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'I think everyone is on board with changing how we do things, but we are yet to find a best fit model': A figural study of assessing games and sport in physical education

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ABSTRACT

This project investigated how Australian Capital Territory (ACT) teachers of physical education (PE) assess games and sports as a Focus Area in the *Australian curriculum health and physical education* (AC: HPE). Figural sociology, including the concept of habitus was used to inform the study and make sense of the findings. The figuration we examined was ACT primary and secondary school teachers across the government, independent, Catholic and private sectors who are mutually oriented towards assessing their students in PE. There were two sources of data: Semi-structured group interviews and current and historical PE curricula. Interview data were collected by each of the authors, from 19 teacher participants split into three groups, comprising two groups of six participants and one of seven participants. Our other data sources were the current AC: HPE curriculum and four historical ACT PE curricula. We used the interview data and the said curriculum documents to reconstruct the macro, micro and sociogenesis levels of the figuration and thematic and content analysis were used to analyse the data. We found that participants used approaches to assess games and sports that were not fit for purpose, were not evidence-based and that were typically based on subjectivity. Further, participants had limited understanding of how to authentically assess games and sports, with the assessment of skills emphasised at the expense of other criteria. This prioritising of skills assessment was also identified as a long-term process within ACT PE teaching. An over-emphasis on skills assessment contrasted with the assessment of game strategy, which although a requirement in the AC: HPE and the historical curricula, received little attention. Our findings are important, because the gap in teacher knowledge we revealed, led to teacher professional learning to upskill ACT teachers in the use of evidence-based approaches to assessing games and sports.

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Introduction

This study examined assessment in physical education (PE), with the international literature suggesting that historically such evaluation has been context specific, contentious, underdeveloped and of limited interest to researchers (Georgakis, Wilson, & Evans, 2015; Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015; López-Pastor, Kirk, Lorente-Catalan, MacPhail, & Macdonald, 2013). In Australia, where this research took place, there is an education focus on effective teaching and learning, sometimes within the framing of 'productive pedagogy' (Department of Education Queensland, 2002), 'quality teaching'

(Australian Capital Territory Department of Education [ACT DET], 2006), or ‘teaching for effective learning’ (Department for Education South Australia, 2019). The implications for quality physical education (QPE) presented by these framings is the complementarity of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in creating the significance of what is taught, the quality of the learning environment, and the intellectual challenge of work for students (Penney, Brooker, Hay, & Gillespie, 2009). This complementarity relates to what Mitchell, Oslin, and Griffin (2013) termed a ‘complete learning experience’ (p. 45). From an international perspective, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) authentic assessment is necessary for QPE.

Our study was conducted in Canberra, Australia’s National Capital, located within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and seeks to build on earlier work by Williams and Pill (2018), who found that ACT PE teachers lacked evidence-based approaches to inform their teaching. Instead, their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was largely influenced by practical or personal ‘philosophes’ (Green, 2002). The research reported here extends Williams and Pill’s (2018) work by focussing on how ACT teachers assess games and sports, and the extent to which this aspect of their PCK is informed by evidence-based approaches.

The aim of this study was to find out, through exploring social processes, how ACT PE teachers assess games and sports within the context of the *Australian curriculum health and physical education* (AC: HPE) (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2015). Within the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015), Games and Sports is one of 12 Focus Areas that is emphasised in teaching between Years 3 and 10 (ACARA, 2015). The Games and Sports Focus Area applies to the AC: HPE Achievement Standards from Year 3/4 to Year 9/10, with Achievement Standards being the benchmark against which teachers assess student performance and progress (see Table 1 for more about Achievement Standards). Data were collected at a breakfast symposium event with the purpose of increasing teacher understanding about the assessment of the Games and Sports AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) Focus Area. There were two research questions in this study: ‘What assessment tools do teachers use in assessing the AC: HPE Focus Area of Games and Sports?’ and, ‘How do teachers select tools of assessment for assessing games and sports within the context of the AC: HPE?’

