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Sport Education: Promoting Team Affiliation Through Physical Education

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The development of feelings of identity, the sense of belonging to a team, and the growth of social skills are experiences that sport, if properly conducted, is well placed to offer (Siedentop, 1994). Evidence suggests that some characteristics of traditional, multiactivity forms of physical education work against realizing these goals (Locke, 1992). Siedentop's Sport Education (SE) model is one attempt to overcome this shortcoming by recasting units as seasons and maintaining persisting groups as teams throughout the season. Extended units intended to foster team affiliation while promoting affective and social development are common objectives in physical education. We report on a 16-week SE unit that includes over 70 Year-5 students (9- to 10-year-olds) from one UK school. Our findings show that the opportunity to become affiliated with a team was an attractive feature of the pupils' physical education experience and that, under the framework of SE, there was an obvious investment made by the Year-5 Forest Gate students in relation to their sense of identity and involvement as members of a persisting group.

Key Words: Sport Education, team affiliation, persisting groups

In a recent article in *JTPE*, Siedentop (2002) noted that there is now a considerable body of research literature on Sport Education (SE), much of it indicating that this instructional model has been used successfully to assist young people to become "literate, competent and enthusiastic sports people" (p. 411). Because of the growing visibility of SE in the research literature, the key features of SE are increasingly well known, including extended seasons in place of short units of

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activity, formal competition, a culminating event, festivity, record keeping, and affiliation with a team.

Although each of these features has been shown to be an important part of students' experiences of SE, Siedentop (1998) indicates, "The use of persisting groups (teams) is one of the model's most important features" (p. 414). A review of the general educational-research literature suggests a paucity of research on the experiences of students who remain in sustained, distinct groups or teams over long periods of time (Siedentop, 1995; Wynne & Walberg, 1994). In the context of SE, Siedentop (1995) believed that persisting groups, that is, sustained membership of a team for at least the course of a season, are not only a necessary condition for personal growth but also fundamentally important to achieving goals characteristic of the model. As Metzler (2000) explained, this extended affiliation allows team members the opportunity to work toward common goals, make group decisions, experience successes and failures as a group, and construct a group identity.

Team affiliation in and through SE is not solely a matter for team sports but it is also indeed applicable to other activities in the physical education curriculum, including dance (Graves & Townsend, 2000), tennis (Grant, 1994), and gymnastics (Bell, 1994). Affiliation through the SE model is enhanced through the identification of team names and through players designing their team uniforms: Giving their team a name and uniform helps the players create a unique identity for themselves. According to Siedentop (1994), the development of team affiliation can also support the establishment and maintenance of rules and routines and assist in the identification of teams' and individuals' accountability. Whereas he acknowledged that team membership could create problems such as students struggling to work with other team members, Siedentop (1994) believed that children mature through experiences such as dealing with disagreements and problems among their peer group. Thus opportunities to practice the skills of negotiation and compromise are provided in SE.

A number of authors have examined team affiliation in SE. After teaching a college softball-activity class using the SE model, Bennet and Hastie (1997) reported that team affiliation appeared to be the most attractive feature of the SE model for students and that the instructor noted how close team members became as they sought to perform well. The emphasis on fair competition in SE has been reported as promoting team affiliation and enhancing relationships among team members (Hastie & Carlson, 1998). Hastie and Carlson have also reported that team affiliation is one aspect of SE that can be achieved regardless of the diversity of the population taking part.

Hastie (1998b) reported that being on the same team for the entire season was strongly favored by six sixth-grade students, and each player made an investment in becoming more competent. Students also felt that they had a part to play in the team, particularly when identifying the specific role that they had in the team-playing system. Team affiliation has also been recognized as a factor in changing the ways students socialize during class, with a particular emphasis on the development of teamwork and cooperation (Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Carlson and Hastie stated that SE allowed students to interact on a different level than previous physical education programs and that students appreciated the increased interaction time with the same teammates. The socializing benefits highlighted by Carlson and Hastie included being with friends, having fun, and assisting teammates. Grant, Tredinnick, and Hodge (1992) noted that placing students on the same team for the

duration of the SE season promoted social skills, social development, and team affiliation.

