

The Reconfiguration of the Physical Activity Field in Australian Higher Education, 1970 - 1986

David Kirk

I remember Bert Willee ... when he sat in on interviews (in 1972, to appoint staff to the then new Footscray Institute) ... and he always used to ask "What do you classify yourself as?", "What is your profession?". If they didn't say "Physical educator" that was it for Bert. They were out of there ... I believe now that the 'physical educators' that I meet, a lot of them want to be known as Exercise Physiologists or Biomechanists or Neurophysiologists or Sport Sociologists or Sport Philosophers ... and rarely do I meet a Physical Educator these days who is under fifty.¹

Writing in the September 1972 edition of the *Australian Journal of Physical Education*, the Editor Dr Bert Willee, Head of the Department of Physical Education at the University of Melbourne, claimed that physical education was on the verge of an era of 'exciting development'. Willee commented at some length on the dangers and benefits of following the American and British preferences for varying degrees of specialisation in undergraduate and postgraduate work. He reminded those who may be given the task of creating new courses in the decade ahead to bear in mind that while the circumstances of individual institutions must be taken into account, 'physical educators have in common a belief in the educational values of properly organised and conducted physical activity, a common interest in knowing more about human movement and a desire for more widespread understanding of physical education'.²

Willee's prediction that change was imminent for physical education proved to be correct. However, his hope that a common set of beliefs and interests might hold physical educators together as a professional group through these changes failed to be realised. The beliefs and shared interests that constructed and constituted the identities of the emerging physical education profession in Australia after the Second World War were ill-suited to the new circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s. While

many physical educators at the end of the 1960s could see that change was imminent, few could have realised the extent to which the field would be reconfigured. Ironically, many physical educators of the 'old school', who would have enthusiastically endorsed Willie's sentiments regarding the 'educational values of properly organised physical activity', unwittingly aided and abetted their undermining, marginalisation and in some cases, their demise.

Once the exclusive domain of teacher education, the study of physical activity in Australian higher education institutions was, between 1970 and 1986, reconstructed as a discipline-based field concerned with human movement, sport, exercise and leisure.³ Nineteen seventy was the year in which Australian universities were no longer permitted to offer sub-degree courses, a policy change that had a significant impact on the physical activity field. Nineteen eighty-six was the year prior to the introduction of sweeping changes to the Australian higher education system introduced by Labor Minister John Dawkins, changes that again had a major impact on the physical activity field. During this period between 1970 and 1986, the sole professional focus on preparation for teaching gave way to emerging professional opportunities in the sport, exercise and leisure industries and in some therapies.

As Goodson and other curriculum historians have shown, the curricula of educational institutions are in constant and dynamic processes of contestation and reconstruction, and programs, courses and subjects that fail to re-invent themselves in the face of new circumstances are liable to decline or to disappear.⁴ Curriculum history embraces a diverse range of studies that can be identified broadly by their use of historical methods to investigate the processes of selecting, organizing and distributing knowledge through educational institutions. They can also be identified by an emphasis on the socially contested nature of these processes, and by a concern to illuminate the deep, sedimented structures of contemporary conflict by locating struggles temporally. Studies that have been identified by the label curriculum history have tended to focus on the emergence and decline of school subjects, or on the etymology of terms associated with schooling such as curriculum, class, and instruction.

The physical activity field in schools and higher education institutions has not been immune to processes of contestation and change. Indeed, there is evidence from studies of school physical education to suggest that this subject has undergone dramatic shifts in form and substance in

the course of the twentieth century.⁵ Nor are these events unique to the physical activity field in Australian schools. In the United States, for example, Lawson has argued that specialisation and fragmentation seem to be built in to the process of reconstructing physical education in higher education.⁶ Newell has claimed that it is 'clear that the disciplinary shift in physical education in higher education has undermined to some degree the training of teachers of physical education rather than enhanced their skills and status'.⁷

One of the important contributions to understanding educational change, made by Goodson, has been the attempt to name the 'dominant' but abstract or faceless groups in society that the early 'new directions' sociology of education argued persuasively were responsible for constructing school knowledge. Goodson's identification of subject communities comprising coalitions of rival interest groups provided an important step forward in terms of understanding how change works in the present.⁸ If the curriculum is made by flesh-and-blood people acting in coalitions motivated by particular beliefs and values, and if contestation between groups and individuals is a central feature of curriculum change, then the possibility appeared that strategies might be developed to make more incisive interventions in change processes.

In this paper and following Goodson's lead, an analysis is provided of emergent forms of the physical activity field from the end of the 1960s until the mid 1980s, just prior to the implementation of the Dawkins reforms of Australian higher education. The intention is to show that changes in this field were contested, involving contestation between and within institutions. In the process of reconfiguring the physical activity field, individuals and groups drew more or less effectively on the discursive resources available to them in attempts to ensure survival within their institutions. As new configurations began to emerge, so the professional identities of workers in the field begin to change. By 1986, there no longer existed a physical education profession as Willee and Lansley had known it, with a core concern for the educational values of physical activity.