Figurational sociology

Central to figurational sociology is the concept of the figuration, defined by Elias (1978) as ‘a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people’ (p. 261). The nature of figurations is such that they vary

Table 1. Summary of the AC: HPE achievement standard elements relevant to the Games and Sports Focus Area.

Year 3–4 (8–10 years old)	apply strategies for working cooperatively and apply rules fairly. refine fundamental movement skills and apply movement concepts and strategies in a variety of physical activities and to solve movement challenges. create and perform movement sequences using fundamental movement skills and the elements of movement.
Year 5–6 (10–12 years old)	demonstrate fair play and skills to work collaboratively. perform specialised movement skills and sequences and propose and combine movement concepts and strategies to achieve movement outcomes and solve movement challenges. apply the elements of movement when composing and performing movement sequences.
Year 7–8 (12–14 years old)	apply personal and social skills to establish and maintain respectful relationships and promote safety, fair play and inclusivity. demonstrate control and accuracy when performing specialised movement sequences and skills. apply movement concepts and refine strategies to suit different movement situations. apply the elements of movement to compose and perform movement sequences.
Year 9–10 (14–16 years old)	demonstrate leadership, fair play and cooperation across a range of movement contexts. apply and transfer movement concepts and strategies to new and challenging movement situations. apply criteria to make judgements about and refine their own and others’ specialised movement skills and movement performances. work collaboratively to design and apply solutions to movement challenges.

in size and complexity as local, national and global representations. According to Van Krieken (1998) figurational sociology has five interrelated tenets. Firstly, accepting that humans produce purposeful action, the outcomes of such action across groups of people is largely unplanned and unintended. Secondly, individuals can only be comprehended through cognisance of their interdependent relations with each other. Thirdly, people and their relationships can only be understood in dynamic as opposed to static terms. In other words, social life is constantly altering, rather than remaining the status quo. An example of such fluidity is the idea of social power. Rather than social power being something that one person or group possesses, and others do not, it exists relatively.

Fourthly, societies on an ongoing basis, adapt on account of long-term processes. Fifthly, a figurational lens involves thought moving continuously from a stance of social and emotional involvement to one of detachment concerning any given topic. In other words, researchers through being social beings themselves are always to a greater or lesser extent immersed in their study. As such they must be mindful of their relative attachment and aim to be as removed as much as possible. We chose figurational sociology as an interpretive lens, because assessment in PE exists as a long-term process and forms part of the human relational dynamics of teaching. Figurational sociology was also appealing, because the importance of long-term processes and human relations is deep rooted in this approach (Dunning & Hughes, 2013).

The figuration we examined is ACT primary and secondary school teachers across the government, independent, Catholic and private sectors who are mutually oriented towards assessing their students in PE. Within this figuration, it is assumed that teachers are positioned according to their values and beliefs, some of which are shared. Although any given figuration has a distinctive order, structure and nuance, individuals within them align themselves in particular ways by virtue of their interdependent relationships (Elias, 1978). However, figurations are in constant flux through individuals continually entering and leaving them over time (Elias, 2009). Therefore, there is an ongoing need to examine figurations, as it cannot be assumed that once a figuration has been studied, it is now in some way 'known'.

A further concept within figurational sociology is *habitus*. Elias (1994) used the term individual *habitus* to mean a person's 'personality structure' (Goudsblom & Mennell, 1998, p. 61) which is subject to modification over time. He also used social *habitus* (Elias, 1991) to describe the level of personality composition that individuals have in common with other people in their figurations. Both types of *habitus* were used to make sense of teacher values, beliefs and behaviour in this study.

Assessment in PE through a figurational lens

López-Pastor et al. (2013) offered an account of how assessment as a global figuration came to be, or in figurational terms, its sociogenesis (Elias, 1978). These authors noted that in most countries, assessment in PE only gained popularity towards the end of the 1960s. Further, they observed that this early assessment was characterised by objective testing of movement skills and fitness that became a common approach in the United States of America, Britain and Australia during the 1970s and 1980s. This assessment aligned to a performance discourse prevalent in those decades. However, alternative assessment began to emerge from the late 1980s that called for methods beyond isolated skills practices or fitness testing (López-Pastor et al., 2013). In other words, a need was identified for the evaluation of students within the environment that they perform skills. From a figurational perspective, what was required was a more 'reality-congruent' assessment approach, meaning as close to real life as possible (Dunning, 1992).

