

SUCCESSFUL FUTURES: MAKING SENSE OF THE PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

A WELSH PHYSICAL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Professor Graham Donaldson published *Successful Futures*, an independent review of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, which will form the basis of the new Welsh curriculum. Four key purposes of the curriculum are central to meeting the learning needs of all children and young people: to ensure they develop as: ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethically informed citizens; and healthy, confident individuals (Donaldson, 2015).

The pedagogy to meet these four key purposes is a key focus of the review document as, ultimately, the quality of the teaching and learning will determine the success of the curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). The purpose of this article is to make sense of the pedagogical principles from a physical education (PE) perspective and to identify how existing pedagogical approaches and models can assist practitioners in this process. Further, from an international perspective, the pedagogical principles are presented as a model of good practice in PE to be considered in relation to other national curricula, pedagogies and assessment procedures, within the bounds of their own social, cultural and policy context.

Epstein's (1989) TARGET structures (task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time) and Ames' (1992) and Morgan's (2017) interpretations of these structures are highly consistent with Donaldson's vision of effective education. Ames utilised the TARGET structures to promote a mastery motivational climate, fostered by self-referenced, differentiated and varied

tasks, a sense of individual autonomy, the recognition of effort and individual progress, heterogeneous and cooperative groups, individualised formative evaluation/assessment and flexible time to learn. Morgan reconceptualised the TARGET structures in a PE context by making interdisciplinary links with relevant pedagogical and sociological theories and by placing a strong emphasis on the teacher-pupil relationship, which had not previously featured.

THE PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Although the key purpose of developing healthy and confident individuals is the most obvious fit to PE, the first pedagogical principle states that effective teaching should also maintain a focus on the other three key purposes: to develop ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; and ethically informed citizens.

Beginning with the development of ambitious and capable learners, the *Task* structure of TARGET emphasises the importance of learners setting their own self-referenced or shared goals and the need to differentiate tasks for pupil choice and inclusion. Teaching the importance of a growth mind-set is also congruent with this key purpose, promoting the belief that intelligence and physical competence are not fixed entities but can be improved incrementally (Philpott, 2016). This mind-set is as equally important for teachers to grasp as it is for their pupils, since teacher beliefs and expectations are crucial in enabling pupils to achieve their full potential.

The second key purpose of developing enterprising and creative contributors connects well with teaching approaches such as Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Thorpe *et al.*, 1986) and Sport Education (Seidentop, 1994), which both develop the application of technical and tactical knowledge and creative thinking. The Cooperative Learning model in PE (Dyson and Casey, 2012) is another example of a teaching approach that helps to meet this key purpose by providing pupils with opportunities to adopt different leadership roles and to work together responsibly.

PE teaching models such as Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison, 1995) and Sport Education are consistent with the third key purpose of the curriculum: to develop ethically informed citizens. Sport Education involves the pupils as officials and sports board members, where standards are set and judgements made about rules and standards of ethical behaviour in competition. The TPSR model overtly promotes positive social and moral behaviours and transfer of learning to other life contexts. Both models, therefore, are highly consistent with Donaldson's emphasis on respecting the needs and rights of others, considering the impact of their actions, and exercising their human democratic rights and responsibilities.

A clear link to the concept of physical literacy is evident in the fourth key purpose: to develop healthy and confident individuals. Whitehead's (2010) definition of physical literacy as the confidence, competence, motivation, knowledge and understanding to be physically active

throughout the life-course is entirely consistent with this key purpose, which requires a positive and inclusive learning environment developed through effective pedagogy.

The second pedagogical principle is that good teaching and learning challenge all learners and recognise the importance of sustained effort. This has close links to a growth mind-set and a mastery motivational climate. A mastery climate emphasises self-referenced individual progress. Research in PE has shown that a mastery climate is linked to the choice of challenging tasks, the belief that success is linked to effort, satisfaction and enjoyment. By contrast, an ego climate, which emphasises normative comparisons, is associated with the choice of less challenging tasks in order to avoid the demonstration of incompetence, higher levels of boredom and anxiety, and the belief that success is linked to fixed ability (Carpenter and Morgan, 1999). If pupils believe that ability is not a fixed entity and that by exerting effort they can make significant improvements (as emphasised in a mastery climate), and if teachers explicitly identify the criteria for success as individual improvement and progress, then pupils are more likely to try their best and set high personal aspirations for learning. This is also compatible with the *Recognition* structure of TARGET, which emphasises the importance of individual teacher feedback on effort and improvement in relation to self-referenced and personalised goals.

