

PEDAGOGY

The Socratic Gymnasium: Learning Lessons of Life Through Physical Education

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Abstract

What constitutes appropriate practice in physical education? NASPE suggests the outcome of a physical education program should be that adolescents have gained the skills and knowledge to be physically active for a lifetime. Furthermore, a physically educated person consistently demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings. The question thus becomes, how do physical education teachers accommodate all of these aspects of appropriate practice into a single unified integrated system that includes equal emphasis on the physical, cognitive, and affective aspects of physical education? My contention is that the answer lies in what I shall refer to as the Socratic gymnasium. The main pillars of the Socratic gymnasium are the combined utilization of a tactical games approach (TGA), sport education (SE), and teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR), all of which are constructivist instructional models.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2014) in regard to *appropriate practice* suggests “the outcome of a developmentally and instructionally appropriate physical education (PE) program is an individual who has the knowledge,

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skills and confidence to become and remain physically active for a lifetime” (p. 3). Also, according to NASPE,

Appropriate instructional practices in physical education are those that recognize children’s development and changing movement abilities, as well as their individual differences. Children’s past motor skill, sport, cognitive and social experiences also are considered in lesson and program design and delivery. (p. 3)

Furthermore, a physically educated person consistently demonstrates responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings. Finally, NASPE suggests, “Appropriate instruction in physical education incorporates the best-known practices, derived from both research and teaching experiences, into a pattern of instruction that maximizes opportunities for learning and success for all children” (p. 3). The expectation is that a person is accountable for responsible behavior and that this responsibility and accountability transfers from the field or gymnasium into the activities of everyday life. To put it another way, it is as important for students to recognize and understand fully the significance of physical activity in maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle as it is for students to achieve competence in a variety of movement activities. I believe that physical educators are uniquely positioned to perform a critical role in transmitting knowledge about physical activity that transcends the moment and that will aid and inform the students as they react to the demands of everyday life.

The question thus becomes, where and how will PE teachers learn to accommodate all of these aspects of appropriate practice into a single unified integrated system that includes equal emphasis on the physical, cognitive, and affective aspects of PE? My contention is that the answer lies in what I shall refer to as the Socratic gymnasium in physical education teacher education (PETE) games education. Thus, in this paper, I will introduce a teaching, curriculum, and assessment model that I implemented in a PETE program following the premise of the student-centered constructivist Socratic dialogue. I will discuss the importance and venue of redefining the purpose of PETE pedagogy from a content and teacher-centered traditional model to a student-centered constructivist model. For this purpose, I will introduce the main pillars of a student-centered constructivist teaching model in PETE games education as well as

a brief lesson and teaching unit in volleyball in which the Socratic teaching dialogue is followed.

Behaviorism to Constructivism

A significant change occurred in the content of PE when the curriculum shifted from an emphasis on gymnastics and exercise to an approach emphasizing sports and games (Swanson & Spears, 1995). As games came to play an increasingly large role in PE programs in the United States, the typical lesson model consisted of first providing explanation or demonstration of a skill, followed by practicing the named skill, and at the conclusion of the PE unit participating in game play. This remains the dominant model for instruction in many PETE and K–12 programs to this day, representing a behaviorist learning theory. Behaviorism has a long custom in PE literature dating back to Siedentop and Rushall's (1972) introduction of a behavioral model for motor skill acquisition. From this point, behaviorism became a frequently used theoretical framework within PE and sport studies (Lee, 1993; Ward & Barrett, 2002). According to behaviorist principles, the teacher's job is to transmit knowledge. As B. F. Skinner, one of the main early proponents of behaviorism, theorized, a job should be broken down into tasks, and students learn best in a linear step-by-step format (Entwistle, 1981). Behaviorism has formed the dominant view of learning for much of the 20th century and continues to have a strong influence in PE (Light, 2008). PE teachers' practice is typically based on assumptions about learning that are deeply embedded in Western culture, and it follows the hypothesis that learning is an explicitly linear and measurable process of internalizing knowledge (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). For the purpose of this article, this model is referred to as the traditional behaviorist approach to teaching games in PE.