As approaches to assessment in PE came to adopt more 'reality-congruent' perspectives, López-Pastor et al. (2013) suggested that teacher subjectivity started to become an accepted 'method' to assess student performance in games. At the same time, research was advocating authentic assessment of games and sports using notational observation instruments such as the Team Sport Assessment Procedure (TSAP) (Grehaigne, Godbout, & Bouthier, 1997) and the Game Performance

Assessment Instrument (GPAI) (Mitchell et al., 2013). López-Pastor et al. (2013) argued that these 'alternative assessment' instruments are not in widespread use, which tells something about PE's inability to change. From a figurational perspective, this inability to change can to a greater or lesser extent be ascribed to social habitus (Elias, 1991). In the ACT, Williams and Pill (2018) found PE teachers to have perspectives about what QPE meant, which along with their pedagogy, were influenced by their individual and social habituses shaped over long periods of time. Those teachers were found to value what can be termed their 'everyday philosophies' (Green, 2002) over evidence-based practice in informing their teaching.

Contemporary approaches for assessing games and sports in PE

In this section, we provide an account of ways in which PE teachers contemporarily assess PE, to provide insights into the characteristics of a broader figuration of PE teachers and assessment.

In terms of PE assessment generally, Mitchell et al. (2013) suggested the following methods: Written tests, question and answer activities, GPAI, TSAP, checking and observation, rubrics, checklists and student self-reflection and journal writing. By adopting such a breadth of assessment, the authors argue that teachers can move towards a notion of QPE. Similarly, concerning games assessment in particular, Georgakis et al. (2015) found that Australian PE teachers use a wide range of tools for assessing student performance. Amongst these, Dudley, Telford, Peralta, Stonehouse, and Winslade (2018) identify student performance observation as one of the most popular methods. However, those authors argue that a tendency for teachers to avoid recording their observations has compromised the validity and reliability of this approach. While most of the teacher participants in the Georgakis et al. (2015) study used Game Sense pedagogy (den Duyn, 1997) less than half used Game Sense aligned instruments of assessment, such as TSAP (Grehaighe et al., 1997) and GPAI (Mitchell et al., 2013). Similarly, from an international perspective, Arias-Estero and Castejón (2014) reported that despite the popularity and usefulness of TSAP and GPAI for assessing student tactical knowledge and performance, both tend to be used infrequently by teachers.

Teachers who did not use TSAP and GPAI in the Georgakis et al. (2015) study, instead used limited alternative instruments of assessment, such as Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) or other skills checklists and the 'Beep Test'. Some also assessed items such as participation and effort that were unrelated to curriculum requirements. Beyond the above study, skills testing is also widely reported as being well liked by teachers in PE generally and in games and sports contexts specifically (Aasland, Walseth, & Engelsrud, 2019; Georgakis et al., 2015; Pill, 2016). Mitchell et al. (2013) cited four main reasons why skills testing is inappropriate in assessing games: '... they do not predict playing performance, they do not take into account the social dimensions of games, they measure skills out of context, and they do not reflect a broader view of game performance' (p. 44). In summary, the extant literature demonstrates that ways in which teachers assess games and sports, vary significantly and in many cases adopted methods lack 'reality-congruence.'

Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted which is compatible with figurational sociology (Baur & Ernst, 2011). In designing our research, we recreated the study figuration, by utilising Baur and Ernst's (2011) three-level approach of macro, micro and sociogenesis. To reconstruct the macro level, the rules and social structure of the figuration, we used the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) and data from semi-structured group interviews. In re-constructing the micro level of the figuration, to understand the behaviour of individuals within the figuration, we solely drew upon data from semi-structured group interviews. In recreating the sociogenesis of the study figuration, how the figuration came to be, historical curriculum documents were used to describe a timeline between 1952 and 2015.

