

What if Curriculum Theorists Were To Share Centre Stage After School Hours?

The Junior Sports Framework (JSF) (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b) recently replaced the National Junior Sport Policy (2004b) as the resource for all sporting organisations seeking to build safe, fun, quality and inclusive environments for the delivery of junior sport. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) has indicated that this resource will enable program developers to adopt a consistent approach for junior sport growth and delivery in Australia by meeting the needs of young people seeking to participate in sport; whether they want to be involved in non-competitive activities, learning new skills or competing at an elite level (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b).

In most cases, national or state sporting associations enlist a panel of accredited coaches, recreation professionals, physical educators and educational consultants to assist with program development activities. The authors aim to use this paper to outline a different scenario for junior sports program development that reflect the involvement of alternative curriculum theorists. Throughout this paper, concepts drawn from curriculum theory (Marsh & Willis, 2003) , educational theory (Piaget, 1972), sport psychology (Ames, 1992; Coakley, 1993; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Epstein, 1998; Weiss, 2004); and qualitative data from an evaluation of junior sports programs (Eime, Payne, Harvey, Payne, & Casey, 2007), are used as a basis to put forward a position that curriculum theorists taking centre stage in junior sports development programs could assist with addressing sport dropout rates for children between the ages of 5-7.

Many theorists have produced a wide variety of ways to view a curriculum and its development (Apple, 1990; Bernstein, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1981; Young, 1971). This paper will use the concept of the curriculum continuum (Marsh & Willis, 2003) to describe an alternative approach to the existing practice for developing junior sports programs being offered to children aged between 5-7 years. In choosing this model the authors acknowledge that its simplistic linear fashion has its limitations and suggest that the model is used here as a metaphor rather than a projection of the reality of the development and delivery of junior sports programs. In the case of this argument, the simplicity and linear nature of the continuum metaphor provides a means for succinctly outlining an alternative that could help address some of the concerns raised about a group of 5-7 year

programs recently evaluated within Victoria (Eime et al., 2007) . The argument put forward in this paper is based around theories from education and sport psychology.

Coaches or junior sports program deliverers may be able to influence the learning or motivational environment in which play is occurring through the use of modified games (Ames, 1992; Weiss, 2004). For children aged 5-7, games can be considered symbolic, as some children see them as an opportunity to explore or try different roles that they have seen older people filling while playing the sport associated with this game (Dockett & Fleer, 2002). The motivation for exploring these roles is the opportunity to practise and master a range of skills that they would be able to use later when playing the sport (Gross, 1898, 1901). The decision about which roles are important, can be influenced by what roles they have seen older people filling while playing the associated sport (Veroff, 1969). Within the same group of children, there could also be those who are directly focussing on comparing their performance with others while filling roles that they have seen older people filling while playing the associated sport (Veroff, 1969). Therefore, when coaches or deliverers are trying to shape the play environment through the use of modified games for children aged 5-7, they need to consider how they can provide opportunities for children to explore the roles the children have seen older people filling while playing the associated sport. This could involve a mixture of self and peer referenced activities and enable participants to practise and master skills that they would be able to use in later when playing the sport.