Influenced by the original observations of Bunker and Thorpe (1986), throughout the last two decades, PE theorists have begun to question the effectiveness of this model and have suggested that traditional behaviorist teaching methods concentrating only on specific motor responses (techniques) fail to account for the contextual and social nature of games. Games knowledge refers not only to the ability to execute complex motor skills but also to decisions concerning the appropriate use of the skill within the context of the game situation (McPherson & French, 1991). If a volleyball player demonstrates the "ideal form" of serving the ball but cannot react effectively to the set up of the opposition during a game, the goal

of the game will not be achieved. To become skilled in playing a game, the performer must develop the ability to monitor and evaluate the game situation, identify response options, and then select the most appropriate response for a particular situation (McPherson & French, 1991).

In addition, it has also been discussed (Rink, 2010; Stolz & Pill, 2012) that a problem with the traditional approach to teaching games and sport in PE is an overemphasis on the psychomotor domain to the detriment of the cognitive and affective domains of learning. Finally, in the traditional approach skills are taught without social and game context (Kirk, 2010; O'Connor, 2006; Rovegno, 1995), and herein rests one of the most distinctive differences between the traditional and constructivist teaching approaches. Therefore, there has to be an attempt to rebalance the unequal emphasis on the psychomotor domain by developing thinking students and players who are also well versed in the affective aspects of physical activity, such as the process of winning and losing and conflict resolution. The failure of the traditional and the need for a more constructivist approach to teaching games may also have to do with the findings that traditional school PE is viewed as irrelevant or boring for adolescents (Ennis, 1999; McKenzie, Alcaraz, & Sallis, 1994; Rikard & Banville, 2006; Smith & Parr, 2007; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992).

As a response to the above issues, I contend that a logical step would be to implement a more student-centered constructivist model in PE in which students “engage in activities that require higher level of thinking and reflective processes” (Richard & Wallian, 2005, p. 21). Consequently, in a Socratic gymnasium the instruction will be properly aligned with a constructivist and student-centered understanding of the nature of learning and the constructivist and student-centered design for teaching. As Biggs (1996) indicated,

A working version of constructivism can be integrated with instructional design at three crucial points: the curriculum or unit objectives are clearly stated in terms of content specific levels of understanding that imply appropriate performances, the teaching methods require students to be placed in contexts that will likely elicit those performances, and the assessment tasks address those same performances. (p. 361)

With these crucial points in mind, it has been suggested that in all of the main pillars of a Socratic gymnasium—sport education

(SE), teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR), and the tactical games model (TGA), derived from the teaching games for understanding (TGfU) model—constructivist pedagogies are used in which students begin the learning experience with their previous learning experiences intact (Griffin & Butler, 2005; Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; Rovegno & Dolly, 2009)

These methods are situated to encourage student engagement with content intellectually, socially, and kinesthetically through active participation in solving tactical, personal, and technical problems. Students are also encouraged to collaborate with others and to use prior knowledge as they interact with new knowledge to develop more complex understandings about a given topic from an affective, cognitive, and psychomotor perspective (Griffin & Butler, 2005). Furthermore, these curriculum models require students to construct their own knowledge through social interaction with classmates (Rovegno & Dolly, 2009). An active learning process is emphasized in all three approaches, and according to Kirk and Macdonald (1998), this learning is “situated in social and cultural context and is influenced by these contexts” (p. 376). Specifically, Kirk and Macdonald suggested these models are practices in PE in which existing communities of practice are modeled, thereby strengthening their constructivist orientation.