Data collection for creating the macro and micro levels of the figuration

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they were appropriate for reconstructing the macro and micro levels of the figuration and because of their compatibility with figurational sociology (Baur & Ernst, 2011). Ethics approval for this data collection was granted by Author 1's University Human Ethics Committee and by ACT Government Education, as well as by private and independent schools.

Participant details

A total of 19 teacher participants took part and their personal information is provided in Table 2. Participants were recruited through direct advertising by ACT Government Education through a mail out to ACT PE teachers. Teachers who registered for the symposium were invited to participate in a single semi-structured group interview. They were asked to provide written consent to being interviewed, having been sent information and consent forms stating that participation is voluntary. Also stated in these forms, was that they could withdraw their involvement in the research at any time without consequence. The interviews were conducted at an ACT Government Education teaching and learning centre. Three rooms were pre-booked to enable the researchers to conduct these interviews with privacy and to help facilitate confidentiality. The authors conducted the interviews, each lasting approximately 30 min, with two groups of six participants and one group of seven participants. The same questions were used as initial prompts by each author. Three separate transcripts resulted, with pseudonyms allocated to every teacher to preserve confidentiality by de-identification of participants. These transcripts were then compiled into a single data set for analysis.

Data collection for recreating the sociogenesis level of the figuration

In deciding the timeline of 1952–2015 for the sociogenesis of our figuration, the work of López-Pastor et al. (2013) was used to help inform the beginning. As mentioned earlier, those authors

Table 2. Participant details.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Position	School Setting	Years Teaching PE
Peter	M	30–34	Executive Teacher/Head of Faculty	Independent/Catholic/Private Secondary (7–10) and Senior Secondary (11–12)	6
Dylan	M	45–49	Executive Teacher/Head of Faculty	Independent/Catholic/Private Secondary (7–10) and Senior Secondary (11–12)	25
Michael	M	45–49	Classroom Teacher	Government Secondary (7–10)	24
Georgia	F	35–39	Executive Teacher/ Head of Faculty	Government Secondary (7–10)	18
Kate	F	25–29	Executive Teacher/Head of Faculty	Government Secondary (7–10)	5
Hannah	F	65 plus	Classroom Teacher	Independent/Catholic/Private Primary School (K-6) Secondary (7–10)	35
Kylie	F	30–34	Classroom Teacher	Independent/Catholic/Private Primary School (K-6)	1.5
Daniel	M	40–44	Classroom Teacher	Government Primary School (K-6)	4
Tom	M	55–59	Classroom Teacher	Government Primary School (K-6)	30
Lachlan	M	30–34	Classroom Teacher	Government Primary School (K-6)	6
Alexander	M	55–59	Classroom Teacher	Independent/Catholic/Private Primary School (K-6) Secondary (7–10)	30
Hayley	F	40–44	Classroom Teacher	Independent/Catholic/Private Primary School (K-6)	20

observed that in most countries, assessment in PE only gained popularity towards the end of the 1960s. For determining the end of our timeline, we chose the year 2015, as this was when the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) began to be adopted by ACT schools. The following four curriculum documents used in ACT schools were examined to form the sociogenesis of our figuration: The *modified curriculum for secondary schools* (Department of Education New South Wales [DE NSW], 1952); the *alternative curriculum for use in secondary schools* (DE NSW, 1955); the *health and physical education curriculum framework* (ACT DET, 1994) and *every chance to learn* (ACT DET, 2007).