Hastie (1998a) showed that keeping a team together for a season accommodated marginalized students. There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating the benefits of SE for low-skilled pupils (Alexander & Luckman, 1998; Alexander, Taggart & Thorpe, 1996; Carlson, 1995a&b; Ennis, 1996; Grant 1992; Hastie, 1998b). Benefits for these pupils include increased opportunities for participation, high levels of peer support, and increased success in skill and social development, responsibility, and decision making. Less is known about the experiences of high-skilled students in contexts of SE, though Kinchin (2001) has provided one in-depth case study of a high-skilled student's experiences of SE. He reported that during the unit the individual's initially strong, public resistance to the principles of SE became less extreme, to be replaced by greater consideration and support for his teammates. Kinchin concluded that the erosion of the high-skilled student's resistance was, in part, influenced by membership in a persisting group.

In this article, we focus on Year-5 students' experiences of SE and the effects of membership of persisting groups on team affiliation. We begin by providing an overview of the organization of SE in one elementary school in the United Kingdom and details of the methods used to generate data. We then report the main findings of the study and show that the main components of team affiliation in this case were relations to others, communication with peers, investing in the team, and working together. We conclude by noting that membership in a persisting group was in this case an essential feature of the development of team affiliation for the students.

The Sport Education Season

The SE unit was taught to Year-5 students in one UK primary school during the spring and summer terms of 2001. The school is referred to throughout this article by the pseudonym of Forest Gate Primary School. The research team worked with the teachers of Forest Gate in January 2001, before the commencement of the SE unit, to introduce them to the key elements of SE, and the team provided in-service support to develop lessons and the content of the season. On most occasions one or two members of the research team attended each SE class. They were present not only to support the initiative but also to collect data that would help in assessing teachers' and students' experiences of SE. This assisted teachers in their construction of a generic game to use throughout the season and a week-by-week plan for the delivery of the unit. Similar to the situation reported by Alexander, Taggart, and Thorpe (1996), SE resulted in the teachers at Forest Gate restructuring the physical education program without any great disturbance to the physical education timetable.

Participants

All 76 Year-5 students (9- to 10-year olds) from Forest Gate Primary School were involved in the SE season. This included students from three classes, with children from one class being members of a composite Year-5 and -6 class. There were 10 SE teams, four each from two classes and two from the composite class. Each team was coeducational and mixed ability.

Generic Game

The teachers chose an invasion game for the SE season. The game was a modified form of basketball and netball and involved scoring a point by bouncing a ball in a hoop placed on the ground behind a back-of-court line. Any team member was allowed to score as long as the shooter avoided stepping over the shooting line. It was a noncontact game, and a free shot was awarded for deliberate contact. Defensive players were required to stand at least 1 m away from the player with the ball. Players in possession of the ball were not allowed to walk or run with the ball, with a sideline throw being awarded to the opposition if they did so. When the ball went out of play, the game was restarted by the nonoffending team making a free throw from the sideline. A jump ball started the game.

Initial Teacher Observations

Before the start of the SE season, teachers spent 2 weeks assessing the students' game-playing ability. In the first week this entailed keeping notes on how the students passed and received the ball and how well they shot at a target. Team skills, including how well students moved in space, communicated with their teammates, and interacted and made decisions, were assessed in the second week while students played a two-versus-two invasion game. Teacher observations from Weeks 1 and 2 were used to help decide the formation of teams with the aim of having a mix of sex and ability on each team (Metzler, 2000).

Introduction of SE to Students

Before beginning the SE unit, the three Forest Gate teachers who were to deliver SE to the Year-5 classes held a meeting with all Year-5 students. The purpose of this meeting was to inform the students of what was going to be happening over the next 16 weeks in relation to SE. Each Year-5 class was to receive one SE session each week lasting 60 min, and all Year-5 classes took part in SE at the same time each week. In Week 3, students were allocated to their teams (decided from the previous two observations), and each team included either 7 or 8 team members. In general, students showed no signs of disagreement with the teachers' choice of team members because they had been told that the teachers would make the teams evenly matched in terms of ability. Five players were permitted on court and that allowed each team to have two or three members who could pursue other roles such as coach and scorekeeper. Students were encouraged to choose a team name, choose roles (e.g., coach, warm-up officer), and maintain the team display boards outside the classrooms. In addition, in Week 3, teachers explained how to keep a portfolio, design logos for team shirts, plan the format of the season, and score according to the rules of the game.

