

Excellent Teaching of Sport and Physical Education History Demands Interpretive Criteria

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Sociologists have made the case for the argument that society is becoming ever more complex with steadily increasing role differentiation. It has become obvious, also, through both historical and social research that sport has steadily become a more powerful social force or influence. Whereas earlier it might have been said that sport was governed and guided by a variety of social influences, it can now be argued in return that sport itself wields a strong influence on many aspects of society. It is for these reasons that the teaching of sport and physical education history should itself become more complex and sophisticated than it may have been to this point. Our teaching of sport history, for example, cannot be a mere chronological narrative if we hope that such a course experience will be truly educational and effective. "History that is a mere stringing together of events is essentially meaningless (Willcox, 1961, p. 63). "There is no history without meaning" (Kahler, 1964, p. 18). Proceeding from these premises, it is recommended here that those working in the area of sport and physical education history should be relating both directly and indirectly to the related disciplines of sociology, anthropology, social psychology, and philosophy. Additionally, it has been found that a tri-partite approach to the teaching of sport and physical education history serves to give meaning to the course experience and provides an interpretive criterion that offers an additional "life competency" to those who take part in the program. Through these means the student gets the benefit of the chronological historical narrative, views slides depicting societal, educational, and sporting and exercise patterns of life in the various cultures; and examines history "longitudinally" or "vertically" by delineating the persistent, recurring problems that have emerged throughout recorded history in sufficient quantity for reasonably intelligent qualitative analysis. These so-called persistent problems are divided into two categories as follows: social forces or influences (e.g., the influence of the type of political state); and professional concerns (e.g., amateurism, semiprofessionalism, and professionalism). Finally, no matter which of a number of historical theories or approaches is employed, such a comprehensive approach as is recommended above ensures that the course experience in sport and physical education history is a truly valuable aspect of a university curriculum.