

## **“I just remember rugby”: Re-membering Physical Education as More Than a Sport.**

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### **What Does the Article Add**

This study shows that doing and learning sports seems to be a strong part of students' memories of PE. However, when focus on what to learn was complemented and even replaced with a focus on how and why they learn the students' experiences of PE became much richer.

### **Introduction**

The memories we hold of school, and in this case physical education (PE), have considerable currency in the ways we consider the contribution PE have in our lives. In this sense we need to explore what young people remember of PE in order to improve their educational experiences.

### **Context and Participants**

The study site was a grammar school in England. The participants were 20 boys ages 16-18. The boys were purposefully selected because they been in one of two classes that had (a) been taught by the author for at least one of their PE lessons each week; (b) had been taught by the author for some of their predominantly games based lessons; (c) had been participants in previous models-based practice research; and (d) had continued as students in the school past the age of compulsory education (i.e., are 16).

### **Design and Method**

Semi-structured interviews to explore the boys' memories of PE were used. The availability of boys determined whether they were interviewed individually, paired, or in groups. During the interviews, participants were asked to respond to what they remembered about (a) the author's lessons (i.e. PE using a models-based practice approach, as known as MBP), and (b) "PE and games."

### **Analysis of Data**

Using autobiographical memory theory and John Dewey's educational theory, the authors approached the analysis with a specific focus on two questions:

- (1) How are the boys communicating their previous experiences of PE practice in their autobiographical stories?
- (2) How are the cultural norms of PE constituted in their autobiographical stories?

## Results

In remembering PE, the overarching “logic” of the boys’ memories were of sport. Almost all of their articulated memories were doing sport, albeit in various capacities. The results, therefore, focus on the main theme of: *sport as an overarching logic*. In considering this theme in light of the data, it became clear that the boys’ memories can be linked to established cultural norms of PE as a social practice. Therefore, the article explores three subthemes: (a) *just doing the game in a traditional curriculum* through a multiple activity sport discourse; (b) *Learning the games* in a technical sport discourse; and (c) *Learning beyond the game* around an educational sport discourse.

*Sport as an overarching logic*: Participating in sports is something that is evident in almost all of the boys memories. Specifically participating in PE involved becoming members of a sport as a social practice.

*Just doing the game in a traditional curriculum*: PE and games were remembered as traditional sports, experienced in seasonal blocks that repeated year after year. One boy recalled that the boys played “Rugby in the winter and tennis in the summer.” Games were experienced across a carousel of short units in keeping with previous findings. Such was the prevalence of rugby, however, that every student remembered, “doing it”. Furthermore, some of the boys saw themselves as players (not learners) who were positioned in the vertical hierarchies based on their respective playing ability.

*Learning the games*: when the emphasis shifted away from games and toward a MBP approach, the role of student changed as well. The emphasis was much less on student as a player and much more on student as a learner. That said, many of these lessons were remembered through a clear sports discourse and students were positioned as the learners of real sports.

*Learning beyond the game*: in remembering MBP, the boys’[ memories were also more frequently of “how” rather than “what”. While this was still often concerned with the basic logics of sports it is not concerned with memories of how to do sport and, instead, unfolds around ideas such as creativity, student-to-student interaction and the impact on learning, innovation, participation, involvement, and inclusion.