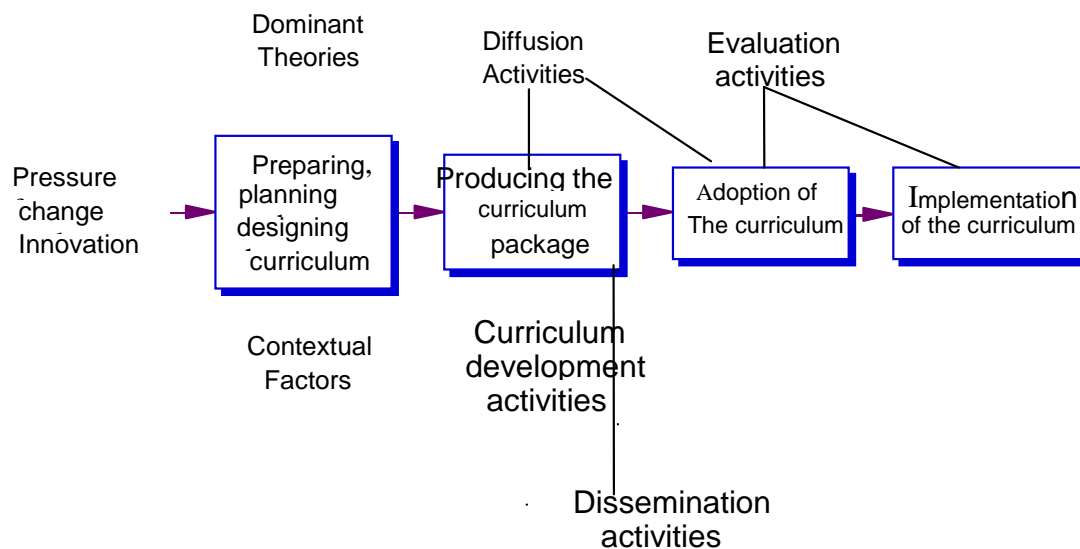
This argument contains several key terms that need defining for the purposes of this paper. Play is considered a symbolic action that involves children exploring or trying the different roles that they have seen older people filling while playing the 'adult' form of the sport associated with this game (Dockett & Fleer, 2002). Motivation to participate in play is linked to the concept of achievement motivation, which suggests that a child's efforts to play can be driven by a desire to master a task or skill, perform better than others, and/or take pride in his or her use of talent (Veroff, 1969). Opportunities for the children aged 5-7 to achieve in junior sports development programs are provided through modified games, which are considered to be structured activities that provide children with a fun way of acquiring basic movement

skills of a particular sport (Netball Australia, 2006). Sport in this case , refers to the adult form of a sport, which is defined as an structured activity governed by rules, capable of achieving a result, requiring physical exertion and/or physical skill which, by its nature and organisation, is competitive and is generally accepted as being a sport (Australian Sports Commission, 2004a). In the case of competition for 5-7 year olds involved in a junior sports development program, it is defined as an opportunity during play or when participating in modified games to compare their performance with previous performances or with the performances of others who are present (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) . While acknowledging that alternative definitions for these terms do exist, there was a clear intention on the authors' behalf to contrast the symbolic nature of play from the field of education with the skill based definition of modified games from the ASC and the competition definition from the field of sport psychology. The authors anticipate that by integrating educational, sporting and psychological perspectives into the of design junior sports development programs targeting the 5-7 year olds, a potential role for curriculum theorists taking centre stage in junior sports development programs may emerge.

Background

Marsh and Willis (2003) suggest that the implementation of a curriculum is better viewed in terms of a continuum (see Figure 1) rather than an isolated activity at the local level,

Figure 1 *The Curriculum Continuum.*



They advocate that initially, the pressure for a large-scale reform or innovation comes from a belief of a Government that something different, which improves the current situation needs to occur. In the case of this issue, two examples of pressure for change can be found in the areas of health and business. With respect to health, results from a series of surveys over the last six years into Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities have reported that frequencies of child participation in outside of school hours sport have shown a slight increase (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2006). In 2000, it was reported that 59% of children participated outside of school hours in sport that had been organised by a school, club or association. Amongst this group of children ranging from ages 5-14 the lowest frequency of participation (32%) was reported for children aged 5 years (ABS, 2001). In 2003, a similar percentage (62%) of children participated in sport, outside of school hours, which had been organised by a school, club or association (ABS, 2004). Once again the lowest percentage group of children were children aged 5 years (44%). The most recent survey of child participation in outside of school hours sport indicates 63% of children participated at least once in an organised sport outside of school hours. As with the previous papers children aged 5 years represented the smallest (45%) group of participants (ABS, 2006). Although this trend of low participation rates among this age group may not be surprising some , sports clubs and associations may view this trend as a justification for targeting a group with possibly the best potential for increasing enrolment numbers in their sport.