During Weeks 4 to 6, the three teachers reassessed the performance of the children to determine whether transfer of players among teams was necessary. No transfers were made, and in Week 7 the teams played short, half-team matches against other teams to practice playing as a whole team. The teachers spent an additional 2 weeks in preseason beyond what was initially planned because they believed the students were benefiting substantially from the experience.

Display boards were placed in the corridors outside each classroom, and each team was allocated a section where, under their team name, team members

chose to display team photographs, drawings, and team chants. Each team kept a portfolio that included details of their team, fact files about the individuals on their team (nicknames, favorite sport, role in SE), and reports from completed matches. Although the teachers requested that the team portfolios include particular information, teams were encouraged to change and add whatever they wished to their display boards. The notion of awarding points to motivate students to carry out appropriate behavior was also introduced (Bell, 1998). Criteria for collecting team points was based not only on playing ability but also on punctuality, fair play, cooperation, having the equipment ready for each SE session, and maintaining the display boards. The teachers also explained to the students that the season would end in a Festival Day when all the teams would play one final match to determine their finishing position on the competition ladder. Table 1 shows the schedule for the season.

Preseason Training

Weeks 4 to 7 involved preseason training. The students practiced their SE roles, including those of reporter, warm-up officer, scorekeeper and equipment officer, and player. The teachers initially lead the coaching and then, after several sessions, handed over this role to the elected team coaches. The teams practiced game play in half-team groups on small grids marked out on the playground with

Table 1 Season Schedule

Week	Content
1	Teachers observed and assessed ability of students.
2	Further teacher observation and assessment of students; formation of mixed ability teams.
3	Meeting with all Year-5 students to explain and discuss SE. Students informed of teams and encouraged to discuss and agree on a team name. Introduction of portfolios and team display boards.
4 – 6	Preseason training (teacher lead). Students encouraged to practice the roles of reporter, warm-up officer, scorekeeper, and equipment officer while also being an active, playing member of the team.
7–9	Continuation of preseason training. The student coach of each team now leads the sessions. Play 3 vs. 3 within teams.
10–13	Round-robin formal competition (5 vs. 5). Team t-shirts designed and printed.
14–15	Sessions cancelled because of bad weather. Time spent concentrating on team display board and portfolio.
16	Festival Day. All teams played one match (5 vs. 5) to decide their finishing position. Medals awarded to all students, and the winning team, most improved team, and most improved performer.

the objective that every team member would get an opportunity to practice playing, umpiring, advising and evaluating team performance, and scoring the game. Students were also taught to understand the rules of play and the consequences should they be broken.

Formal Competition

Formal competition took place during Weeks 10 to 13. All teams competed in a round-robin format with the teachers devising the schedule. The games were based on five versus five, allowing teams to substitute players from their playing squad with extra team members keeping match reports and encouraging their team. Several outdoor sessions had to be canceled because of bad weather. Although the students did not go outdoors in such conditions, they were able to work on their portfolios in the classroom. Consequently the SE season was extended to 16 weeks.

Festival Day

Festival Day was in the final week and provided teams with an opportunity to play in front of spectators that included family and friends. During Weeks 10–13, teams played each other, and on the basis of results of the matches, teams were allocated to one of two leagues in a ladder system. The team that finished on top at this stage was put in League A, the second team in League B, the third team in League A, the fourth team in League B, and so on through Teams 9 and 10. It was done in this fashion so that each league had five teams of mixed levels (i.e., one league was not of a better standard than the other). Each league contained five teams, and in the two leagues each team played the other four teams. Consequently, on Festival Day, the play-offs were among teams placed fifth, fourth, and third in each league. The grand final was in effect between the teams that had finished second and first in each league. At the end of the Festival Day, medals for all participants and “most-improved player” and “most-improved team” were presented. A trophy was presented to the winning team.

Methodology

Student data were collected through interviews with individuals and teams throughout the SE season. Interviews conducted with students and teachers were informal. Students were interviewed by a member of the research team, out of class time, or were approached while involved in SE on the playground. The location of the interviews was determined by the level of student game-play activity. If the students were predominantly involved in game play during their SE classes, the researchers visited the school at a time when teachers were able to release the students from class. As the weeks progressed and tournament play became the focus of the unit, a member of the research team chose members from each team, making sure they were not engaged in play at the time, and interviewed them individually. Students appeared relaxed and honest during the interviews, eager to share their thoughts and experiences of SE with the research team. The length of the interviews varied between 7–10 min for individual interviews and up to 25 min for team interviews. Questions were developed by the research team and were exploratory in nature. Table 2 contains a list of sample questions developed for the interviews. Multiple coders were used to code the data.

