ROUTLEDGE FOCUS

THE GAME-CENTRED APPROACH TO SPORT LITERACY

Sixto González-Víllora,
Javier Fernandez-Rio, Eva Guijarro
and Manuel Jacob Sierra-Díaz

ROUTLEDGE Focus

The Game-Centred Approach to Sport Literacy

The Game-Centred Approach (GCA) is the ideal framework for coaches and teachers to develop comprehensive tactical or technical lessons for any game, both in physical education and in extracurricular sport contexts. Learning about the pedagogical models included in this approach has never been easier thanks to this short introductory guide.

The book helps the reader acquire the skills needed to design effective session plans, regardless of the sport that is being taught or coached. It introduces the core concepts underpinning the GCA model, complemented by practical examples of tasks and strategies for each game category and assessment instrument.

This is essential reading for all educators, coaches or sports professionals who wish to improve their teaching or coaching to enhance their students' and players' physical literacy and sport competence. It is also invaluable reading for any student or researcher working in physical education, sport coaching or sport pedagogy.

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Routledge Focus on Sport Pedagogy
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Edited by Shane Pill

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Prologue

The Game-Centred Approach to Sport Literacy provides a comprehensive introduction to the main ideas and practices of this approach to physical education and sport. The authors have sport coaches principally in mind, but their accessible and readable style will make this book a primary resource for all practitioners in the physical education and sport pedagogy field. The first and last chapters act as theoretical bookends to five more chapters that explore the practical application of the Game-Centred Approach in invasion/territory games, net/wall games, striking/fielding games, target games and individual games. In the first chapter the authors explain the main ideas behind the Game-Centred Approach in accessible language, dealing with some of the complex issues in games coaching and teaching in a readable style. The final chapter takes up the issue of hybridization within a Game-Centred Approach, where games teaching and learning is combined with other pedagogical models such as sport education and cooperative learning to create hybrids. The five practical application chapters provide rich details of practices for coaches, carefully explained and illustrated with diagrams where appropriate. The book draws on the most up-to-date research literature in the physical education and sport pedagogy field so readers and users can be assured that best practice is being advocated. Again, the authors deal with great facility often complex research literature and issues such as assessment and fidelity. This book is a good illustration of the advances that have been made with the Game-Centred Approach since the early work of Thorpe, Bunker and Almond at Loughborough University. It will be a key resource for all serious games coaches and teachers.

Professor David Kirk
University of Strathclyde
February 2020

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Series editor foreword

Learning about different pedagogical approaches is covered in many teacher and coach education courses around the world. What has been lacking for many coaches, teachers and pre-service teachers has been a guidebook or the reader's notes. Like Shakespeare, research is often, but not always, written in a language that distances itself from the end user. The ideas are fantastic, the words mesmerizing, but the desire to make them sound fantastic comes at a cost (and is often dressed up in big words). It's no coincidence that Albert Einstein defined genius as "making complex ideas simple and not simple ideas complex." The desire to use bigger words often distances the reader from the idea. I have, all too often, put a book or a paper to one side because I simply can't engage with the ideas because of the writing.

The Game-Centred Approach to Sport Literacy, in contrast, is the reader notes for Game-Centred Approaches (GCAs). The authors have taken well-established ideas – ones that have baffled many a novice user – and provided much-needed help. They haven't dumbed it down. This isn't "an idiot's guide." Instead it is a careful and thorough consideration of both the what and the how of GCAs. In each chapter they help the reader consider the modification process across a number of contexts and pedagogical models. They provide example sessions and ideas and guidance for assessment. In short, they do something that is much needed, that is, a praxis guided to GCAs. I suspect that this is a book I'll be using with my students on a regular basis.

Ash Casey
5 May 2020

1 Building the Game-Centred Approach

A historical overview, implementation and transference

Why is it important to promote sports and physical activities?

Our world's constant evolution and the challenges associated with globalization are present in educational, personal and professional spheres. Nowadays, information and communication technology (ICT) occupies a central place in our lives. These technologies are designed and updated to make our lives easier, although paradoxically, they have led humans to increase sedentary behaviours to an extent that it is considered one of the diseases of the 21st century (Arocha-Rudolfo, 2019). The increase in inactivity has seen a decline of physical activity levels among school-age children and adolescents around the world (Farooq et al., 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) published a comprehensive guideline to help individuals reach the minimum levels of physical activity needed to achieve the associated health benefits:

1 children and young people (5–17 years) should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily;
2 adults (18–64 years) should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly; and
3 elderly people (more than 65 years) should perform at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly.

The promotion of sport and physical activity among youngsters should be encouraged not only in schools, where physical education is the only subject that involves education through the physical, but also in extracurricular activities. A central issue, however, is how to develop effective sport programmes that help young people learn the basic tactical-technical elements whilst simultaneously promoting sport engagement. The way sports are taught (i.e., sport pedagogy) has been shown to be a key element in

increasing students' motivation to practice and maintain sporting activity into adulthood (Martin, 2020), which connects with the concept of physical literacy proposed by Whitehead which implies the "motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain activity throughout the life course" (2010, pp. 11–12).

An historical overview: the traditional approach of teaching sports/games

Traditionally, sports teaching/coaching has been focused on the technical development of skills based on decontextualized and repetitive drill-based methods (Standing & Maulder, 2019). Although these methods can be termed differently depending on the context (e.g., skill-drill-game, direct instruction), the concept of "coach-centred" approach will be used throughout this book.