Teachers' expectations of pupils' ability are a key consideration as they also need to emphasise a growth mind-set to eliminate the limiting beliefs they themselves have about pupils' potential (Philpott, 2016). Inclusion is a key factor in this process, which values the achievement of all equally and promotes the notion that all pupils can achieve irrespective of ability and personal circumstances (Stidder and Hayes, 2013). Differentiating the tasks and providing choices for pupils to self-select different levels of difficulty can assist this process, as evident in an inclusion style of teaching (Mosston and Ashworth, 2002). The danger is that pupils select tasks to protect rather than challenge their ability, which once again is dependent upon the learning environment explicitly communicated by the teacher. The design of the tasks to limit the opportunity for public comparison is one way of reducing this concern but, ultimately, the teacher needs to ensure that pupils feel valued and that they are achieving, regardless of their normative ability levels. A caring and nurturing pedagogical agenda consistent with developing confidence and perceived competence in physical literacy is, therefore, crucial in challenging all learners.

Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) spectrum of teaching styles in PE fits well with the third pedagogical principle that good teaching and learning employ a blend of approaches, including direct teaching. This is consistent with the spectrum's 'non-versus' perspective, which states that all teaching styles have a place in PE, dependent upon the learning outcomes. However, research in PE (Morgan, 2005) revealed that the more pupil-centred teaching styles of guided-discovery and reciprocal teaching resulted in higher levels of pupil motivation and greater perceptions of a mastery climate in comparison to the more teacher-centred styles, whilst acknowledging that there is still a place for these more direct styles. This is in harmony with Donaldson's fourth pedagogical principle of good teaching and learning, which recommends employing a blend of approaches including problem-solving and creative and critical thinking.

Cecchini *et al.* (2014) reported the positive motivational and learning effects of problem-based tasks within the TARGET framework in order to engage and challenge the learners. There are numerous opportunities to employ problem-based approaches in PE across a whole range of activities. The more creative activities, such as dance and gymnastics, immediately spring to mind, but there are also many opportunities in activities such as games for creative decision-making and problem-solving. Developing game scenarios, for example, in a TGfU lesson can result in positive learning opportunities for the pupils, enhancing their strategic and tactical decision-making and game-understanding. Monitoring and reflecting on their own progress and outcomes, analysing the opposition's strengths and weaknesses, and planning to outwit them in Sport Education is another way of achieving these learning outcomes. Morgan's (2011) Athletics Challenges has further examples of problem-solving activities. The key message is to focus on the transferable life skills of problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity in PE lessons, rather than purely on the technical and tactical aspects.

The differentiated and individually set self-referenced tasks, designed for variety and novelty, as promoted in the *Task* structure of TARGET, are similar to Donaldson's fifth principle of setting tasks that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest. As Donaldson puts it, "a one-size-fits-all approach to learning will not meet this wide range of needs". An element of autonomy is therefore important, which is consistent with the *Authority* structure of TARGET that promotes active learning by allowing shared responsibility for decision-making, active thinking, questioning, learner choice, self-direction and leadership (Morgan, 2017).

According to Donaldson, designing authentic PE lessons that are relevant and meaningful to pupils' future lives and the 'world beyond the school gates' is a key challenge for PE teachers and, for some, is shaped and limited by their own professional identities. It could be argued that traditional sport-based PE has resulted in a curriculum that caters primarily for the pupils who play sport in and out of school and those who continue to play sport after leaving school. The challenge for PE teachers, under *Successful Futures*, is to make lessons more meaningful for *all* pupils and their future lives as identified in the sixth pedagogical principle. The most obvious line to take is to focus on the health and wellbeing agenda, but it is crucial that pupils see the value of this to their current and future lives. Pupil voice and choice of activities will play a key role in achieving this pedagogical principle in both curricular and extra-curricular activities (Morgan *et al.*, 2015). Consistent with this principle, the 5x60 project in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) has been successful in providing extra-curricular opportunities to participate in different physical activities decided upon by the pupils themselves and facilitated by the 5x60 officers in the schools. Further, the Sport Education model is a good example of making PE lessons authentic and providing leadership opportunities for pupils, as encouraged by Donaldson and emphasised in the TARGET structures.