Table 2 Sample Questions for Interviews

Interview context	Sample questions
Individual students (2 during season and postseason)	What do you like about Sport Education? What do you dislike about Sport Education? Is Sport Education similar to or different from your usual physical education class? How would you explain Sport Education to others who do not know what Sport Education is about?
Team (1 during season)	Tell me about Sport Education—what does it involve? What roles do you have in Sport Education? What do you like the most about Sport Education? What do you not like about Sport Education? Tell me about your portfolio. Is there a difference between Sport Education and your usual physical education classes?
Coach (4 during season)	How did you become a coach? What does being a coach involve? What are the qualities of a coach?
Students' notion of 'sport' (24 during season)	When somebody says the word 'sport' to you, what does it mean? Do you watch sport on television? Are you involved in sport? Is the Sport Education class like sport?
Festival Day (2 to 3 individuals from all 10 teams)	What is happening today? What is it all about? What does this day mean to you? How important is your team to you?
Teacher (2 during season)	How did you plan the season? Are you making changes as the week's progress? How are the students coping with Sport Education? Have there been any problems? Do you see a difference in their game playing abilities? Has your approach to teaching changed?
Teacher (1 post season)	What positive and negative impacts have you observed from Sport Education? Would you do anything differently if you were to do another season? What recommendations would you make to other teachers thinking of introducing Sport Education?

The first interviews were conducted in May 2001 in a section of the school allocated for a reading area. The first author conducted interviews with one SE team, four individuals from four different teams who were pursuing the role of coach, and two individuals whom the teachers thought would be interesting to talk to in relation to their experience of SE. The members of the team and the four coaches were interviewed as two separate groups, and the two individual students were each interviewed on their own. The team identified for interview had initially been unhappy at being assigned to their particular team with the boys being noticeably dominant over the girls. The four individuals who had taken on the role of

the coach were identified by the teachers as good examples of the different personalities that SE accommodated through assigning such a role. The two individuals interviewed were a girl who had previously disliked school physical education and a boy who had difficulties interacting with other students. These interviews focused on the SE experience, including students' impressions of SE, their likes and dislikes relating to SE, their views on being part of a team, and whether SE was viewed differently from previous involvement in physical education at school.

Further interviews involved 24 students and focused on what the word *sport* meant to them, their involvement in sport, and whether SE was similar to their notion of sport. These interviews were conducted in the playground on a day of round-robin formal competition in July 2001. The third author chose some members from each team at random, making sure they were not engaged in play at the time, and interviewed them individually. The first author also conducted interviews on the playground during the festival day the following week. Two or three members from each of the 10 SE teams were asked as a group what the festival day meant to them and about their experience of being part of a team. The final set of student interviews, conducted by the first author in the school reading area with three SE teams, including the winning team, was carried out the week after the festival day. The purpose of the interviews at this stage was to allow students to reflect on their SE experience.

The first author interviewed the two classroom teachers involved in overseeing the SE season before the 2001 spring break to assess how SE was progressing, decisions made in delivering SE, and any difficulties or concerns regarding its implementation. One of the two teachers was interviewed again at the completion of the SE unit by the second author to establish the impact of the SE season and to find out how SE's delivery could be improved.

From the interviews, we identified text segments, attached category labels to the segments, and sorted all text segments that related to a specific category or theme. As in the constant-comparative method of analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the data were manually reviewed repeatedly and continually coded as the researchers looked for similarities and differences, groupings, patterns, and items of particular significance (Mason, 1996).

The interview questions were exploratory in nature because SE was implemented with the intention of allowing themes to emerge through the data rather than seeking to determine the extent of particular attributes of SE. Multiple themes did emerge from the data (fun and enjoyment, improvement in game play, and competition), and the strongest theme, team affiliation, is addressed in this article. The notion of team affiliation and related issues that arose from the analysis are presented and examined in the Results and Discussion section, in which we investigate the level of influence that participation in a season of SE had on students' affiliation and the authenticity and meaningfulness of their experiences in physical education.