Data analysis of the semi-structured group interviews

The semi-structured interview data were analysed deductively using thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012) and a five-stage coding process, which was essentially a system of reduction adopted from Creswell and Guetterman (2019). Step one was each author completing a preliminary exploratory analysis of the single data set to get an overall sense of the data. In step two, we each highlighted sections of the text that broadly related to the research questions, or that as ‘one-off’ quotes had some other connection to the research aim. We then coded the identified segments of text, with ‘coding’ being ‘... themes, patterns and relationships in the data, which provide evidence for the researcher’s categories, interpretations and conclusions’ (Vialle, Howard, Herrington, & Okely, 2015, p. 169). Step three was to assign initial codes to the sections of text and in step four, after discussion, we merged some codes, created sub-codes and removed other codes, significantly reducing our preliminary codes. The final step, step five, was the construction of seven final themes (see Table 3).

Author 1 then used content analysis for each of these seven themes to report ‘... textual data in a summarized form by examining the frequency of occurrences in the text’ (Basit, 2010, p. 194). In addition to word frequency, content analysis was used to understand the context within which each theme was used (Basit, 2010). In terms of suitability for a figurational approach, content analysis has been used in other figurational research about PE (see Smith and Green (2004) for example). Additionally, Author 1 used figurational sociology as an interpretive lens to analyse the seven themes within the single data set. This was done by examining how the themes relate to individual habitus (Elias, 1994) and social habitus (Elias, 1991) as these figurational concepts were deemed to be the most adequate for answering both research questions.

Data analysis of the historical curriculum documents

The documents selected for this study were examined deductively, again using content analysis (Basit, 2010). Specific words or phrases were searched for that were about PE teaching and assessment within the context of games and sports. This analysis was carried out manually for documents that were not available in an electronic format and by using the Microsoft Word and PDF search function for *every chance to learn* (ACT DET, 2007), which was the only document available electronically.

Table 3. Theme frequency.

Theme	Frequency of occurrence in the single data set
Skills	74
Tactic	2
Strategy	8
Rubrics	43
Observation	16
Peer assessment	9
Self-assessment	4

Findings

Reconstructing the macro and micro levels of the figuration

The themes constructed in Table 3 are important, because, taken in the context of how each was mentioned, they provide an indication of the kind of PE the participants valued and how it was assessed.

In answering Research Question 1. 'What assessment tools do teachers use in assessing the AC: HPE Focus Area of Games and Sport?' in contrast with what Georgakis et al. (2015) reported, participants used a limited range of assessment instruments to assess games and sports in PE. Rubrics were the most common instrument of assessment cited (see Table 3). None of the teachers used TSAP and GPAL, which is concerning, given that there is a requirement in the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) for teachers to assess strategies in movement contexts and these are the only evidence-based approaches for doing this (Mitchell et al., 2013). Several teachers expressed a lack of knowledge about how to assess, or different ways to assess, and spoke about how subjectivity influenced their assessment judgments. For example, the following quote by Hannah privileged skills assessment and indicates that until recently, assessment was predominantly subjective at her school:

We have just gone from completely subjective, to Australian Curriculum, and now our rubrics are quite complicated ... When we do a unit, we are now giving them (the students) the rubrics to assess the entire journey, so the kids can actually assess ... So they are fully aware of what their skill is and what they are being tested on. But before, it was subjective – yeah, you're an 'A'.

Kate mentioned that at her school '... we are trying to model what we are doing in maths to what we are doing in PE with rubrics, and it is just not working. Our assessment practice has a long way to go ...' Kate's remarks show a lack of clarity about how to assess PE that are consistent with Veal's (1988) observations more than three decades ago, that PE teachers have limited knowledge about the theory and practice of assessing PE.

Observation was mentioned by some teachers, however in common with Dudley et al. (2019), there was a lack of detail about how the participants undertook observation, criteria used, and what was documented. Few teachers spoke about how they recorded their observations other than using written notes. For example, Alexander relied on performance measurements to support his observations.

... and we've done a Round Robin ... I've got some data there to see where they're ranked compared to others ... on a points system ... with Year 8 students. Can't do that with every unit unfortunately but ... that's about the only example of written information of ... data supporting assessment. But other than that, it's very practical observational. Call it 'old school' if you want (laughs) but it's pretty damn accurate (laughs).