This constructivist student-centered characteristic is the significant common building block of each model that, in combination, shapes the Socratic gymnasium. My contention is that bringing these models together under the aegis of the Socratic gymnasium can produce quality constructivist PE. The combined applications of these models in a Socratic gymnasium produce a safe learning place where teachers and students pose questions that are researched and answered by both in a community of learners. When used in combination, these three approaches have the potential to improve significantly how PE games education is taught in PETE and at K–12 levels.

Several physical educators have already successfully undertaken the difficult task of designing and implementing one or two of these three models in their PE settings. For example, Hastie and Buchanan (2000) combined SE and TPSR in their study of a 26-lesson teaching unit, and they concluded:

To summarise the experience, then, it could be stated that using the goal levels served to improve the performance of

the players in the responsibility aspects of Sport Education. That is, the personal well-being aspects of TPSR served to improve the quality of the Sport Education season. (p. 34)

Hastie and Buchanan considered that the merging of SE and TPSR led to a hybrid model that they entitled “Empowering Sport” (p. 34). Empowering Sport was described as “a sport-based model that foregrounded specific features of both Sport Education and TPSR [in which] the relative contribution of Sport Education and TPSR changed, depending on the stage of the season” (p. 34).

The preliminary indication is a TGA blended with SE and TPSR holds great promise when skillfully implemented in schools or universities. However, in reviewing the literature concerning approaches to teaching that have been inspired by a TGA, SE, or TPSR model, I found no significant initiatives in which the three instructional models were implemented in a unified format in PETE and/or the K–12 PE setting.

The Pillars of a Socratic Gymnasium

The main pillars of the Socratic gymnasium are the combined utilization of TGA, SE, and TPSR, all of which, as established earlier, are student-centered constructivist instructional and curriculum models. Figure 1 shows how the three models are connected with each other through their student-centered constructivist intentions. The main lines of connection highlight their interrelationship and the way in which each contributes to a student-centered PE program in the PETE and possibly K–12 teaching environment. Each model connects in certain aspects with the other, beginning with SE as the curriculum model based on which the teaching units are organized. Connected to SE is the dominant teaching method TGA for instructional delivery, and TPSR is connected to both as the social foundation to develop the proper socially responsible community. All three models connect to developing the Socratic gymnasium through the Socratic dialogue that is represented in each part or step of the teaching–learning process, which will be demonstrated later through examples from my classes. Next, I will describe each of the models briefly, as well as the Socratic gymnasium, the connecting link. Because of space limitations, only a brief introduction to the teaching models can be provided with an emphasis on their most important characteristics toward the purpose of this article.



Figure 1. The pillars and their relationship.

The Curriculum Design Pillar: Sport Education

SE is a curriculum model designed to provide students with enjoyable, authentic experiences that contribute to a students' desire to become and stay physically active later in life (Siedentop, Hastie, & Van Der Mars, 2011). This model is focused on students' development to achieve competence in an activity. Throughout the duration of the season they gain confidence and come to enjoy the activity. The premise is that through enjoyment and success students will be more motivated to continue to learn and improve (Siedentop et al., 2011). Key components of SE are seasons, team affiliations, formal competition, record keeping, and a culminating event. This system allows students to understand the history and the appropriate competitive spirit that is in accordance with each sport. With traditional pedagogy, in which skills are typically taught in isolation, SE loses a significant part of its constructivist nature. Thus, combining SE with TGA is a natural step toward improvement in student learning and empowerment. Through SE, students are empowered to take on a responsibility in the class. Students are carefully selected into teams and then volunteer, or are chosen, for jobs such as coach, trainer, referee, equipment manager, or statistician. Every team member is able

to contribute in various ways, not only on the field of play. Dividing students into roles makes them take ownership of their actions.