Results and Discussion

First we report and discuss the SE students' perceptions of their relation to others and investment in a team. Before concluding, three specific examples are given and discussed to illustrate the impact that team affiliation had on one particular team and two individuals. In the following section, comments attributed to

students are preceded by the name of the individual and his or her team. There were 10 teams, with names chosen by the members of each team. The team names are as follows:

Simpson City	The Invaders
South Park United	The Persians
The Cheeky Monkeys	The Rattlesnakes
The Comets	The Smashers
The Daggers	The Thrashers

The team names were a prominent sign of team affiliation throughout the SE season. One of the teachers at Forest Gate commented on the number of teams that had selected a name with an attacking emphasis (i.e., The Rattlesnakes and The Invaders). It was clear that some level of thought and discussion had taken place among the children regarding team names. One teacher reported how members of The Persians had explained to her that, although they were a quiet team, “when we attack our claws come out” (Alison, teacher interview, December 2001).

Relations to Others

It was evident that the students at Forest Gate could see the benefits of having increased interaction time with the same teammates. Ahmed (The Smashers) reported, “I like being in a team since Christmas because . . . you don’t have to keep swapping teams so you get to know them and play with them” (Interview 22, May 2001). John (The Smashers) commented that remaining in the same team had been “quite good because if you swap teams round all the time, then you just wouldn’t get to know how all the other players do it and you wouldn’t be very good at the sport” (Interview 24, May 2001). The notion of getting to know people better in SE than in other sporting opportunities outside of school was illustrated in this conversation with Jacob (The Daggers):

Jacob: I go to the Q_____ football club on Wednesday nights 6–7 and we do some warming up, do some skills, and then have a game. When you’re doing Sport Education you’re working not just on sport, you’re doing portfolios and stuff . . . you’re not on a different team all the time and you can get to know them more.

I: How do you feel about getting to know people more?

Jacob: It feels quite good because you can make more friends.

I: Have you made more friends?

Jacob: Kind of a bit more because I know more about the people in my team. (Interview 22, May 2001)

Students also appreciated the opportunity to get to know students other than their current friends. Sue (The Cheeky Monkeys) commented that working in a team that is not necessarily made up of your friends might let you find out that someone who you thought was “really horrible” is “actually quite nice” (team interview, May 2001). Billy and Leigh, members of The Daggers, commented that the SE teams allow one to get to know other people and make new friends (Interview 23, May 2001, and team interviews, July 2001). John (The Smashers) said,

“It’s [SE] made me get a lot more friends because Isaac is in my team and before this started me and Ahmed didn’t like each other very much but now we’re best friends, just because we’re in the same team.” (Interview 24, May 2001). The impact of friendship within a team is illustrated in the following extract from an interview involving two members of The Cheeky Monkeys:

I: How important is your team to you?

Kevin: It means a lot to me because all my friends are in here, we work great as a team and it’s great fun . . . to be able to trust people, to be friends with people, to know what you’re doing and work as part of a team.

I: What do you think is the best thing about Cheeky Monkey’s team?

Robbie: Most of my friends are in it. We all work great as a team. (Festival day, July 2001)

Grant et al. (1992) found that although some students appreciated having opportunities to interact with others who were not necessarily their friends, other students became frustrated at differences in people’s enthusiasm for participation. This reaction was not apparent at Forest Gate because individuals accommodated less enthusiastic players rather than becoming frustrated with their behavior.

Cooperation among students and the development of interpersonal skills have been reported as important outcomes of participation in a season of SE (Alexander & Luckman, 1998). The teachers at Forest Gate believed that the social skills promoted through SE brought students together as teams. A reported attraction of the SE model has been its effectiveness in catering to girls, less skilled students, and less popular students (Alexander & Luckman; Carlson, 1995a). A member of one team explained how SE involved him more than his previous experiences with sport:

I: How important is your team to you?