With respect to business, since 2001 the Australian Government's sports policy , Backing Australia 's Sporting Ability – a more active Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001), has provided the ASC with a clear challenge to focus on increasing participation in organised sport and find new ways of establishing partnerships between sport and business to enhance the sustainability of participation growth in sport. A key strategy with this initiative has been to work with sports with an extensive club infrastructure in an attempt to achieve growth in the number of people participating in grassroots sport. Given the ABS data identifying the 5 year old group as the smallest group of participants at this level, it is possible to begin to understand how the development of sports programs targeting this age group to promote participant numbers could be seen as a strategy for increasing participant numbers and enhancing the sustainability of the sport. Whether the motivation comes from health or business, in both cases there seems to be more attention being placed on increasing the number of children participating in sport.

The next step in the continuum is the planning and design phase. The preparation and planning of a new program usually involves groups working at the National, State, regional and local levels who prepare the details about the content, structure and timeline for the creation of the program. All of this will be shaped by contextual factors such as budget, time, the knowledge and skills of the writers and the values and agendas of the decision-makers overseeing the process. A team of writers is usually chosen to write a program document that adheres to the guidelines provided to them by a governing group. These guidelines can share links to the dominant theories and existing models emanating from the major discourses operating at the time of writing (Marsh & Willis, 2003). The resulting package of materials traditionally contains a document or framework, some annotated support materials and guidelines. Marsh and Willis (2003) suggest that in some cases organisations have already begun to adopt the practices contained in the new program even before the package of materials is delivered to them. This type of early adoption occurs as a result of diffusion. Rogers (1983) believes that diffusion can occur at many levels from media publicity to a conversation between two people involved in delivery about the new program. Marsh and Willis (2003) define diffusion as the spread of ideas that were previously unfamiliar and may result in the adoption of a program. Traditionally, diffusion involves two-way communication, although in the case of a media release the information presented is one-way. Since in most program innovations only a small percentage of organisations fit into the early adopter category (Rodgers,1983) the diffusion activities are usually supported by a dissemination strategy.

Dissemination is akin to marketing, where there is an intentional effort to inform organisations and individuals about the program reform (Marsh and Willis 2003). The aim of the disseminators is to arouse sufficient interest in the new program in order to prompt deliverers to adopt it into their practices. Over the past decade there has been a growing emphasis on meeting the perceived needs of children and to encourage children to participate in organised sport within Australia (Australian Sports Commission, 1994, 2003, 2004b; National Public Health Partnership, 2004; Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2006). More recently, examples of programs promoting modified games as part of structured sporting programs for 5-7 year old children have begun to appear (Netball Australia, 2006). These programs represent a response to the National Junior Sports Program (Australian Sports Commission, 1994) and the Junior Sports Framework (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b), which serve as resources for sporting organisations during their efforts to build safe, fun, quality and inclusive environments for the delivery of junior sport'. These documents also seek to promote a consistent approach to the delivery of junior sports development programs in Australia. Within the context of the curriculum continuum the promotion of the Junior Sports Framework (JSF) could be interpreted as a dissemination activity to arouse sufficient interest in the JSF in order to prompt deliverers to adopt it into their program planning practices. The advice given to those planning experiences for children beginning their journey along this pathway is to plan for them to spend most of their time involved with play (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b). With respect to competition while playing, it is suggested that 'it is best not to have formal competitions to maintain a focus on participation, skill development and fun for all (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b,p.2)'. The guidelines from the ASC do advise that it is appropriate to include low-level competitions involving structured minor games later in this stage 'where basic sports skills can be acquired and refined in an enjoyable, positive environment'(Australian Sports Commission, 2004b,p.2). The implication of this policy was that age determined who experiences modified competition. In the case of netball, this has meant a child must be between 8-10 before they could begin to experience modified competition (Netball Australia, 2006). Adopting this approach to competition for younger age groups is considered as a means for providing a 'good introduction to the simple rules and ethics of sports'(Australian Sports Commission, 2004b, p.2).