The analysis begins by examining the 1968 Report of the Durrans Committee on the future of physical education in Queensland higher education. This Report provides a marker of how the field had developed to that point and how Durrans and her colleagues imagined the field would develop during the 1970s and 1980s. Then, following Goodson, an

attempt is made to put some names to the change agents within the field by drawing on interviews conducted towards the end of 1994 with over forty leaders in the physical activity field in Australian higher education. Evidence from the interviews is used to identify some of the key contested issues in the reconfiguration of the field during the 1970s and early 1980s.⁹ The paper concludes with the presentation of a model that attempts to conceptualise these contested developments and to suggest that future research might utilise this model as a basis for studies of the shifting forms of knowledge and professional identities in the physical activity field.

Back to the Future: The Durrans Report on Physical Education Teacher Education in Queensland

The Martin Report, published in 1966, proposed that Australian universities should cease to offer 'sub-degree' courses by the 1970-1972 triennium, and that the course of training for primary school teachers should be increased in length from two to three years.¹⁰ In response to these proposals, the Queensland Branch of the Australian Physical Education Association (APEA) formed a committee led by Nan Durrans, at the time a Senior Lecturer in Physical Education at Kelvin Grove Teachers' College in Brisbane, and three senior teachers, G. Dempster, B. Roberts and R. Sellars. The Committee's remit was to look into possibilities for the future preparation of physical education teachers in Queensland.

This APEA Report, 'The Training of Teachers of Physical Education in Queensland', is important because it provides evidence of the existing forms of the physical activity field in Queensland higher education and information on how these compared with national and international trends.¹¹ It also provides information on what the Durrans Committee believed physical education in higher education to consist of and on some of the problems and difficulties facing physical education at that time. Their projections of the future needs of physical education teachers are also of importance given the quite substantial changes to the structure and organisation of higher education courses that were to take place within less than a decade of the publication of the Report.

The Committee considered the professional preparation of teachers of physical education across five categories: primary school generalists, primary and secondary schools specialists, state education department advisers and tertiary staff in teachers' colleges and 'the' university (there was only one university in Queensland at this time). They acknowledged

their inability within the terms of reference of their investigation to consider the needs of teachers of physical education in three other categories: recreational leaders, specialised coaches and remedial teachers dealing with special physical education. The Committee felt that the needs of teachers in these latter three categories, like the other five, could be met through specialisation at some stage in the courses they recommended. However, such specialisation must always take place within the framework of teacher education: 'Physical Education is part of education and must never be divorced from general educational training'.¹² This statement is an instance of the prevailing view of physical education at this time, and it is this location of education and teaching as the core business of professionals in the field that was to be displaced in future practice.

The Committee's list of the problems facing physical education in Queensland in 1967 suggested that there was a shortage of staff with specialist qualifications in physical education, particularly among women. In Britain and the USA, there was a strong tradition of training women teachers in private colleges.¹³ This had led to the development of quite different forms of physical education for girls and boys in these countries. However, there was no comparable tradition of training women teachers in Australia. The shortage of women teachers identified by the Durrans Committee had important implications for the gender appropriateness of physical education offered to girls. The Committee also pointed to inadequate facilities and equipment in schools and in the tertiary institutions, the marked absence of indoor facilities such as gymnasias also having important implications for the kinds of activities offered in schools.

Problems in the structure and content of teacher education courses were the Committee's main concern, however. In order to gain specialist physical education qualifications in Queensland in 1967, the pathway was unreasonably onerous by today's standards. Entry was through a two year course in primary school generalist teacher training at a Teachers' College, supplemented by three years of part-time evening study at the University of Queensland leading to the Diploma of Physical Education. It was possible to continue on to complete a BA or B.Ed., though this seems to have been uncommon given the burden of further part-time study or inaccessibility due to teaching placement.

The Committee's proposal for specialist teachers was to rationalise

this process so that students were required to complete only one year at Teachers' College before being selected for a further two full-time years of study towards a Diploma of Physical Education. Extension scholarships were made available to exceptional individuals to enable them to complete a further full-time year and gain a B.Ed. degree. The controversial part of this proposal was that while the course would be taught jointly by the College and the University, the Teachers' College would offer the Diploma, rather than the University. In an appendix to the Report, the Committee suggested how responsibilities might be divided between the College and the University, with the former concerned with some content and teaching method, while the latter would be concerned with content and with theoretical subjects such as anatomy and physiology in particular. The University was also given the role of research training.

Of particular importance is the Durrans Committee's view of the substance of physical education teacher training, since these provide an insight into the prevailing definition of the field. This definition was set out for each of the five categories under the same three headings: 'job analysis', 'practical needs' and 'theoretical needs'. For the school teaching categories, the job analysis reveals that physical education is a field of practical physical activity with the only non-physical lessons being confined to health and hygiene. The major categories of activities reflect a multi-activity program: swimming, major games, athletics, dance (various forms), gymnastics, calisthenics, minor games and camping. The training required to deliver programs based on this version of the field involved varying degrees of participation in physical activity and teaching practice, and a range of biophysical, sociocultural and educational subjects.

The Committee's remit was to say 'what kind of teachers will be responsible for Physical Education teaching in Queensland schools during the next ten to fifteen years?' Despite this future agenda and the controversial claim that the Teachers' College should award the Diploma, this was on the whole a relatively conservative and cautious Report. The proposed pathway to specialist qualifications rationalised and streamlined existing arrangements, while the version of school physical education on which this teacher training was based embodied the multi-activity program, with competitive team games at its heart, that appeared in the immediate post Second World War period.¹⁴ Instead of anticipating change, the Report crystallised the orthodox version of physical education that by the end of the 1960s was, in concept if not in fact, a quarter of a century old. This gap between advocacy and practice is important to note

since it is unlikely this multi-activity, games-based form of physical education was practiced widely due to problems the Committee itself noted, such as a shortage of teachers, poor facilities and low status in the education system. These problems clearly persisted into the 1960s and for some years to come, despite the rapid growth of physical education personnel in state Education Departments after the war.