David (The Daggers): It’s quite important because when you are just playing football then you don’t feel as if . . . You just get picked; you don’t feel you’re really needed. When you’re in a team you feel like the team needs you. (Festival day, July 2001)

In previous studies improved outcomes for lower skilled students included increased opportunities for participation and high levels of peer support (Alexander, Taggart, & Thorpe, 1996; Carlson, 1995b; Hastie, 1998b). At Forest Gate, teachers commented that students began communicating more with their peers, and, rather than dismissing a team member who could not carry out a particular skill successfully, other team members encouraged them and advised them on how to improve:

They’re talking to each other a lot more. Rather than getting cross with people who can’t do a particular skill and saying, “Well, you’re rubbish” they’re saying, “Well perhaps if you can’t do that then if you move into a particular space,” . . . “Perhaps if you were looking at the ball.” . . . They’ve started talking to each other more and they’ve started to respond well to . . . the encouragement and the advice. . . . I think really they feel happier because they’ve got more to focus on and they have got this role and it’s their team

now and they feel quite protective about it. (Alison, teacher interview, March 2001)

This statement suggests that the students appreciated the responsibilities that they had for members of their team; it is also consistent with what Carlson (1995a) and Hastie (1998a) found. The teachers involved in the SE unit observed an increase in some of the students' confidence when they took on particular roles, such as coach or reporter, that encouraged them to talk with each other and make decisions: "Their ball skills have amazingly improved. . . . They've really thought about what they are doing and they'll sit down and say, 'We're not filling spaces enough' or 'We need to vary the passes.'" (Claire, teacher interview, March 2001)

One teacher attributed an increase in student confidence to teammates encouraging each other rather than to the discreet skill levels of individuals. She noted that students welcomed improvement in their performance and observed an increase in confidence when teachers commented on how well the teams were working. The confidence that students developed through participation in SE was, according to one Forest Gate teacher, evident in subsequent dance lessons. Another Forest Gate teacher reported that two girls who had previously been very shy and reticent before the introduction of SE had since joined the school netball team.

Investing in the Team

We observed an investment in the team and development of a sense of loyalty by students who were members of a team. They did not want to let their team down and expressed a preference for remaining on the same team for the entire season. Carlson and Hastie (1997) believed that the student social-task system in SE could be the major reason for student accomplishment in SE. Working together as a team was a popular response given by students at Forest Gate when speaking about the importance of their team:

I: If somebody said to you, "What do you do in sport education?" how would you explain it to them?

Stuart (The Daggers): You have to work together.

David (The Daggers): We learn how to work together as a team and how to play properly and fairly. (team interviews, July 2001)

In general, students favored working together as a team over winning the end of season festival. At the same time, however, when some individuals were asked about their team, they judged their team's performance on how many matches they had won against other teams:

I: How important is your team to you?

Samira (The Persians): It's very important because if we don't get along with our team then we won't win because we can't work together.

Katie (The Persians): And they'll keep on getting goals so we won't win. (Festival day, July 2001)

Winning is only one aspect that has been reported by students as contributing to the fun of being involved in SE (Carlson & Hastie, 1997).

The teachers commented on only one instance when a student had voiced concern about his involvement in a team. The boy's mother had mentioned to his class teacher that he came home upset over the lack of cooperation that his team was showing toward him. When the teacher, one of the three involved in SE, approached him to ask whether he would like to change teams, he declined and said he would prefer to persevere rather than give up on his team.

A claim sometimes made for SE is that it is an inclusive instructional model (Alexander & Luckman, 1998). One of the Forest Gate teachers reported that the class she taught was mixed ability: some very talented sports students who were not shy to advertise their abilities, some very quiet students who excelled at sport but never told anyone, and others who were not interested in being involved. Being part of a team through SE, however, has not only promoted involvement for those who previously were not interested but also raised others' awareness of quieter students' physical abilities.

Feeling that their participation mattered was important to students. Maxine (The Thrashers) said, "I enjoy the team spirit that's created when you play in a team and I like playing in teams more than individually so I quite like this" (Interview 19, May 2001) and Laura (The Dagers) commented, "It made you feel part of it. It made you feel nice" (team interviews, July 2001).

SE also encouraged the few exceptionally talented sports students to be patient and cooperative with their less able teammates; students attributed losing a match to the team and not to individual performance. Alison (The Invaders) said, "What we used to do was not pass the ball around, we used to run and keep it to ourselves, and we didn't score any goals doing that. When we did pass it around we scored lots of goals" (team interviews, July 2001). It was apparent that for one of the more talented students, predominantly involved in playing competitive tennis at an elite level, the SE season had introduced him to the notion of teamwork.