Despite these dissemination efforts there is no guarantee a new program will be accepted or adopted by organisations or clubs. Even when a new program is

adopted, a large number of organisations fail to incorporate or implement the new program into their setting (Marsh & Willis, 2003). Consequently, researchers use evaluation activities to collect evidence about the acceptance of the new program and its likelihood of implementation. During the period 2003-2005 coaches and program deliverers from Victorian sport and recreational organisations were provided with resources from their associated State Sporting Associations (SSAs). These resources included the program manual, describing the specific activities to be delivered in addition to general program information and rationale. The SSAs expected that the junior sports programs delivered by the coaches would be conducted in accordance with the structure and resources provided. The implementation of two sports programs for ages 5-7 years were randomly identified in 2004 for in-depth evaluation from a stratified sample of all Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) funded Victorian SSA programs (n=115). The evaluation activities occurred throughout 2004 and 2005. Interviews were conducted with the Executive Officer and Program Officer from both SSA's. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the background to the program and the program structure.

A total of four clubs chosen randomly from the list of program deliverers, two metropolitan and two rural, were visited per program. Face-to-face interviews with coaches from these clubs in addition to phone interviews with other coaches (n=8 program A, n=5 program B) were conducted. The interviewees were chosen randomly from a total list of coaches at clubs that delivered the programs. All interviews were conducted by the trained and experienced project leader. The evaluation of program A engaged 15.6% of the participating clubs in Victoria, and program B 19.6%.

The evaluation sought to investigate the delivery of the program at each club using semi-structured interviews. The interviews included coaches' thoughts on the: proposed and delivered program structure; use of, and appropriateness of matches; children's desires and dislikes; program resources; barriers and facilitators to the success of the program; program outcomes; and their experience. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using content and thematic analyses (Hudleson, 1996). In addition, parents of participants, at visited clubs were personally asked to complete a short questionnaire (Program A n=34 parents, Program B n=30 parents). The 11 question parental perception questionnaire explored what the children liked best and least about the program using an open-ended format. In addition parents'

thoughts about the focus of the program were investigated including the use of/and desire for matches and modified games. The semi-structured interview and questionnaire instruments were developed from the research questions which were aligned to the program aims, and were reviewed by subject matter experts.

A key finding of the evaluation was that children participating in the program for ages 5-7 were not enjoying the sport as competition had been removed and the modified games in the junior sports program did not provide sufficient opportunities for the children to be involved in activities that they equated to playing the sport. Given these reports of dissatisfaction it may be timely for curriculum academics to question if the current strategies of game modification within junior sports programs for children aged 5-7 are promoting an outcome that does not result in increased participation, skill development and fun for all (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b) . As children continue to drop out of a sport before they commit to playing at a club even after the introduction of modified sports (Cote & Hay, 2002) an opportunity for curriculum theorist to take centre stage in this area begins to emerge.

Theorising About Junior Sports Programs

'Theorising' (Huenecke, 1982) is a commonly used term when discussing curriculum research (Marsh and Willis, 2003). This involves the analysis, synthesis and testing of curriculum problems (Vallence, 1982). In this case the curriculum problem takes the form of reports that children between the ages 5-7 were not enjoying the junior sports development program as the opportunity for children to compete with themselves and others had been removed and the activities that formed the program did not provide sufficient opportunities for the children to play the sport. Returning to the curriculum continuum proposed by Marsh and Willis (2003), the theorising will involve examining and refuting the arguments put forward in the JSF guidelines (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b) using data from a recent evaluation (Eime et al., 2007) before advocating an alternative theoretical approach in response to the reports of dissatisfaction among the children participating in the program.

Can a game be too modified?