The Teaching Pillar: The Tactical Games Approach

TGA is a model that is focused on teaching the tactics and corresponding skills needed for particular sports during game situations. This enables students to become tactically aware during game play and provides them with an opportunity to understand the importance of skill execution (Mitchell, Oslin, & Griffin, 2013). Mitchell et al. (2013) suggested that the main rationales for using the TGA are interest and excitement, knowledge as empowerment, and transfer of understanding and performance. These results of TGA can form the building blocks for students' success. Students' success is also based on the four lesson components of TGA: Initial Game, Question and Answer segment, Practice, and Final Game. In the Initial and Final Game, teachers use "conditions" to emphasize the purpose of the game to correspond to the specific learning objectives of the lesson. Conditions are the rule changes to emphasize on a specific task, resulting in a modified game that represents the main objective of the day's lesson. For example, in the overhead serve lesson, during which the main focus is on teaching the importance of the serve, the condition is that if students are able to hit the ball over the net successfully, they will receive 3 points instead of 1 point.

Community Development Pillar: Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility

SE alone can be motivating for student participation, but when it is combined with TPSR (Hastie & Buchanan, 2000), it also creates a sense of duty among students while they are in class. As noted earlier, Hastie and Buchanan tested the combination of the SE and the TPSR models, which they called "Empowering Sport." The results of this new approach were that "lower skilled students became more competent and showed increase in self-efficacy" (p. 34). Making students responsible for their actions essentially means allowing them to understand that their actions influence the entire class environment (Hellison, 2011). The TPSR model was developed to give students more responsibility, carefully putting them in decision-making positions. This helped students become more aware of the influence they have on their own life as well as on their community. In TPSR, effort and self-direction are critical to achieving a sense of personal well-being. Respecting others' rights, considering others' feelings, and caring about others are essential to achieving a sense

of social well-being. Achieving these outcomes is organized into Levels of Responsibility. The levels represent a continuation from *irresponsibility to responsibility*, moving from respect for oneself to respect and concern for others. These behaviors are first developed within the PE class and then used outside of the gym, in the home, and in community settings. The TSRP levels that were used in the Socratic gymnasium are introduced in Table 1.

The Socratic Method: The Connecting Link

The Socratic method, as used here, is a process of inductive questioning that results in the incremental acquisition of knowledge. The fundamental goal of the Socratic method is to increase understanding through questioning and inquiry (Chesters, 2012). The method of questioning is not limited to any one discipline and can include anything from mathematical equations to questioning oneself regarding one's beliefs (e.g., one's beliefs regarding PE pedagogy). Simply asking an array of questions, however, does not mean a Socratic dialogue is being used. Boghossion (2006) explained,

The presupposition of the Socratic Method is that there is a truth of the matter and that truth can be known through discourse, or, more specifically, through the elenctic process. The elenchus is a systematised question and answer process that is directed by the teacher and depends upon student involvement. Its purpose is to help those engaged in a dialogue discover true propositions through a sustained inquiry. (p. 716)

As used within this context, Socratic dialogue relies on a pre-designed set of questions that are arranged to lead the respondent in a particular direction. Initial questions may be designed to deconstruct previously held beliefs, thereby opening the door for the acquisition of new knowledge concerning the topic at hand. When, because of inductive reasoning led by the constructivist teacher, the student or teacher acknowledges that previously held beliefs and thought are inadequate, the mind gradually opens to new understandings that may have been previously concealed or obscured by traditionally held ideas. To this extent then, Socratic dialogue and reasoning are considered dialectical in nature as each answer leading to a synthesis eventually becomes the new thesis. Each answer builds upon the previous answer until the student logically reaches the goal of the lesson. Obviously, this requires students to think critically as they

Table 1
TPSR Levels

Behavior	Description	All the time	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Self -Control	Student does no harm to others verbally or physically; works well with others; resolves conflicts peacefully if they emerge	4	3	2	1	0
Participation	Student will participate in activity and take on various roles if asked; shows respect; stays on task when teacher is watching	4	3	2	1	0
Effort	Student tries to master every task and focuses on improvement but participates at times with reservation; listens and follows direction	4	3	2	1	0
Self-Direction	Student will stay on task without direct instruction or supervision whether working alone or with others; does not seem to follow bad examples or peer pressure	4	3	2	1	0
Caring	Student will help, encourage others, and offer positive feedback; works with everyone in the class willingly; asks and provides assistance to teacher and other students	4	3	2	1	0

reach higher levels of understanding. Critical thinking skills, therefore, lie at the foundation of the Socratic dialogue in the Socratic gymnasium.