Throughout the Report, there was a clear concern for higher level qualifications to be accessible to physical education teachers, though the undergraduate degree rightly was the key concern of this Report since this opened up access to masters and doctoral level qualifications. Though the Committee had little sense of what the possessors of these qualifications would do with them beyond lecturing in colleges and universities, the push for higher credentials reflected a perennial worry among physical educators about their lowly educational status. In the context of the Martin Report, this preoccupation with status and acceptance as a field of study worthy of a place in higher education institutions was entirely justified. However, due to its backward looking conservatism, the Committee's definition of higher education study as preparation for teaching a physical activity based school subject was already out of touch with emerging trends. By the early 1970s, courses were already in place that offered a radical challenge to physical education as it was understood by the Durrans Committee. In the process, this dominant definition of the physical activity field in higher education as 'part of general educational training', was about to lose its pre-eminence.

The Degree Decades and the Reconfiguration of the Physical Activity Field

The 1970s and 1980s can be characterised as the 'degree decades', as the two decades in which degree programs in the physical activity field became widely available and firmly established in higher education institutions. According to the Durrans Report, by 1968 it was possible to complete a degree with a major in physical education building on the diploma of physical education, at the Universities of Tasmania (BA), Queensland (BA and B.Ed.), Western Australia (B.Ed.), and Sydney (B.Ed.). Physical education units were also available within the BA at the University of Adelaide.¹⁵ Only the University of Melbourne, of the six oldest universities and the first in Australia to offer a specialist physical education diploma in the late 1930s, had no degree option. However, in all cases these programs were underpinned by 'a belief in the educational

values of properly organised and conducted physical activity'.¹⁶

Concomitant with the emergence of the new degree programs, there was the reconfiguration of various aspects of the older teacher education courses to stand by themselves as general academic degrees, without teaching as a professional outcome. Two of the original six universities played a central part in this development: the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia. Some institutions in the College of Advanced Education sector, formed in the early 1970s, also played a significant role in the creation of discipline-based degrees and degrees with alternative professional foci to physical education teaching.

Establishing the field within the academy: The discipline-based degree and the 1970s

John Bloomfield, who became Australia's first full professor in the physical activity field at the University of Western Australia by the mid-1970s, played a key role in the degree development process. Of particular importance was his ability in the late 1960s to draw on the North American 'Oregon Model' of the field. He used this to persuade senior academics at the University of Western Australia that a form of physical education based on the biophysical sciences could become a university field in its own right.¹⁷ Bloomfield claimed that the decision to base the new degree programs in the biological and physical sciences was in part due to his own expertise in the anatomical sciences, and in part due to the institutional power blocks in medical and physical science within the University of Western Australia. He claimed that if he had tried to promote the physical activity field as social science based or continue in a professional form only, he would have failed.¹⁸

Nevertheless, while the University of Western Australia presented the physical activity field in a more scientific light than it had formerly appeared, it retained its connection with teaching through a B.Ed. (Physical Education), revamped and first offered in 1969. Bloomfield characterised the shift in orientation as 'a steady move away from Physical Education per se, which was just a professional training for teaching' towards building 'up a body of knowledge in the Human Movement, Sport Science area'.¹⁹ A three year Bachelor of Physical Education degree, first offered in 1970/1, which was a non-teaching qualification, realised this aspiration. This course proved popular with diploma qualified teachers and teacher educators wishing to upgrade their qualifications.²⁰

The University of Queensland's response to the abolition of its three

year diploma course was strongly influenced by Bloomfield, who was invited by the Vice Chancellor to become an adviser to the University.²¹ Two degree programs were developed as an outcome of Bloomfield's contribution. The first was a three year Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (BHMS) degree, 'a discipline oriented degree for those wishing to study aspects of the art and science of human movement'. The second was a four year Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Education) (BHMS Ed.) degree. This latter program built on the three year degree 'but incorporat(ed) professional preparation studies for teaching'.²² Both degrees were offered through the University's Faculty of Education. In their early form these degree programs attempted to balance the 'science and art' of studies in human movement, although the biophysical science subjects formed just over two thirds of the total number of subjects offered by the Department of Human Movement Studies.

The Universities of Western Australia and Queensland pioneered the discipline-based degree in Australia in the early 1970s. This was a significant development, since its proponents believed that it provided the physical activity field with an opportunity to established itself as an academic field in its own right. Indeed some advocates, particularly those returning to Australia with North American higher degrees in the early 1970s, believed this development to be so significant that it 'was almost sacrilege to talk in those (vocational) terms in 1974'.²³ But it appears that this was not a widespread or at least dominant view at this time. Advocacy for a discipline focus vied with questions about what to do with the professional preparation of teachers, and the desire to take advantage of opportunities to develop new professional pathways.