Although students have been reported to find it difficult to differentiate between SE and physical education (Grant et al., 1992), the Forest Gate students commented that SE encouraged a level of team affiliation that was not evident in school physical education. Sue (The Cheeky Monkeys) said,

Sport Education is much better [than physical education]. Usually in PE we just get in teams for one PE [lesson] but in Sport Education we can work together all the time in the same team so we know each other really well. (team interview, May 2001)

Whereas the advantages of working with others are recognized in the school physical education curriculum (Laws & Fisher, 1999), Siedentop (1994) reported the absence of group or team affiliation from physical education programs. One teacher involved in the SE unit at Forest Gate implied that the persisting groups resulted in students being more focused during the SE season. Students were prepared to invest effort in their team because they were to remain on the same team for a number of months and not change activities or team members on a weekly basis.

Students' feelings of belonging to a team were illustrated through team chants such as "Persians are the best," "Comets rule," and "We are The Smashers, we are mean, we're the best you've ever seen!" Along with the chants, designing team T-shirts and maintaining portfolios and display boards each appeared to enhance the students' investment in their teams. One teacher reported that students were

sketching team logos with captions in their workbooks and that teams put stickers on other teams' display boards stating that they would "never be beaten." Students wanted to wear their T-shirts all the time in the lead-up to Festival Day, and they were still wearing them for physical education classes when we completed this study.

Specific Examples of the Impact of Team Affiliation

The impact of nurturing team affiliation was particularly evident with the team called The Invaders. They were initially unhappy at being allocated to their team and the boys were noticeably dominant over the girls. One of the teachers talked with The Invaders after they had endured a couple of weeks of arguing with each other and reemphasized the philosophy of SE. She explained that if they did not start to work as a team, they would not enjoy the experience, and they were reducing the likelihood of ever winning any games. Consequently, as the weeks passed, the team admitted to watching how other teams were working and, as a result, reassessed their approach to the extent that they were awarded the most improved team and were also the winning team overall in the festival at the end of the SE unit. Team members commented,

Donald: To start we weren't like the other teams.

Rossie: We kept messing about.

I: So what do you think made you change your attitude and think, "We're doing this all wrong"?

Amy: By seeing other teams.

Billy: And their tactics.

Donald: Thinking we have to be better than them to win.

I: So you were watching other teams and seeing what they were doing?

Donald: And using their tactics.

...

Billy: It's fun and we didn't think we would get into the final, I think we're a pretty good team.

Paul: Without the team we wouldn't have won.

Amy: Without some of the players we wouldn't have won. I think Donald and Billy made the team quite good because they always scored the goals.

...

I: If you could choose again would you keep the same team?

All: Yes.

I: Why?

Billy: Because we're a winning team and we're all really good.

Paul: We all work together.

Amy: We connect.

Billy: Better not tell any of the other teams this, but I think we work better as a team than any of the others. (team interviews, July 2001)

The Invaders came to believe that their team worked better together than any other team. They also stated that they would choose to stay in the same team with the same team members.

Grant (1992) suggested that SE had the power to reengage students who had previously disliked physical education and sport and entice them into the arena. Jane (The Thrashers) was a girl who, before the introduction of SE, regularly forgot or refused to bring clothing to school that would allow her to take part in physical education lessons. Her dislike for physical education was evident in her SE team's portfolio, where she had written "My name's Jane. I used to hate games but I don't now." One teacher reported how Jane had gradually introduced herself into SE, from not bringing her uniform in the first couple of weeks to bringing her uniform but not committing herself to being involved in team play, to finally throwing herself wholeheartedly into the sessions. The teacher commented,

The idea of working as a team without somebody in charge and bossing everybody about was a lot more helpful to people like Jane because she is very quiet and she doesn't like to be center stage. . . . For her to take a role in a little group and do things in a different way than she has done before gave her a lot more confidence and by the end of the third week she was showing us how much confidence she did have. . . . She played very well. She was joining [in] and shouting for the ball and doing very well. (Alison, teacher interview, December 2001)

Jane was now the first to be changed and ready to start SE each week. Jane said that she liked working as a team and working with other people. She explained that "We get to know other people in the class that we wouldn't normally play with" (individual interview, May 2001). She added:

I'd say it's [SE] about a game . . . and the children have to coordinate themselves enough to be able to work in a team, to be able to get things organized and we've got to think of things like names for the teams and for the game and it's just fun. (Jane, individual interview, May 2001)

Jane's attraction to being part of a team had never been fulfilled through previous physical education lessons and she was not shy in sharing her understanding of the difference between physical education and SE: "PE is just like jogging around and just doing exercises. Sport education is actually playing proper matches and having fun" (individual interview, May 2001).