Modifications to the structure of a game for use in junior sports development programs aims to reframe the sport to a size and form that matches the developmental levels of participants. Modifications include lowering basketball nets, decreasing the size of the playing area and having lighter basketballs (Chase, Ewing,

Lirgg, & George, 1994). The JSF guidelines advocate that development programs and modified versions of a sport offer young people activities better suited to their capacities with a more suitable level of challenge and provide children with an opportunity to develop skills in a rewarding and enjoyable environment. Principle One of the JSF (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b) promotes providing a quality sports experience so young people make a lifetime commitment. A key message within this principle is that it is important that sport be made to fit kids, and not the reverse. The strategies recommended to coaches to make the activity fit include modifying rules, games and equipment for the purpose of helping young people to experience success. This advice assumes that modified games represent activities that more closely match the capabilities of the child and assist in creating rewarding and enjoyable environments. Previous studies suggest that while some Australian children already participating in sport enjoy the benefits of participation in these types of activities (O'Meara & Spittle, 2005), many do not (Salmon, Telford, & Crawford, 2004).

In the case of the most recent evaluation (Eime et al., 2007) the coaches were reporting challenges with adhering to the junior sports program for 5-7 year olds. While the program manuals were suggesting the need for the development of skills, the coaches were identifying children who want to play regardless of their skills:

"They haven't got the capability of motor development skills to go any further, but they want to go, they want to play games, they want to get on the court and that is all they want to do."

Although the coaches accepted the inclusion of activities for introducing children to the sport through a suitably challenging activity, there were those who believed an unintended outcome of this approach was restriction rather than development.

"The program is a good program but it shouldn't restrict the kids. If the kids are ready to play games, let them play."

The requirement for sports programs for 5-7 year olds to complete skills based activities in preference to play has provided a challenge for some coaches

"If you purely focus on the skills, the kids get very bored, very quickly." "All they (participants) want to do is play games; they want to get into positions...whereas you just don't do that with (the program)."

This appeared to be particularly true for young children.

"The thing is with this program is the kids are 5-7 (years of age), there is absolutely no way that you can hold their attention to anything skill based"

As a result there were examples of coaches who endorsed some of the activities in the manuals and made local modifications as well.

“The manual is fantastic, but we make changes, we adapt our own program from the manual.”

In many instances it appeared that in order to make an ‘enjoyable and rewarding environment coaches moved away from the prescribed skills-based activities, choosing to allow the children to play games in order to learn skills.

“Work on a few extra things... play a few more games, rather than spending time on skills, so if they just want to play games and they are learning the skills in those games anyway, I am happy to do that.”

The reports of modified games in the chosen junior sports programs sometimes seemed to conflict with the positions being advocated by the ASC. It appeared that matching the capabilities of the child did not always result in creating a rewarding and enjoyable environment for the children. Theorising about why the type of play may not be enjoyable, it may be beneficial to look at what some educational theorists have said about play. Several researchers have attempted to develop a definition of play (Ablon, 1996; Froebel, 1887). While the collective efforts of this group have contributed to our understanding of play, a single definition, accepted by all still eludes academics in this area (Dockett & Fleer, 2002). Fromberg (1992), who chose to define play in terms of its characteristics and how these characteristics contributed to the attitudes of those playing (Dockett and Fleer, 2005) provides us with a definition that assists with the development of a framework. Fromberg (1992) describes the play of children as: symbolic, meaningful, active, voluntary, rule governed and episodic. In the case of symbolic characteristic of play, some similarities exist with the JSF policy as symbolic play involves children exploring or trying different roles (Dockett and Fleer, 2005). Groos (1898, 1901) believed that the children’s motivation for exploring these roles was that it enabled them to practise and master a range of skills that they would be able to use in later life. The coaches interviewed about the sports programs for 5-7 year olds (Eime et al., 2007) regularly spoke of the need for children to ‘play’ the game *“Kids want to play the game”*. When referring to ‘the game’ this referred to filling a role in the version of the game they had played themselves or had seen others playing

“...As soon as they go to school and they want to play ... a lot of their mums play, and the kids come up and watch them all the time playing.”

Some support for the symbolic nature of play was found in the comments from the coaches about how special children feel when they look and dress as though they

are or like they are playing the sport *“Putting on the uniform makes them feel special.”*

While the JSF advocates offering modified versions of sport to young children, the reports of coaches in the junior sports program for 5-7 year olds reported that this strategy was not always effective. A possible explanation for this finding is that some children at this age are more motivated by the symbols of the game rather than the skills; this group of children may prefer to look and act like a player, parent or peer they have seen locally or on television.