The Victorian Institute of Colleges institutions such as Preston and Footscray had never had responsibility for teacher education. Despite this, they felt best placed to offer degrees that met new and emerging needs for professional training in the physical activity field, rather than rely solely on the academic merit of the field as the means of justifying their new courses. Footscray Institute in particular signaled clearly from the start that it would not be concerned with teacher education, and it developed an innovative social science-based degree under the leadership of Keith Lansley, whose field of expertise was the philosophy of sport.²⁴ The development of courses with specific professional outcomes, such as courses in recreation, were also available in higher education institutions in other states by the mid 1970s.²⁵ According to Lansley, graduates from

recreation leadership courses went into local government as recreation officers, where job placement arrangements actually stimulated the creation of jobs, into departments of sport and recreation, and into tourism and the health and fitness industry.²⁶

But in the first half of the 1970s, the concern for physical education teacher education was less easy to shrug off than advocates for discipline-based and alternative professional degrees might have wished or imagined. For instance, there remained concerns over the long term viability of departments that did not offer some possibility of physical education teacher education as an outcome. In one case, at the Preston Institute, staff set in place arrangements for their students to complete teacher education qualifications at La Trobe University's education faculty in tandem with or following their discipline-based degree in human movement studies.²⁷ It was only later, in the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s, that there emerged some confidence in the view that the traditional concern with educational issues and preparation for physical education teaching was dispensable.²⁸ On the other hand, few institutions in the early 1980s were prepared to follow the lead of the Universities of Western Australia and Queensland and Footscray and Preston Institutes and offer three year discipline-based degrees. While the concern with teaching as a professional focus receded, professional preparation for other occupations in the physical activity field gained momentum in the early 1980s.

Professional degrees in sport, recreation and exercise: developments in the early 1980s

Outside the higher education institutions, the ongoing commercialisation and professionalisation of sport, recreation and exercise throughout the 1970s began to create employment opportunities for professionals with diploma and degree level qualifications. Government funding for mass participation in sport and recreational physical activity in Australia formally began in 1939 with the establishment of a Commonwealth Coordinating Committee for National Fitness and National Fitness Councils in each state. By the early 1960s most of the National Fitness Councils had become statutory bodies and during the post-war period were very active in facilitating the provision of equipment, facilities and instruction for participation in sport and outdoor recreational activities.²⁹ In the early 1970s, many of the functions of the state Councils were absorbed into the new state departments of sport and recreation, thereby

consolidating the role of government in funding and coordinating sport participation.³⁰ The 1970s marked a period in which both state and federal governments began to seek a more active role in steering the course of sport development in Australia. The media proclaimed disaster of the Montreal Olympics in which the Australian team failed to win a single gold medal further promoted the willingness of government to provide funds for elite sport. Meanwhile on the back of a 'new health consciousness' among the middle classes of the wealthy western nations, a 'fitness industry' began to emerge during the 1970s as the public were persuaded to pay for the services of fitness leaders and instructors.³¹

Each of these developments created some new employment opportunities in the fields of sport, recreation and exercise, and seemed to promise that there would be increasing employment opportunities for degree qualified graduates.³² By the early 1980s, higher education institutions had begun to respond to, and in some cases to lead, these developments. The consequent shift away from teacher preparation to focus on professional training for recreation, exercise and sports coaching brought into sharper focus the relationships between discipline-based degree courses, teacher preparation degrees, and degrees that provided professional training in other aspects of the physical activity field. The development of courses at what was to become the School of Sport and Leisure Studies at the University of New South Wales provides an illustrative example. According to a former and long serving Head of School, a problem with both teacher education courses and the general discipline-based degrees was that they could not provide students with the specific skills required by the emerging leisure and exercise industries. He commented that:

One of the major motivations was that people in the profession were screaming blue murder that those students who had general teacher education qualifications or those who just had the general sort of discipline background in fact were of no use to them. [so] very quickly we moved [from associate diplomas] to degree programs ... the degree became a Bachelor of Sport Science with a major in exercise science or a major in coaching, and a Bachelor of Leisure Studies.³³

The aim of these responses to the perceived needs of an emerging professional community was:

to develop programs with three specific aims. One was to

develop professionals in the exercise science area who would service the fitness industry which at that point of time was blossoming ... that coach education had reached a very significant point in relation to Australian sport, so our second aim was to provide coaches with tertiary qualifications .. and the third was to provide recreational leadership people.³⁴

Another example of the attempt to clarify the relationship between discipline-based, teacher preparation and other professional courses was the Canberra College of Advanced Education, where degree courses in sport coaching, sport journalism and sport administration emerged in the early 1980s. In the case of the sport coaching degree, the tension was not easily resolved.

[The degree] very quickly became sport coaching/ sports science ... the coaching aspect of (the degree) .. got played down and it wasn't until the end of the eighties that the program got three units of coaching in it, first, second and third year .. we argued very strenuously that if we were going to have a coaching degree it would need a hell of a lot more coaching in it. So it never really came to the sports scientists' minds that the coaching degree had to be remarkably different (from other discipline-based HMS degrees). I think the intention was there but I don't think they could find any models as to how you would do it appropriately.³⁵

The Canberra sports coaching degree also provides an insight into what had been happening to physical education teacher education during the early 1980s, as this process of establishing the physical activity field in the academy and the growth of professionally oriented courses unfolded. Within the sport coaching degree at Canberra, sports science knowledge drawing on the biophysical sub-disciplines of the field was placed in the foreground. Meanwhile the professional pedagogical knowledge central to coaching as a practice was considered only later in the development of the degree, and it continued to take a subsidiary role. Moreover, there was apparently little perceived relationship between the professional knowledge required for coaching and for teaching physical education.