Assessment for learning (AFL) is Donaldson's seventh pedagogical principle for good teaching and learning, involving meaningful feedback to meet learners' individual needs and providing guidance for the next steps of learning. Morgan (2017) argues that the *Evaluation* structure of TARGET is compatible with AFL and that recognising where the learners are, communicating their strengths and areas for development, and identifying next steps required to improve are all essential elements of effective assessment. Important considerations for PE practitioners are to attempt to distribute feedback equally to all members of the class and to consider not only 'what' is said to the learners, but 'how' it is said, including the accompanying body language, eye contact and facial expressions (Morgan, 2017). Further, the opportunity for learners to question the feedback and clarify any misconceptions is important for their learning journey.

Ipsative assessment compares an individual's level of achievement with their own previous attainment and is entirely consistent with the principles of AFL and a mastery motivational climate. Whilst acknowledging that the more able and talented pupils in PE may well enjoy their favourable comparisons with others in the class, research has shown that, for many pupils, evaluation that emphasises



normative comparisons can impair self-worth, intrinsic interest and perceived ability (Nicholls, 1989). PE teachers should, therefore, consider carefully the impact of such normative-based assessment on the motivation of the majority of pupils in their classes. On that basis, it is argued that ability comparisons should be used sparingly, if at all, in PE and, if used, should be given privately not publicly. However, knowing what motivates your pupils individually is a crucial factor in making such pedagogical decisions.

Teacher-led questioning, along with self- and peer-evaluation, are important strategies for evaluating learning and fostering a positive motivational environment in PE (Newton and Bowler, 2015). Many teachers' questions are simply fact-seeking and seldom require the learners to think beyond the basic recall of information (McNeill *et al.*, 2008). According to Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom *et al.*, 1956), such closed questioning only promotes the lower-order skill of recall, whereas more open-ended questions promote higher-order thinking skills, such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. PE teachers should aspire towards more open-ended, problem-solving questioning to enhance pupils' understanding and learning. TGfU is a good example of a PE model that can facilitate this higher-order questioning.

Individualising the questions to challenge learners at their own level is also a key pedagogical target and one that draws upon Vygotsky's (1987) concepts of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development

(ZPD). Scaffolding is a metaphor for the process of assisting learning within the ZPD; the gap between tasks that can be completed without assistance from a more knowledgeable other and tasks that require such assistance to be achieved successfully. Setting tasks within an individual's ZPD is, therefore, an important part of developing an effective learning environment. The struggle to achieve this in whole class situations is not to be underestimated and is recognised as a significant pedagogical challenge, which emphasises the need to know your pupils' individual learning needs.

Within his seventh pedagogical principle, Donaldson encourages peer-collaboration in learning, consistent with Mosston and Ashworth's reciprocal teaching style. Such an approach requires careful planning as it involves one learner observing and providing constructive feedback to another. The use of peer-teaching resources (e.g. Morgan, 2011) can significantly assist this process by focusing the observer on the key points for evaluation and improvement. However, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure the pupils understand the teaching points and that the feedback they provide to peers is constructive and delivered in a sensitive manner. The process of peer-evaluation also deepens the understanding of the observer, thus enhancing learning for both peers. Importantly in such peer-teaching episodes, the feedback given by the teacher should not be on the performance of the learner, but on the accuracy and quality of the feedback given by the observer. Self-evaluation is

another key strategy of AfL, which can be facilitated by the use of technology in the form of visual replay of performances. Many schools now adopt this approach in their PE lessons, allowing pupils to observe and improve their own performance and raise the standard of their work.

The key elements of Cooperative Learning, namely positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing are also highly consistent with peer-collaboration, as are the curriculum models of Sport Education and TGfU.

In the eighth pedagogical principle, Donaldson argues for the development of the skills and capacity to make connections within and across the areas of learning and experience. The promotion of transferable life skills is in harmony with this pedagogical principle and PE is an ideal vehicle for the development of such skills. According to Mandigo *et al.* the life skills of communication, interpersonal skills, decision-making, critical thinking and self-management are crucial in developing healthy and positive young people. Furthermore, Morgan (2011) argues that adhering to Ames' TARGET structures in PE provides numerous opportunities for the development of such life skills.