The applicability of this notion of Socratic dialogue to the previous discussion is clear. When students actively participate, the potential for them to remain active and engaged is much higher. Rather than being passive recipients and being fed endless servings of content, the students are engaged in their own learning. Curiosity is aroused, rather than being stifled, and thinking is not only provoked and encouraged, but also demanded. Students actively learn from their classmates as they feed off one another's ideas.

A note of caution should be mentioned before continuing. The goal of Socratic reasoning and questioning is to stimulate critical thought in certain areas, for example, in this context, the importance of teamwork rather than individual accomplishment. The teacher must be careful not to teach by imposing ideas on students. Students must be encouraged to think critically in a logical manner as they incrementally gain knowledge. Consequently, although Socratic questioning can be implemented in the gymnasium or on the field in a number of ways, it is best if the teacher "pre-thinks" the main question and constructs a list of questions that would need to be addressed for the main question to be effectively addressed. Questions should be logically related and flow from one to another. Although the ensuing dialogue may take a number of directions given the differences between students and classes, this list can serve as a general guide to the question–answer sequence. For example, the Question and Answer session in the TGA follows exactly such a "pre-thought" order of questions for the students to understand the technical elements and tactical underpinning of each situation the games present to them.

Not only does this method have a greater potential to excite and actively engage students, it makes teaching more interesting to teachers, providing them with the opportunity to learn from their students in a manner that is not traditionally available to the didactic teacher. Rather than receiving questions that indicate little critical thought from the student, the teacher is asked questions that are the product of critical reasoning and that give rise to answers that themselves raise questions not previously thought of, thus creating situations in which the teacher is the student and the student is the teacher. A genuine community of learning can result, with critical thinking at its foundation. What is key here is the students, and often the teacher, are required to examine their own assumptions critically

as they examine the question at hand, leading them to think about their own beliefs critically.

For example, throughout years of teaching, I have encountered several instances of how questioning has developed a community of learners and how each community represented that “Socrates” was “present” in the models discussed above. In the first phase of an activity unit in SE, captains worked together to “scout” and “build” their individual teams. During the development of the teams, the captains had to discuss and negotiate among each other the proper development of the teams. These negotiations were heated at times because, even though these were PE majors, therefore adults, they at times exhibited immature, overly competitive behavior. In such time, the teacher needed to step in and question the students’ negotiating behavior. However, true to the Socratic dialogue, these questions were not instructions as to “how they should conduct themselves,” but questions regarding their belief about the role and virtues of being a captain. The questions were directed toward their sense of leadership and proper use of knowledge in executing difficult decisions. Making important decisions that resulted in the development of equal and competitive teams gave each team in the classes a sense of community even before the season started.

In addition, although questioning and reasoning may take time away from the activity, its power lies in that the most relevant answer was discovered as a result of constructive dialogue, hopefully removing the need to revisit it. This means that once students understood the reasons behind a decision, the teacher did not need to keep repeating the same instruction. Any teacher who has taught for an extended period has faced the problem of constant repetition. However, through a Socratic dialogue, whether the issue was related to conflict resolution, technique, or tactics, once the students discovered the answer through this method, it seemed to stay with them throughout the season.