My problem with the coaching degree was that coaching to me was never just about some kind of technical knowledge ... my problem was that if you were doing coaching here you weren't required to do any education units. If you look at

what was going on in Leipzig for example, if you left out the ideology, the compulsory sessions on Marxism and Leninism and if you put to the back of your mind all the allegations about drugs and so on, the really interesting thing was that the construction of their coaching program had a very strong teaching/learning basis. I mean, the whole pedagogical aspect of it was central and we just completely ignored all that and still do.³⁶

By the mid 1980s, professionally-oriented degree courses serving the fields of sport, recreation and leisure and exercise were well established in the College of Advanced Education sector in particular, while there was some consolidation of the discipline-based degrees in a small number of higher education institutions.³⁷ As a hierarchy of status emerged, physical education teaching was by the mid 1980s suffering a double dose of marginality. The example from Canberra suggests that teaching not only had no place within the general discipline-based degree courses. It was also viewed as of little importance to other professionally focused courses such as coaching to which there was ostensibly some clear relevance. At the end of the 1960s education was the core business of the physical activity field in higher education. These developments in the early to mid 1980s represent a dramatic reconfiguration of the field, and so deserve to be examined in a little more detail.

The flight from education within the physical activity field

There are a number of factors that may help explain this flight from education by higher education professionals in the physical activity field, most of whom in the early 1980s had begun their careers with an initial qualification in school physical education teaching. One reason some former physical education departments began to distance themselves from education and teacher professional development was to gain greater control and autonomy over their subject matter. An example is the Department of Physical Education at Ballarat Teachers' College. Following the amalgamation of the Teacher's College with the local Victorian Institute of Colleges institution, the then Head of Department:

Opted to go out of (the Department of) Education at that stage .. my decision was that I felt the B.Ed. did have certain restrictions on the physical education content of such a course, I did not want Education people, and I mean that's apart from physical education people, to become too involved or to

have too much power over the course. I felt that if [the physical education department] got away from education ... it would give ... much more latitude to make decisions with regard to content of physical education, to expand where we wanted, that would be ... quite limited if we stayed within the education faculty ... [at the same time] I didn't want to lose phys ed teaching, I knew we'd always maintain that anyway.³⁸

The option taken by Ballarat was repeated in other former Teachers' Colleges where staff wanted to pursue academic and professional opportunities in the physical activity field beyond teacher education. In some former Teachers' Colleges where physical education staff chose or were required to remain in education faculties, such options could not be taken up. Geelong Teachers' College was a case in point. After a merger with the local Institute of Technology to form Deakin University in 1978, members of staff on the Geelong campus were unable to follow Ballarat's example, since their location in an education faculty constrained the development of physical activity sub-discipline research. This led, through the 1980s, to an ongoing marginalisation of those staff whose expertise had shifted away from education to the sub-discipline aspects of physical activity, and to an eventual reduction in staff numbers relative to the pre-amalgamation Teachers' College staffing levels.³⁹

At the same time, some of the newer, regionally-based universities, such as Wollongong, and some Colleges of Advanced Education, such as the group based at the State College of Victoria's Burwood campus in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, offered four year B.Ed. degrees. These degrees were extended rather than substantially reconfigured forms of the pre-1970s two and three year Diplomas of Physical Education.⁴⁰ Until the mid 1980s these courses retained a professional focus on teaching. They included a range of biophysical and sociocultural knowledge, though most of the institutions in the College of Advanced Education sector lacked the human and material resources to conduct the highly specialised research developing through the 1970s in, for example, the Universities of Western Australia and Queensland.

Another factor influencing the flight from education and teacher preparation, as was evident in the case of the University of Western Australia, was the need to construct the physical activity field in a form that would be acceptable academically to influential people within the institution. Just how difficult this could be is well illustrated by the case of the University of Melbourne. The University of Melbourne was the

first of the traditional universities to offer a course to prepare teachers of physical education, with the first students graduating from a one year diploma course in 1937. So successful was the course that the Director, Dr Fritz Duras, was able to persuade the University to add a second year in 1938. Until the 1960s, Melbourne remained at the centre of developments in Australian physical education. However the Department of Physical Education was threatened with closure by the early 1970s.⁴¹

In keeping with developments at the Universities of Western Australia and Queensland, the staff developed a new discipline-based Bachelor of Science degree, involving 'major studies in skill acquisition, biomechanics, and exercise physiology', each of which had to be 'justified against criteria put forward by the various science departments'.⁴² The link with teaching physical education was thereby broken. Ironically, this shift from a professional teacher preparation course to scientific, discipline-based studies failed to save the Department. Australia's first Department in the field was closed in 1978 and the staff dispersed to other parts of the University. Echoing recent analyses of department closures in North America, the key issue in the University of Melbourne's case was that status within the institution appeared to be of greater importance than status among peers outside the institution.⁴³

The physical activity field in the Arts or the Sciences?