Consistent with Donaldson's ninth pedagogical principle, the cross-curricular responsibilities of embedding literacy, numeracy and digital competence are as important for learning in PE as they are

in any other subject and there are many opportunities to promote these explicitly in PE lessons. The Welsh Government has already embedded literacy and numeracy in existing subjects and there are some excellent ideas of how to achieve this in PE in resources such as The PE Talking Toolkit (Davies *et al.*, 2013). The challenge for PE teachers is to embed these cross-curriculum responsibilities without losing the focus on practical PE, thus making them natural, rather than added-on, and enhancing rather than distracting.

Several areas already covered in this article go well with Donaldson's tenth pedagogical principle of encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own learning. The *Task* structure of TARGET encourages pupils to set their own self-referenced learning goals and the *Evaluation* structure promotes self-evaluation in relation to the pupils' set learning outcomes. Pupil voice and allowing choice of activities are part of the mastery *Authority* structure and *Task* differentiation. It is acknowledged that, logistically, this can be very difficult, so the idea of planning to allow for pupil choice needs to be part of the solution. Thinking strategically in order to outwit opponents is a key feature of TGFU and Sport Education, encouraging active participation and learning (Donaldson, 2015). Additionally, understanding that some pupils require more time to learn is consistent with the flexible *Time* structure in TARGET and Donaldson's flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs. However, giving learners too much autonomy, without scaffolding the learning process, would not enable effective learning to take place. Encouraging an appropriate amount of learner autonomy, whilst still providing a scaffold is, therefore, an essential aspect of a high-quality learning environment.

Morgan (2017) argues for the addition of *relationships* to the TARGET structures and emphasises the importance of developing a caring and nurturing climate in PE. This is compatible with Donaldson's eleventh principle that good teaching and learning support positive relationships and social and emotional development. Donaldson's focus on pupils needing to feel competent is also consistent with the development of confidence and perceived competence in physical literacy (Whitehead, 2010). Killingbeck and Whitehead (2015) emphasised the need to view learners as individuals when observing them, and to realise that they are all at different stages of their personal journey, with different levels of confidence and self-esteem. They also warn of the dangers of personal beliefs and frames of reference when observing others, emphasising the need for PE teachers to consider the motives of the learners rather than their own.

Donaldson's twelfth and final pedagogical principle is about the need for encouraging collaboration in good teaching and learning and the ability to function effectively as a member of a team. This principle has already been partially covered in the discussion about the life skills of communication and interpersonal skills and has direct links to team games in PE, specifically in relation to models such as Sport Education and TGFU. Further, the Cooperative Learning model is closely connected to collaborative learning.

As a note of caution, PE teachers need to be aware that some pupils may not have the emotional intelligence to provide positive and sensitive feedback to others in peer-teaching scenarios. Teachers who care about their pupils' personal, social and emotional development, therefore, must teach them how to give effective feedback to peers, in order to create the most effective learning environment (Morgan, 2017). However, there is strong evidence that a collaborative learning environment is worth striving for in PE, provided it is facilitated effectively by the teacher (Dyson and Casey, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to provide PE practitioners and teacher educators with practical teaching and learning ideas to help them make sense of and apply the twelve pedagogical principles in *Successful Futures*. There is, in the author's opinion, great strength in the flexibility of the new Welsh curriculum and in Donaldson's recommendations, but also a danger that PE teachers may interpret this flexibility as a licence to continue doing what they've always done and resist change in their PE curriculum, pedagogy and assessments. This article argues that, to achieve Donaldson's pedagogical principles, PE teachers in Wales have to apply a wide range of teaching methods and models and to challenge their own pedagogical practices.

The requirement for high quality teachers who can deliver the new curriculum effectively will test the quality of initial and continuing teacher education and require the growth of reflective practitioners who can understand the *why* and the *how* of teaching, as well as the *what* (Donaldson, 2015). As such, teacher identity will be a key consideration for both recruitment and continuing professional development of PE teachers, in a time when the traditional sport-focused curriculum in Wales is changing to embrace the new health and wellbeing agenda. It is hoped that, in some small way, this article can assist this process of change and professional growth in PE teachers and teacher educators. ■

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