The second excellent example happened in relation to another net game, in a tennis class, during which the TGA was used as the teaching model. The students were involved in the “preseason” preparation of the SE tennis unit and were learning court positioning. The lesson was specifically focused on court positioning at the net in preparation for a volley. As it is a commonly accepted “truth,” players should position themselves somewhere halfway between the net and the deep end of the service line. Therefore, traditional lessons were taught to ingrain this positioning in the students’ minds through repeated practice. However, on several occasions students

approached the teachers with the following problem. During the initial game and the closing game, they tried to position themselves in the “right” place on the court, only to find that their opponents were able to lob over them regularly. One asked if he, being shorter and not having an excellent jumping ability, could move back a bit to be able to take some of those lobs out of the air and volley them back to the opponent. This led us to an additional Question and Answer session with the class in which the students and the teachers discussed how the “proper technique” at times must be altered based on body compositions, skills, and abilities. From this open dialogue, not only did the students learn that the “truth” can be varied, but the teachers also learned that same valuable lesson. I contend that if the community had not been completely student centered and constructivist in nature, such Socratic dialogue would not have occurred.

Finally, the third example demonstrates TPSR in action. In one of the tournaments, a team’s consistent level of positive behavior resulted in winning the tournament even though another team scored more points in the championship game. How? At the conclusion of each lesson, a brief dialogue occurred between members of the teams, as well as between the teacher and the teams, regarding their efforts to develop a responsible community. In this particular case, one of the teams had consistently violated the responsibility rules that the class had established. Their peers regularly warned them throughout the season regarding their lack of personal and social responsibility. During the championship game, the TPSR “judges,” their peers, had pointed out to the teachers that this team had been collecting so many negative points that they would lose the tournament even if they won the game. Thus, when the award ceremony arrived, the team in question was called to the podium as the second place finisher and was shocked and, of course, questioned the decision. Then, an extremely significant response occurred. Although the teacher offered to give the explanation, one of the students, the main TPSR student judge, offered to lead the Socratic dialogue with the team in question. This young man had prepared for several days for this moment and then led an extremely skilled Socratic question and answer session. He skillfully led this team to realize when and why their own behavior was not satisfactory. In addition, he also worked with them to rebuild and to form a personally and socially responsible community within their team. The result was one of the most defining moments in the Socratic gymnasium. During the next unit, the team asked to stay together, and they became one of the highest functioning and achieving teams for the year. In fact, some

of these students still get in touch with me from time to time to show how this one event had an extremely significant effect on their lives and their everyday decision making.

I believe the above examples demonstrate the power of dialogue in contrast to direct instruction, community in contrast to individuality, and responsibility in contrast to irresponsibility. Ultimately, every preservice teacher (PST) that I teach will have to learn to become responsible for his or her own actions and will have to learn to find the common denominator within the community. Providing the proper community for such development has to start, if not at home, then certainly in school.

The Implementation Steps

Understanding the challenges that arise with implementing new ideas in a field dominated by tradition may prove difficult to some, and thus, I include an example of a block plan and a sample lesson in an attempt to offer a brief introduction. The foundation for the lessons was the SE model with preseason, season, culminating event, traditions, and, of course, responsibilities. Each lesson had a TGA lesson format as the main basis for the Socratic dialogue, and TPSR was incorporated for all students. The volleyball game season was designed to correspond with the pedagogical recommendations of TGA (Mitchell et al., 2013), the curriculum framework used in SE (Siedentop et al., 2011), and the steps to develop a responsible community used in TPSR (Hellison, 2011). Specifically, students remained on one team throughout the entire season of 10 lessons. During these 10 lessons, students learned several basic skills and strategies of volleyball, in combination with preseason games and formal competition leading to the culminating event, the “NCAA” Championship. Besides being players, students also took on roles, including coach, trainer, statistician, publisher, referee, and equipment manager. The structure of the season is outlined in a block plan in Table 2.

Next, I will introduce one of the lessons from the block plan in detail. In addition, I will provide an example of each assessment rubric used for skill assessment and the assessment of students’ personal and social responsibility. The rubrics represent a variation of techniques to provide a selection for the reader. If teachers find they need skill or strategy evaluations more and TPSR assessments less, they can vary the tools they apply. One suggestion, however, is to include students in all levels in the discussion, design, implementation, and evaluation of tools that are used in the Socratic gymnasium.