Does removing competition meet the needs of all children?

Guideline 3 of the JSF 'Sport Pathways' (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b) identifies a common set of definite stages in every sport that involves the child moving from a novice to an experienced participant. These stages are identified as broad experiences (fun activities for mastering basic sports skills), broad activities (fun activities with many people involving many sporting experiences), progression (fun activities with the focus being placed on skill development), specialisation (serious sport involving refining skills) and recreational participation (sport played for fun and to maintain skills). The advice given to those planning experiences for children beginning their journey along this pathway is to plan for them 'to spend most of their play time experimenting with sport activities' (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b, p.2). For the child commencing their journey in sports participation it is suggested that 'it is best not to have formal competitions so that the focus can be kept on participation, skill development and fun for all (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b, p.2). Adopting this approach to competition is considered as a 'good introduction to the simple rules and ethics of sports' (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b). The guidelines suggest the use of low-level competition involving structured minor games to be offered later in this stage 'where basic sports skills can be acquired and refined in an enjoyable, positive environment'. During the remaining three stages of the sports pathway, competition is seen as an important part of junior sports programs because it provides challenge in applying, testing and developing skills (Australian Sports Commission, 2004b).

Returning to the data from the evaluation, it appears that the strategy of delaying the introduction of competition for children aged 5-7 has its supporters

I think skill development is the way to go. The 5-7 year olds developmentally are not ready for matches or competition. Even some 7-8 year olds are not

quite ready for the idea of competition. So by the time they get to 8 or 9 most children can catch on to the idea of the game and play modified games and it is early enough for them to start, they don't need competition any earlier than that.

Some coaches suggested that the approach being adopted in their junior sports development program should also be adopted by schools.

I think it is excellent. I think that the girl who is running it is doing a very good job. We need to get out there and tell the schools about it so that their PE teachers can promote or their sports instructors can promote it

Despite these examples of support, there are also critics of this approach that suggest that this approach lacks the 'real world application' that is needed to keep the children interested and more importantly participating.

...to use an analogy you need to have the pure form of the exercises for the children, but it would be advantageous to have those exercises applied to the real world and have some, as I said, to incorporate them into the activities that the older children do each week. It is absolutely essential; otherwise the kids just lose interest

The focus on skill development in these junior sport development programs appeared in some cases not to have the desired effect of promoting fun and interest "*They just won't want to do skills, they just get bored with it...*" There were reports from coaches acknowledging that playing games that children could equate to the adult version of the game did contribute to creating an enjoyable environment

"I must admit, you can see the kids are very excited to actually be playing a game".

One coach even went as far as to suggest that the absence of competition was a weakness of the program

"Probably the fact that they might not get as much competition as they like, they are highly competitive... that's what kids like least about program".

Even supporters of the program did raise concerns that the entry level programs of the JSF were beginning to resemble perceptual motor programs

"Overall, I think it provides something for the kids at an early age...I only worry that it is very close to being a Perceptual Motor Skill program".

This observation may be seen as contradicting the advice for the children to be most of their time experimenting with the sport through play.

The mixed reports about the program raise some doubts over the deliberate absence of competition in the programs for the 5-7 year olds. Additionally, the reports of children enjoying the opportunity to compete at this age, serve as a motivation to provide some explanations about why some children enjoy competing.

Like the staged approach outlined in the JSF pathway, researchers (Scanlan, 1988; Veroff, 1969) have documented a development framework to explain a child's motivation to achieve and compete. Achievement motivation represents a child's efforts to master a task or skill, perform better than others, and/or take pride in his or her use of talent. Competitiveness is defined as a personal characteristic to maintain a positive self image in a competitive context where comparisons are made against some benchmark by those present. In this framework, children up to four years of age focus on mastering their environment and on self-testing (Autonomous Competence Stage). Around five, children begin focusing directly on comparing their performance with others (Social Comparison Stage). Finally, as children mature they begin to understand when it is appropriate to compete / compare themselves with others and when it is best to have self-referenced standards. Having an understanding of the concepts within this framework provides a possible explanation as to why some five and six year olds would enjoy competition. The comments of some of the coaches suggest that children this age are too young to be exposed to competition or comparisons

“they're [under 6 years] not ready to go into competition...they don't even know how to [play the sport] properly”.