While physical education teacher preparation seemed to be experiencing double doses of marginality during the period under review, another struggle was emerging over the kinds of discipline knowledge in which the field should be embedded. The anatomical sciences, physiology of exercise, mechanical analyses of movement and motor skill acquisition formed the majority of discipline knowledge in the field of physical education prior to the 1970s, drawing on the disciplines of biology, physics and psychology respectively. With the development of discipline-based degrees, however, an opportunity emerged for institutions to expand the proportion of degrees that drew on the Arts as well as the Sciences. Some institutions, such as the University of Queensland's Department of Human Movement Studies, developed early in the 1970s a degree that included Arts and Social Sciences subjects applied to physical activity. Subjects in these disciplines represented about one third of the degree.⁴⁴ However, while the new discipline-based degree courses that survived into the mid 1980s did not entirely exclude the social sciences of physical activity, all drew heavily on the biological and physical sciences

to legitimate their presence and degree status within their respective institutions.

One exception to this general trend was Footscray Institute where, under Keith Lansley's leadership, the course established in the mid 1970s was an Associate Diploma and soon after a Bachelor of Social Science degree. The course remained social science oriented even when the nomenclature was changed to Applied Science in the late 1970s.⁴⁵ Lansley believed that there was a need for courses that offered alternatives both to teaching as the sole professional orientation and to biophysical science as the predominant form of discipline knowledge. He commented that, at Footscray:

We divided Physical Education into four areas. We have the underpinning philosophy of play, play would permeate all that we did, and play, from the very loose unstructured play right to the very highly structured play ... there was a biological science component, there was a social science component, there was a human movement or activity component, and an applied component, the application of the concepts ... to society or commerce, community, industry'. I believed Australia ... needed a Bachelor of Social Science in Physical Education to offset what I saw as the overwhelming dominance of the Oregon Model.⁴⁶

The Footscray course provided a model for the configuration of discipline knowledge within a physical activity degree course that was social science based, but this lead was taken up by few other institutions before 1986, and such courses remained in the minority throughout the period under study. The opportunity to more fully develop the social sciences of physical activity may have been missed during this period of expansion. Nevertheless, such examples as the Footscray degree demonstrated that there was a body of knowledge beyond the biophysical sciences that could with profit be applied to better understanding physical activity.

The Reconstructed Physical Activity Field by 1986

A key matter to note in concluding this paper is the considerable diversity in developments in the physical activity field in higher education through the 1970s and into the 1980s. There were differences in emphasis and detail, and also considerable unevenness in the rate of change from institution to institution and state to state. These differences can be understood as functions of the culture and history of individual

institutions, of personnel and their particular interests and expertise, state and federal governments' administrative processes, and other local forces. The diversity in developments up until the middle of the 1980s suggests a loosely regulated and rapidly changing field of study in higher education institutions.

By the mid 1980s and on the verge of the next wave of changes that were heralded by the establishment of the Unified National System in 1987, a dominant configuration of the physical activity field was beginning to emerge from within this diversity of developments. This configuration was produced through contestation among players within the field, often within institutions as well as between them, providing evidence to support Goodson's claim that curriculum change occurs through contestation and struggle between vying coalitions and interest groups. The new configuration can be viewed as a series of fault lines along which the emergent physical activity field had begun to take shape. These fault lines can be imagined as three crosscutting and interdependent continua, as discipline-based knowledge versus professional knowledge, as biophysical knowledge versus socio-cultural knowledge, and as practical versus theoretical knowledge. The emergence of new degree courses, and the new forms of knowledge they embodied, can be conceptualised within a three dimensional model of these interdependent factors illustrated by figure one.

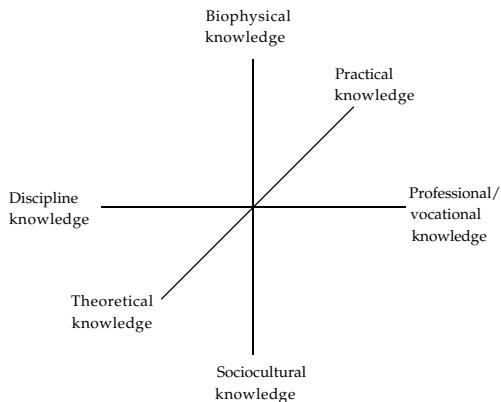


Figure 1: Elements of the physical activity field in Australian higher education.⁴⁷

The polarising of these dimensions of the physical activity field in higher education institutions is intended to demonstrate that the configuration of these dimensions of knowledge is the outcome of processes of struggle and contestation. Indeed, within the field, these dimensions are often cast as *opposing* poles.⁴⁸ Where individuals and institutions position themselves on any of these continua, regardless of whether this positioning is conscious or reflexive, and the courses that result from their positioning, effectively produce definitions of the field. This framework provides a conceptualisation of the fault lines along which changes in the physical activity field have taken place. The configuration that began to emerge as dominant by the mid 1980s is illustrated by figure two.

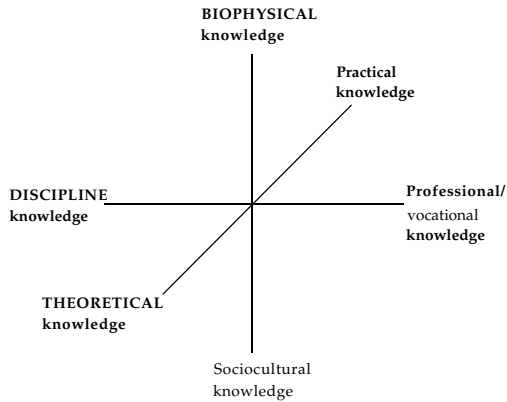


Figure 2: A dominant form of physical activity field in Australian higher education, c. 1986

Figure 2 is intended to represent the dominant configuration of the physical activity field by the mid 1980s, as discipline-based though with some professional elements, predominantly theoretical drawing on both biophysical and socio-cultural knowledge, though usually with biophysical knowledge in the foreground. This development contrasts with the form of the field that had been pre-eminent until this time and that continued to exist for a while in Colleges of Advanced Education that had incorporated Teachers' Colleges. This form was professionally oriented towards teaching not only, though predominantly, in schools,

predominantly practical, and with a predominantly biophysical knowledge base.