Table 2
Volleyball Season Block Plan

Lesson 1: Intro to Volleyball	Lesson 2: Passing	Lesson 3: Setting	Lesson 4: Spiking	Lesson 5: Court Positioning
Assessment: Team contracts: Students will negotiate the varied roles among themselves and then will write up a contract by themselves with the leader-ship of the teacher.	Assessment: Peer and coach assessment: Students and the coach will use a rubric that will be designed by the teacher, but can and will be modified based on student input through discussions built into the unit. (See Table 3 for example)	Assessment: Learning TPSR: Each team has to come up with descriptors for their scale of social responsibility. These descriptors need to relate to their involvement as a member of a sports/group/team learning to develop skills and knowledge for competition.	Assessment: Peer-reporting TPSR sheets: peers within the team check for each other's representation of the five agreed behaviors to provide feedback. In addition, students will discuss with their peers if there is difficulty with exhibiting the behaviors and why. (Table 1 and Figure 1)	Assessment: Self-evaluation: Students will self-assess their performance based on agreed upon skill performance standards. (See Table 4 for similar example)
Lesson 6: Serving	Lesson 7: Blocking	Lesson 8: Communication	Lesson 9: NCAA Volleyball Playoffs	Lesson 10: NCAA Volleyball Championship
Assessment: Peer-assessment (See Table 4 for exact example) Peer assessment: TPSR (Table 1 and Figure 1)	Assessment: Self-assessment: TPSR (Figure 1 and Table 1)	Assessment: Self-assessment: TPSR (Figure 1 and Table 1) Communication assessment (Figure 2)	Assessment: Peer assessment: TPSR (Table 1 & Figure 1)	Assessment: Poster/binder presentation
		Team E: Caring Each team needs to present their ideas to the class. (Table 1)		
		Team A: Self Control Team B: Participation Team C: Effort Team D: Self-Direction Team E: Caring		

Net Games: Volleyball Lesson

Lesson 6

Serving

- Students will get into their teams.
- **Equipment Manager** will gather materials needed for the day.
- **Stretch/Warm-Up:** led by the **Trainers**, and then report to designated courts.

Lesson Breakdown

- **Initial Game:** 5 points for scoring off the serve (ace), in any way they can initiate a serve; 3 points for getting the ball over net in any way they can with their hands; and 1 point for all other scores.
 - Each player will have an observer on another team evaluating their TPSR levels based on a simple rubric (see Table 1 and Figure 2).
 - After the game, they will meet with the observer and discuss what they saw and why. Providing feedback to what they liked and could improve on.
- **Q&A:** What was the purpose of the initial game? (To get the ball over the net in any way they could as long as they used their hands.)
- **Why is the serve important?** (There could be a variety of answers, but mostly the students will say it starts the play or that it is the first line of attack.)
- **Can you tell me what ways you were able to get the ball over the net?** (Here the students will have the chance to explain every serve with which they may have experimented and found worked for them.)
- **How did you perform the serve and why did you serve that way?** (What the teacher is looking for here is a variety of answers, as some may have served overhand or underhand, some with spin, some flat, some facing the target, some sideways. In addition, some students may find that depending on the game situation such as a “must make” as the next point wins, they may be using a different serve than if they have the lead and can “experiment.” But the teacher is looking for similarities the students would agree to be the basics of all efficient serving skills. Example could be stag-

gered stance, nondominant hand holding the ball, dominant hand open, toss the ball high, bringing arm back and then forward, weight transitioning forward, and follow through.)

