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## **The Impact of 40 Years of Academic Discipline Development on Physical Education**

Almost 40 years ago, Franklin Henry, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, wrote an article that discussed the need to develop what he called "the discipline of physical education," a shift in focus from teaching applied methods to the academic, scholarly knowledge that should support the field in a university setting. While different nations had organizations devoted to expanding the knowledge base of the field, most national and international bodies that focused on developing and expanding the scholarly "body of knowledge" of physical education began appearing in the 1960s and 1970s. While there is no question that major gains in knowledge were long-term outcomes of the disciplines movement, there is still controversy concerning the eventual and future impact upon physical education itself.

The question that a frustrated physical educator asks is, "Where did physical education lose itself?" Today no one trains for physical education beyond an undergraduate degree. Usually graduate education is preparation for conducting research. In other fields, research is meant to increase knowledge and expertise in the teaching field. In sport science, much of the research today has little or nothing to do with the teaching field. This concern leads to another concern that is rarely addressed in the field: A professor cannot gain promotion or tenure in a "serious" [research] university, unless they do specialized research. Research universities in the United States have seen serious criticism of their

declining emphasis upon actual teaching, as the focus is on outside-funded, highly specialized research. This results in a field losing its focus regarding its core missions.

For many universities, physical education no longer exists. Teacher education is disappearing from higher-level American universities, based upon the idea (shared by many members of the discipline) that it is not sufficiently scholarly to be part of a research university. The programs that replaced physical education are in large part changing their focus to medical concerns that are not necessarily related to movement in the sport and exercise setting. They are more likely to do medical research than sport- or physical education-related research. If teacher education is offered only in the second and third tier of universities (the current trend in the United States), because teacher education "isn't scholarly," that sends a strong message that education itself is not a worthy focus of universities. Teaching becomes "unimportant."

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