This conceptualisation is a means of marking the shifts that had taken place over the period under study, from the late 1960s until the mid 1980s, and is not intended to represent the configuration of the field in any single institution's or group of institutions' degree courses or staffing structures. It does however make possible an assessment of the ways in which the field has been reconfigured during this period and to map emergent forms over time. By identifying the dominant form of the field by 1986 as mainly discipline-based, theoretical and BIOPHYSICAL/ sociocultural, it may be possible to better understand more recent developments that have taken place since the Dawkins legislation of 1987. It may also be possible to better understand the ongoing struggles over the configurations of knowledge in the field that continue to be reported in the scholarly literature.⁴⁹ The model of interacting and interdependent continua presented in figure one may provide the basis for further empirical research on the social construction of the physical activity field in higher education and in schools.

The primary concern in this paper has been the shifting forms of the physical activity field in higher education. However, it is important that sight is not lost of the fact that these shifts in the configuration of knowledge also registered at the level of the professional identities of workers in the field. The statement by Keith Lansley that opened this paper provided an insight into the shift in professional identity that took place during this period. The earlier form of identity centred on a concern for the educational mission of the physical activity field. Towards the end of this period, professional identity is increasingly focused on a set of broader concerns for the science and art of human movement. Within this more recent form of identity the educational mission is only one, some would argue peripheral, part. The key argument of this paper has been that this shift in the identities of workers in this field can be viewed as evidence of struggles by members of vying coalitions to secure a place for their field and for themselves in the academy and workplace.

Notes

- 1 Interview with Keith Lansley, 14 October 1994.
- 2 *Australian Journal of Physical Education (AJPE)*, September 1972.
- 3 Throughout this discussion 'physical activity field' is used as a neutral term for the field of knowledge in higher education that allows it to be marked off from other fields and to identify particular social constructions of the field rather than using any

of these constructions in themselves and in so doing privileging that construction (eg. 'physical education', 'human movement studies').

- 4 I. F. Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change*. Falmer, Lewes, 1987; T. Seddon, 'Curriculum history: a map of key issues', *Curriculum Perspectives* Vol. 9, No. 4, 1989, pp. 1-16; P.W. Musgrave, 'Curriculum history: Past, present and future', *History of Education Review* Vol. 17, No. 2, 1988, pp. 1-13.
- 5 eg. D. Kirk, *Schooling Bodies: school practice and public discourse, 1880-1950*, Leicester University Press, London, 1998.
- 6 H. A. Lawson, 'Specialisation and fragmentation among faculty as endemic features of academic life', *Quest*, Vol. 43, 1991, pp. 280-295.
- 7 K. Newell, 'Physical education in higher education: chaos out of order', *Quest* Vol. 42, 1990, pp. 227-242.
- 8 Goodson, *School Subjects and Curriculum Change*.
- 9 The paper draws on data from a larger study of the emergence of the sport and exercise professions in Australia from 1970 to the present. All participants were provided with the opportunity to edit a verbatim transcript of their interview. Each participant provided written permission for use of the text of their edited transcript in conference papers and journal publications. The authenticity of the evidence was determined by comparing interview with interview and interview with documentary evidence. At the same time, the author takes sole responsibility for the interpretations of the extracts from interviews included in this paper. The author wishes to thank most sincerely everyone who participated in this study. All interviews were conducted by the author, unless otherwise stated.
- 10 *Third Report of the Australian Universities Commission*, August 1966, p.48, Section 2.73, the 'Martin Report'.
- 11 Australian Physical Education Association, Queensland Branch, 'The Training of Teachers of Physical Education in Queensland', Presented to the Seventh Biennial Conference, 17-24 January 1968, University of Melbourne.
- 12 'The Training of Teachers of Physical Education in Queensland', p.19.
- 13 J. Wright, 'Mapping the discourses of physical education: articulating a female tradition', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 28. No. 3, 1996, pp.331-352.
- 14 D. Kirk, and K. Twigg, 'Civilising Australian bodies: the games ethic and sport in Victorian government schools, 1904-1945', *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 11, no. 2, 1995, pp.3-34.
- 15 I. Moutray, 'The development of physical education in the Australian Universities'. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of NSW, 1973, pp.221 -231.
- 16 *AJPE*, September 1972, p.49.
- 17 The 'Oregon Model' presented the physical activity field as a multi-disciplinary field consisting of a number of 'sub-disciplines' that were specialised derivatives of other 'parent' disciplines, their common characteristic being their focus on physical activity or human movement. This model was developed at the University of Oregon. F. M. Henry, 'Physical education - an academic discipline' *Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*. Vol. 35, 1964, pp. 32-33&69, is generally considered to be one of the earliest attempts to theorise this development.
- 18 Interview with John Bloomfield, 8 November 1994. (This interview was carried out by Richard Tinning.) Interview with Ian Jobling, 30 August 1994.
- 19 Bloomfield interview.
- 20 *AJPE*, February-March 1969, p. 38; *AJPE*, October-November 1970, pp.39-40.
- 21 Bloomfield interview.
- 22 Details of the new BHMS and BHMS (Ed.) degrees approved by the Senate of the University of Queensland were reported in *Australian Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AJHPER)*, December 1973, pp.25-27. Jobling interview.
- 23 Interview with Tony Parker, 26 October 1994.