Performance measurements, as a traditional approach to PE assessment, have limited value in assessing the breadth of content required within the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). It is the kind of historical assessment that Hay and Penney (2009) described as being outdated and lacking authenticity. Further, the interviewer (Author 1) clarified Alexander's response confirming that his observations were not recorded. Instead, their purpose was 'to get a sense' of student grades and the Round Robin performance information was used to support them.

The use of checklists was mentioned, but predominantly these were discussed within the context of assessing FMS and not games and sports. Peer assessment was also cited. However, while teachers saw merit in this approach, there was limited mention of how they used it, apart from Hayley:

I use ... a lot of peer assessment ... with some Year 5 and 6's when we've done gymnastics ... One pair will watch another pair and ... they'll know that they should be looking for ... each routine should have four balances ... So you're guiding them on their observations and then as a pair they watch and feedback ...

While the kind of approach described by Hayley has its place in assessing PE, it is still nonetheless an example of a performance-based traditional form of assessment that has limited relevance in

games and sports. Overall, teachers mentioned self-assessment less frequently than peer-assessment. An example about self-assessment is provided by Peter, although again, it is not in the context of games and sports:

We are moving our rubrics to have the 'I can' statement rather than just the language of the Australian Curriculum. Within that, we change it and put in the 'I cans'. For basketball, for example, 'I can dribble both hands'.

In summary, examples of assessment tools that the teachers used in assessing the AC: HPE Focus Area of Games and Sports were few and lacked relevance and applicability. They were limited for meaningfully evaluating the breadth of criteria, particularly in the cognitive domain, required in meeting the games and sports aspects of the Achievement Standards.

Assessment that did not relate to the AC: HPE

Participants referred to assessable criteria that had no, or limited connection to the assessment of games and sports in PE or the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) more generally. Teachers spoke a lot about being too time poor to carry out assessment. Nonetheless, some still had time to assess 'effort'; 'participation'; 'uniform/getting changed,' all of which can be considered historical assessment criteria, typically subjective and of limited educative purpose (Georgakis et al., 2015; Matanin & Tannehill, 1994; Williams, 2016).

A small number of teachers valued 'effort' as an assessment 'criterion'. For example, Hannah commented 'but within our rubrics, we do have effort. You can have a kid that has very little skill that can get a really high mark for effort ...' Regarding 'participation', nearly half of the participants valued student participation, with some suggesting that it has relevance along with student 'attitude', as an assessable component of PE. For example:

I have a girl that ... pretty much didn't participate all last semester and now she is participating, but she is not very good, and so how is she going to feel when she gets a 'D' on her report ... and we have taken that step to getting her participating and potentially starting to feel that lifelong physical activity mindset. (Peter)

Concerning getting changed into PE uniform, two teachers valued students being suitably dressed into PE uniform and Michael considered this as being a legitimate assessable component of PE:

About 15 years ago there was a gap in the rubric, and I made up my own one, a very generic one for all sports – and I used a fundamental motor skills base. And one of the things I put in there that was interesting was at the top, 'getting changed'. I had worked in government schools where that is a purely optional activity, and my Executive Teacher at the time said 'that is something you can write down, and where you can get your scores from' ...

Despite this assessment approach not being appropriate for the AC: HPE (2015), Michael stated that he continued to use it.

These quotes show the strength of individual habitus (Elias, 1994) and social habitus (Elias, 1991) through personal and group beliefs about what 'criteria' should be assessed in PE, despite there being no or limited connection to the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). Assessment of skills in PE was the kind of assessment completed by most participants. Accepting that some of the teachers spoke about skills in the context of FMS, the high frequency of mention of skills (see Table 3) illustrates that the assessment of skills was a strong focus. Consistent with Veal (1988), the following quote shows understanding, that the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) requires teachers to assess more than just skills. However, teachers were unsure what to do beyond skills assessment:

But I think we are just in a limbo ... where we have got this new curriculum (AC: HPE) and it's not sport specific, and it's not skill specific. I think everyone is on board with changing how we do things, but we are yet to find a best fit model. (Kate)

In contrast to the mention of 'skill,' the words 'tactics' and 'strategy' appeared infrequently in the single data set. Peter spoke about tactics and strategy within a wider understanding of the aims of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) by valuing student knowledge and comprehension in addition to student

'doing'. The lack of mention of 'strategy' was particularly surprising given its explicit mention in each AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) Achievement Standard from Year 3/4 onwards.