The coach-centred approach was defined by Pill (2018, p. 1) as a traditional style of coaching (or teaching), which is "directive, commanding and prescriptive coaching, emphasizing conformity and transmission of information for reproduction." In other words, players do what the instructor tells them to do, and consequently, this approach disempowers players and places instructors at the axis of the teaching-learning process. This approach is based on the belief that learning how to play games properly requires the player to reach a minimum level of competence in performing techniques that are thought to be fundamental to the game before they can play the game itself (Light, 2014a). According to Light (2014b), the teaching-learning process is focused on reducing skill mistakes and mechanically acquiring the correct technique, which is a combination of skills applied for a specific sport. The instructor is considered an expert, both in the sport content and in skills management, because they have to transfer the content and specific techniques using the most efficient and effective way. Although this traditional approach can be viewed slightly differently depending on the experience and expertise of the instructors, Kruzel (1985) proposed that the common factor in different traditional approaches is that athletes are always involved in a coach-directed learning style that provides a progression of activities, normally skill drills, to master certain techniques.

Bunker and Thorpe (1982) were critical of this approach. They considered that traditional methods of teaching sports and games had failed to consider the contextual nature and authenticity of games. Light (2014a) observed that the implementation of these methods both in educational and extracurricular contexts could promote selfishness, egotism, lack of

empathy or compassion for teammates and failure to teach teamwork. In addition, a recent meta-analysis showed that the self-determination index (quantification of motivation) significantly decreased when traditional approaches were implemented (Sierra-Díaz, González-Víllora, Pastor-Vicedo, & López-Sánchez, 2019).

A change in the conception: the athlete/student-centred perspective

Pill (2018, p. 1) defines an athlete-centred coaching approach as "a style of coaching that promotes athlete learning through athlete ownership, responsibility, initiative and awareness, guided by the coach." Over the years, specific terms have been used to designate these pedagogical methodologies focused on the players, which constitute solid action plans (Metzler, 2017) and can be used both in physical education and sport contexts: *curriculum models* (Thorpe & Bunker, 1986; Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995), *instructional models* (Metzler, 2005) or *pedagogical models* (Haerens, Kirk, Cardon, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2011). Throughout this book, following the recommendation of Haerens et al. (2011), the term *pedagogical models* will be used because it reinforces the idea that models can be applied beyond the educational context in extracurricular sport activities or in leisure settings.

Pedagogical models are a consolidated alternative to replace traditional practice, influenced by similar pedagogical tenets based on constructivism. Baker (2016) indicated that *pedagogical models* can be adapted to different contexts, offering inclusive, relevant and contextualized physical activity practices, including consolidated learner-centred frameworks. The inclusion of all players is a pre-requisite for developing physically literate players (Whitehead, 2010).

Historically, the first model created as a response to the exclusive focus on techniques, as well as the lack of motivation among less-skilled players, was *Teaching Games for Understanding* (TGfU; Bunker & Thorpe, 1982). After the publication of the handbook *Rethinking games teaching* (Thorpe, Bunker, & Almond, 1986), the model spread around the world, but it also was adapted to each particular cultural context (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2014). This led to the creation of new models based originally on the TGfU, such as the *Tactical Games Model* in the United States (Mitchell, Oslin, & Griffin, 2003) or *Game Sense* in Australia (den Duyn, 1997). As a result of this emergence, a new term to encompass all those which shared similar features was needed (Forrest, 2014): the Game-Centred Approach (GCA). Figure 1.1 encourages all readers to make the shift from a traditional approach to player-centred pedagogies. This book aims to address this important goal.

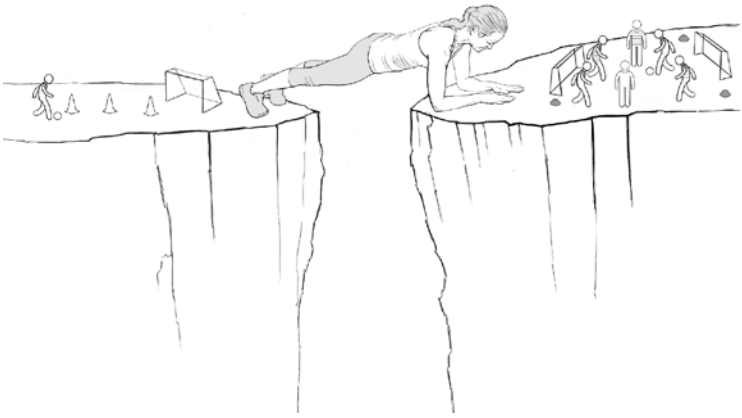

Figure 1.1 Shift from traditional approach to athlete/student-centred pedagogies.

The development of the Game-Centred Approach (GCA)

The GCA (Oslin & Mitchell, 2006) is an umbrella term for pedagogical approaches and models with the game and reflections on game play as the central elements for learning (Forrest, 2014). This approach is also referred as the *Game-Based Approach* (Kinnerk, Harvey, MacDonncha, & Lyons, 2018; Light & Mooney, 2014) to avoid confusion with the abbreviation and concept of the Singaporean *games concept approach*.

According to Light and Mooney (2014), the origin of this concept can be traced back even before the emergence of TGfU to the works of Wade (1967) and Mahlo (1974). However, Bunker and Thorpe's proposal (1982, 1986), and its curricular adaptations around the world, consolidated the need to integrate them all under the umbrella term *GCA* (Forrest, 2014).

Regarding the nature of GCAs, Harvey, Cushion and Sammon (2015) highlighted the implementation of modified games oriented to the development of a specific technique alongside tactical problems as the most important common feature of this approach. Comparatively, Harvey, Cope and Jones (2016) also emphasized the use of questioning strategies to help participants build their own knowledge to reflect the best strategy and technique against a real tactical game problem. Considering both features, Light (2013) stressed that the first step in developing critical thinking is to allow athletes to discover independently the solution to tactical problems