- 24 As one current academic staff member commented, Footscray's 'philosophy was interesting in the fact that it was educating people in physical education, but it didn't make a strong claim that was necessarily preparation for schools', Interview with Terry Seedsman, 20 October 1994.
- 25 Interview with David Lawson, 19 October 1994. By March 1975, the School of Physical Education at the Preston Institute had students in the second year of a three year BAppSc (Human Movement) course and a four year BAppSc (Physical Education), with a full-time staff compliment of six, (*AJHPER*, March 1975, p.38). Earlier, the Western Australian Secondary Teachers' College at Nedlands were reported to be planning to offer an Associate Diploma in Recreation, a Diploma in Applied Science (Recreation) and a Graduate Diploma in Recreation for 1974, (*AJHPER*, December 1973, p.32) while the Claremont Teachers' College was offering an Associate Diploma in Health Education by 1975 (*AJHPER*, June 1975, p.40).
- 26 Lansley interview.
- 27 A former Head of the Department of Physical Education commented that Preston 'took forty-two in the first intake in 1974, all of them into human movement and most of them went on and did the Dip. Ed. (at La Trobe University) afterwards. A few didn't and those few went out and were really pioneers I guess in moving into the health and fitness industry', Interview with Peter Reichenbach, 17 October 1994.
- 28 The University of Western Australia was continuing to graduate slightly more students from its teacher education course than its three year discipline degree by 1976, when there were forty-one B Ed (PE) graduates and thirty-seven BPE graduates. *AJHPER*, June 1976, p.46.
- 29 Kirk, *Schooling Bodies*, pp. 120-125.
- 30 J. W. Deane, The Development of the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation in the State of Victoria, Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1982, p.189.
- 31 R. Crawford, 'Cultural influences on prevention and the emergence of a new health consciousness', in N. Weinstein, (ed.) *Taking care: understanding and encouraging self-protective behaviours*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1987, pp.45-61.
- 32 There is some evidence from the interviews to suggest that this promise was not fully realised in the 1980s. Reasons for the slower than anticipated growth in these fields were, for example, loss of faith among consumers in the fitness industry which was suffering most of the problems of other small business, various crises in government funding that limited spending on sport and recreation, and lower levels of qualification in the fitness and leisure industries that made the degree credentialled graduates too expensive to employ.
- 33 Interview with Wilf Ewens, 13 October 1994.
- 34 Ewens interview.
- 35 Interview with Brian Stoddart, 7 November 1994.
- 36 Stoddart interview.
- 37 For example, the South Australian College of Advanced Education was advertising the following courses in 1985: BA (Performing Arts and Dance); BAppSc (Exercise and Sport Science); B Ed. (Secondary Physical Education); BA, Associate Diploma and Graduate Diploma in Recreation; a Graduate Diploma in Health Studies, and a Graduate Diploma in Outdoor Education. *Australian Council for Health. Physical Education and Recreation National Journal*, September 1985, p.79.
- 38 Interview with Peter Fryar, 17 October 1994.
- 39 D. Kirk, D. Macdonald, and R. Tinning, 'The social construction of pedagogic discourse in physical education teacher education in Australia', *The Curriculum Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1997, pp. 269-96.
- 40 *AJHPER*, March 1975, p.38. Another example was developments at Kelvin Grove

- CAE in Brisbane, Interview with Nan Durrans, 13 October 1994. (interview conducted by Doune Macdonald).
- 41 Interview with Brian Nettleton, 18 October 1994.
 - 42 Interview with Brian Nettleton. The problems physical educators were experiencing in coming to terms with changes in their field were clearly evident at the University of Melbourne. After much vacillation, the University finally announced the offering of its B.Sc. degree in early in 1975. The *AJHPER* reported that 'The major difference ... between the degree and diploma courses is that the degree is not exclusively or inclusively per se a teacher training course as was the diploma course. It is, however, expected that those who elect to proceed to teacher preparation will subsequently be better prepared to teach physical education than the diploma holder'. *AJHPER*, March 1975, p.39.
 - 43 See eg. J. R. Thomas, 'Arizona State University: Prominence within the university is essential; prominence within the academic field is nice', *Quest*, Vol. 50. No. 2. 1998, pp.159-165.
 - 44 *AJHPER*, December 1973, pp.25-27; Jobling interview.
 - 45 According to Keith Lansley, the change to applied science was 'strictly for funding reasons'; Lansley interview.
 - 46 Lansley interview.
 - 47 Adapted from Kirk et al. 'The social construction of pedagogic discourse', p.278.
 - 48 See J. McKay, *No Pain, No Gain. Sport in Australian Culture*, Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1991, pp.129-156 for a discussion of this issue.
 - 49 See for example the special issues of the North American journal *Quest*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 1998 and *Quest*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1990 that feature detailed discussions of struggles over the configuration of the physical activity field in higher education.