- **Demonstrate:** In the demonstration, the teacher asks each of the students with a different idea to demonstrate the serve with which they experimented and found success.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Self- and Peer Reporting TPSR: Volleyball

As you remember, we have discussed TPSR—Don Hellison’s model—and how we will be using it in our class. You will be responsible for assessing either your own behavior or a partner’s behavior. **After thinking about the different displays of behavior you have witnessed today, circle which level applies, and on the back state whom are you assessing (either yourself or a partner). Be sure to give examples!**

What is your level currently: 0 1 2 3 4

Why? _____

How did your responsibility level change, and why do you think it changed?

Figure 2: TPSR self- and peer assessment.

- **Practice:** *Trainer* and *Coach* will have a server on one side of the half court, three players ready to receive, continuing to work on the other hits to get it over to the server. Server will be asked to experiment with each of the serves discussed during the question and answer session and, at the end, choose their top serving forms and the reasons behind them. They will rotate after two tries.
- Final Game: 5 points for scoring off the serve (ace), 3 points for getting the ball over the net, and 1 point for all other scores.
 - Each player serves twice. They choose which serve they will use.
 - Each player will have to monitor their serving success for a self-evaluation to be conducted at the conclusion of the class (see Table 3).

Table 3
Self Skill Assessment Rubric

Name: _____

Self-Assessment: Serving

Answer the check sheet honestly. At the end, write what you are good at and what you need help with. If you have questions or see a need for improvement, write it in the Questions and Need for Improvement column.

Question	Always	Most times	Rarely	Questions and need for improvement
Are you in a staggered stance?				
Do you make good contact with the ball?				
Do you follow through?				
Does the ball go over the net?				
Can you place the ball?				

Closure Questions/Review

- *Statisticians* will report scores of the day to the teacher.
- *Referees* will have a meeting to discuss issues they saw.
- *Publisher* will collect the peer assessments and place in the binder.
- *Equipment Managers* will put the materials away.
- *Teams meet as a group* to discuss their TPSR levels and skills that were measured with the assessment throughout the class.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed pillars of a Socratic gymnasium, the constructivist approaches identified herein, have several elements in common. Most obviously is they are student centered. All are used to engage the student in lessons and learning that could transcend the classroom and could serve as a foundation for everyday life. These lessons include not “simply” physical skills, but also lessons regarding conflict resolution, teamwork, ethical behavior, and the importance of rules and positive social interaction. All are used to engage students as active participants in the construction of their own life. All involve greater levels of student satisfaction with the content, and therefore, all make the discipline of PE, and the essential benefits offered by it, more meaningfully available to students of all ability levels. Also important, all have at their foundation the essential elements of critical thinking. These elements of the Socratic gymnasium in PETE are in congruence with Hastie and Curtner-Smith’s (2006) recommendation that teacher educators, when using a constructivist approach to teaching PE, organize learning environments in which

students must be active learners, in that they perform tasks which involve solving problems and making decisions; social learners, in that they formulate knowledge by interacting with their peers; and creative learners, in that they discover and understand knowledge by experimenting with the subject matter. (p. 22)

Consequently, I contend, when these methods are used within the context of the Socratic temperament and Socratic dialogue, physical educators in PETE and K–12 settings can become uniquely positioned to perform a critical role in transmitting knowledge about

physical activity that transcends the moment and that aids, informs, and prepares the students to deal with the vicissitudes of everyday life. The Socratic gymnasium is an approach in which the basic elements for teaching sport concepts and skills are ideally combined in a constructivist, student-centered manner. The ultimate decision of applying the tenets of a Socratic gymnasium, however, will be greatly dependent on a number of factors. Some of these are the future teachers' beliefs about their role as the transmitter of knowledge, the future teachers' level of comfort regarding their own teaching skills, and, of course, available space and equipment for activities. The above cannot be addressed in this article, but it would be interesting to study how teacher educators, practicing PE teachers, and future teachers with varying beliefs, abilities, and teaching contexts implement the Socratic gymnasium in PETE and K–12 settings.

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