Elsewhere the reports from the coaches identified children within their 5-7 year old programs wanting to compare themselves against others.

“I'm not sure really what children like least about program I guess perhaps the fact that they are not competing.....they would continually ask 'when can we go out there, when can we do what they're doing”.

In some cases children saw their older peers who were able to play the sport as the benchmark and were keen to compete with them

“I don't think they are particularly bored, but they're finding that they want to be doing what the big kids are doing and they want to be competing...they want to move on to the group with the bigger kids”

Not all children needed the opportunity to compare their performance with others, some were quite happy to play modified games, a possible explanation could be that they were still at the self-referencing stage and quite happy to compare their current performance with previous performances

"It's the fun [what children like most about program] aspect of it, that its more games rather than competition, they like the competition as well but like the games, they seem to relate to that".

This group, although not interested comparisons with others still need introduced challenges and non competitive modified games if they are to make any comparisons with previous efforts.

"The kids like playing new and challenging games ... they get bored when the skills or games become too easy or repetitive".

Whether the motivation to play is derived from a desire for children to compare current against previous performances or to assess their ability against their peers, the reports from the coaches suggest the presence of children from both groups, therefore if these programs are to meet the needs of all children then some attention needs to be devoted how this could occur.

Curriculum Theorists Sharing Centre Stage

The examples of coaches modifying existing junior sports programs for 5-7 year olds to maintain the interest of the participants supported the position that they are well placed to shape the environment through the use of modified games. If coaches accept that for children this age play is symbolic, they will also appreciate why they need to include play activities that allow the children to explore or try the different roles that they have seen older players filling. After their brief introduction to the achievement motivation and competitiveness framework they may now be in a position to see how new activities could serve as an intrinsic source of motivation that prompts the children to practise and master the skills that they consider necessary for ongoing involvement in this sport. They should also be aware of how in some cases children will be interested in comparing current and previous performances, while others will be directly comparing their performance with others present while they are playing or participating in modified games. The authors believe that this finding/outcome may prompt some SSA's to consider how they can provide opportunities in their junior development sports programs for 5-7 year olds to explore roles they have seen their older brother, mother or sporting hero fill, while wearing their uniforms and having the opportunity to participate in self and peer referenced activities. Hopefully the motivation for program reform of this nature will result in some young participants willingly practising and mastering relevant sports skills rather than dropping out of the sport due to a lack of engagement.

Returning briefly to the Marsh and Willis continuum to outline how curriculum theorist can share centre stage during the after school hour time period. The findings from the recent SSA evaluations (Eime et al., 2007) raising concerns over reported dissatisfaction with the programs currently being offered to 5-7 years olds represents a need for change. The introduction of a different theoretical perspective based on an improved understanding of the delivery context has identified a need for some competitive and increasingly challenging activities in these programs to meet the needs of both the self and peer referencing groups. It is at this point that the involvement of the curriculum theorist is crucial; however it should be stated that this is not a solo role as he or she will rely heavily on the input from the ASC accredited coaches, recreation professionals, physical educators, educational consultants and sports psychologists during the production of these new packages. In the case of both groups of children there will be a need to ensure that the children along with the coaches, see some value in the activities and that they are able to maintain a positive self image after participating in these activities. The curriculum theorist can work alongside program developers to check for the presence of regular changes to the program to motivate children to participate in action orientated, game-like activities, and the potential for children to make decisions about and have some degree of control over the experiences that from the program ((Weiss, 2004). Once such a program has been developed, the role of the curriculum theorist would shift from developer to evaluator, which should prompt a new set of concerns, evolving from a differing set of needs of the children that help the program developers move closer to understanding the unique needs of this special group of children beginning their journey in sports participation.

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