In response to Research Question 2, 'How do teachers select tools of assessment for assessing games and sports within the context of the AC: HPE?', the main way that teachers chose instruments of assessment was by asking colleagues what they did. This consultative approach suggests the influence of social habitus (Elias, 1991) through the valuing and adoption of what others did within their PE teaching figuration. There was a tendency for less experienced teachers, such as Kylie, to draw upon what more experienced colleagues did. In addition to teachers seeking advice from close colleagues, Georgia sought ideas and approaches from teachers beyond her immediate school environment. The high value that was placed upon the insights and recommendations of others was described by Daniel:

Certainly, having picked up a PE specialist role this year, the first thing I did was grab three or four people I knew in the system who had been doing it a while ... I just picked their brains and just picked their programs – the best teacher education you can get.

Some participants commented that their assessment was guided by the unit itself or the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). Concerning factors that influenced what assessment instruments were used, the age of the students, the nature of available resources or information, and existing teacher knowledge about the 'sport' being assessed was cited. In response to 'Does the wording in the Achievement Standards affect or influence what tool of assessment you might use?' Alexander noted:

Well yes ... I've felt as a teacher I've had to be more accurate ... I've been more conscious about ... I've got to use more assessment tools. It's become a lot more formalised compared to what it used to be ... I've been teaching 30 years and I'm not saying I'm the best teacher, but I'm saying that I've come from an era where there's been no Australian Curriculum and minimal assessment tools to an era where it's very formalised and lots of documentation. (Alexander)

Alexander's comments reflect how assessment in PE for some teachers has shifted from traditional restricted approaches to those that are more cognisant of cognitive and affective domains beyond that of the physical (Hay & Penney, 2009).

Concerning the question, 'Has the ways in which you assess games or sports changed over time?' Lachlan commented that he has adapted his assessment methods to become more holistic and involve both skills and strategy, mirroring his move to adopt Game Sense as a pedagogical approach. Tom explained how assessing games has changed during his teaching career:

I guess over 30 years teaching you go through different ways, as new things come through ... when I first came through the focus was more on being able to play a game ... So the child who could play a good game of cricket obviously got the good marks and the child who didn't ... play cricket or didn't know the basic skills got the poorer marks.

This quote showed that like all figurations, the figuration studied here has modified over time, although indications from this study suggest that certain traditions may remain, such as 'assessing' changing for class, and teacher perception of student effort.

How the teachers selected tools of assessment for assessing games and sport seemed to be influenced by their 'everyday philosophies' (Green, 2002). For example, three participants valued instilling students with a love of physical activity and the promotion of enjoyment or fun as a main aim. Dylan commented, 'My own personal philosophy is that I want the students by Year 10 to have ... a love for physical activity.' Assessment was also seen as getting in the way of some teachers' 'everyday philosophies' of PE (Green, 2002). For example:

I am frustrated a hell of a lot as we have to assess. There is a real problem for schools as I get more experienced teaching, 25 years now, we actually assess for a 'set of numbers' at the end of Year 12. We should be preparing them for life outside of school regardless of what we are teaching, and it makes it worse when we have lifelong things we are trying to impart in skills, in understandings and in attitudes ... particularly around something like

physical education where if they develop a love of physical activity it could be something that saves their life ... in forty years' time. (Dylan)

Assessment seemed to be a limited part of Dylan's individual habitus. Instead, he valued preparation for life after school, emphasising skills, attitudes and developing a love of physical activity. Similarly, participants spoke about games in PE needing to be 'fun' '... and we're trying to teach the kids skills and fun and fun's the biggest thing ... well one of the most important things I believe ... and now with the Australian Curriculum we've got more pressure to get the assessment right (laughs)' (Alexander). A number of the participants expressed a desire for more professional learning (PL) around assessment in games and sports.