Robbie provides an example of a formerly troublesome student who transformed his behavior during the SE season. The teachers viewed Robbie as a demanding member of class. He found it very difficult to stay on task for any length of time and received learning-support assistance on a daily basis. In the beginning weeks of SE Robbie had difficulty focusing on the task at hand and would wander aimlessly around the marked court, play with the hoop that was the goal target, and kick the ball away from the group whenever the opportunity arose. His team, The Cheeky Monkeys, was very patient with him and attempted to include him as much as possible, but his behavior was detrimental to his involvement in the team.

It was not until one of Robbie's teammates decided that he was being too disruptive and should have a "time out" that Robbie appeared to be genuinely upset at being asked to leave the team. Another incident, reported by the teacher, that made a difference in Robbie's behavior during SE was that the team chose Robbie's T-shirt design over some others. During the SE unit Robbie became much more cooperative and at the end of the Festival Day was named the most improved player.

Robbie's classroom teacher reported that, through his involvement in SE, Robbie had become much more settled and attentive to what he was doing in school and less destructive in small-group work in the classroom. The impact extended to Robbie being able to work with more individuals in the classroom and not having to work with a select group of students. Robbie's parents, along with other parents, commented on the positive impact that SE had on students who were previously not keen in taking part in physical education.

Conclusion

Key findings from the SE unit at Forest Gate Primary School support and extend findings from other studies relating to the benefits to students of team affiliation through their participation in a persisting group. SE was reported by the teachers at Forest Gate to be the first opportunity that some students had been given to experience meaningful social activity in sport and physical education.

It was evident that the opportunity to become affiliated with a team was an attractive feature for the students of their SE experience. For a number of possible reasons, including low ability levels and lack of peer support, some children at Forest Gate had previously been denied the chance to experience the benefits of team membership from both a social and a performance point of view (e.g., Robbie and Jane). There was an obvious investment made by the Year-5 Forest Gate students in relation to their sense of identity and involvement as members of a group.

Pupils at Forest Gate supported the notion that extended time was necessary for groups to get to know one another and work through difficulties. SE contrasted with their prior experiences of physical education, in which such extended situations had been absent. Opportunities for other students to benefit from the development of team affiliation, as the other students in this study have intimated, are clearly hampered under the current model for curricular design in the majority of school physical education programs in the UK, at both the primary and secondary levels.

The cultivation of new friendships was clearly apparent in many teams. Prior perceptions of others held by some pupils were clearly reshaped, and, in the majority of cases, these perceptions became more positive as a consequence of their regular assembly.

There was also evidence that the value of team affiliation was such that teams were reluctant to change team makeup, choosing to work through their difficulties rather than give up. Consequently, a sense of loyalty to the team emerged. Different levels of team affiliation were clearly visible and distinguishable in class. More positive behavior of some teams appeared to motivate other teams who were not as cohesive to strive to attain a similar level of affiliation. Pupils recognized that working as a team was beneficial and that maintaining unrest within teams was detrimental to the task in hand (The Invaders).

It is evident that SE, through the promotion of team affiliation and in combination with other elements such as formal competitions and festivity, was a successful alternative for students who had not been interested in the more traditional physical education program offered at school. Choosing a team name, working on portfolios and display boards, choosing roles and team chants, and designing team T-shirts were all events that fostered team affiliation. There is little doubt that the SE season at Forest Gate resulted in students experiencing authenticity and relevance in their involvement.

There was evidence to support Berierter's (1990) notion of an "intentional learning module," in which students were motivated to learn because they appreciated why their participation was significant and important to their team and to themselves. Further work exploring the effects of SE in the lives of young people (outside of school) is needed. Does SE offer students an authentic and meaningful experience in and through school physical education that is transferable to their involvement in sport outside of school? The potential of SE to promote intrinsic, in favor of extrinsic, aspects of sport is evident from the data presented and discussed. Such promotion could increase the extent to which transfer of learning between school and sport is possible. Without longitudinal work, however, it is impossible to state the extent to which SE has equipped the students at Forest Gate with "experiences that have lifelong meaning and value" (Penney, Clarke, & Kinchin, 2002, p. 56).

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