Reconstructing the sociogenesis of the figuration

From examining the four historical curriculum documents, the privileging of skills was a strong and recurring theme concerning the teaching and assessment of games with limited mention of tactics and strategy. The latter being explicit content in contemporary Australian PE (see Table 1).

In the *modified curriculum for secondary schools* (DE NSW, 1952) skill development and encouraging an ongoing pursuit of physical recreation have a central focus '... emphasis should be given to the development of interest and skill in out-door recreational activities' (DE NSW, 1952, p. 2). The *alternative curriculum for use in secondary schools* (DE NSW, 1955) designed as a supplementary curriculum for NSW and ACT secondary schools for children who were 'less academic,' is a facsimile of the *modified curriculum for secondary schools* (DE NSW, 1952). In this curriculum 'they (children) should be graded according to ability so as to ensure that skilled pupils are not held back by the less skilled or slower class members' (DE NSW, 1955, p. 94). It is also mentioned, in the context of games teaching, that 'every opportunity should be taken for incidental teaching of skills, positional play and game tactics' (DE NSW, 1955, p. 119). However, there is no mention of teachers being required to assess strategy or tactics.

Skills practice is emphasised through a suggested 40-min game lesson plan comprising: Introduction, skills practice and class games, where 15 min is devoted to skills practice (DE NSW, 1955). The only explicit mention of assessment in PE is in a short section about self-testing activities, where students self-assess. Self-testing is described in the context of activities designed with performance norms and standards, like those described by Alexander, above, who used similar performance measurements to support his assessment observations. Both NSW curriculum documents were used in ACT schools during the 1960s (Williams, 2016). An emphasis on skill development was continued in subsequent ACT curricula, despite an Interim ACT Schools Authority advocating individual schools to engage in school-based curriculum development (SBCD) (Williams, 2016).

SBCD continued through the 1980s (Director ACT Schools Accrediting Agency, 1982) until 1994, with the introduction of the *health and physical education curriculum framework* (ACT DET, 1994). Skills development through games is again emphasised by 'students demonstrate knowledge, understanding and application of ... motor skills and coordinated movement patterns through play, games, dance and sporting activities' (ACT DET, 1994). A section on assessment provides teachers with general direction and seems to suggest broad and holistic assessment of cognitive, physical, inter and intra-personal skills: '... it is important to assess the full range of student learning outcomes, including knowledge, understandings, skills, values and attitudes' (ACT DET, 1994, p. 18).

Seven strands are included: Human Development; Human Movement; Physical Activity and the Community; People and Food; Health of Individuals and Populations; Safety; and Human Relations. It is within the Human Movement strand that games and sports are covered. Each of the strands is taught to early years, lower primary, upper primary, high school and post-compulsory bands of schooling (ACT DET, 1994). Within the Human Movement strand, games and sports are not mentioned for early years. For lower primary, students participate in modified games for the purpose of refining FMS (ACT DET, 1994). In upper primary, the only mention of games in the Human

Movement strand is in the context of students 'inventing games to develop their awareness of space and perform movements using objects in a variety of situations' (ACT DET, 1994, p. 39).

In the Human Movement strand for high school, students are required to '... devise and implement game strategies and tactics' (ACT DET, 1994, p. 43). This is one of only two examples where strategies and tactics are mentioned. Further, there is only one suggested assessment approach that would be suitable for assessing games and sports 'analyse movement using a set of criteria to refine their own and others performance' (ACT DET, 1994, p. 42). However, there is no inclusion of criteria or guidance for creating the same. General advice is provided about assessing the HPE learning area that includes for example '... surveys, interviews, student assessment records ...' (ACT DET, 1994, p. 55). Nevertheless, in the absence of specific direction and given that this document precedes the creation of GPAI and TSAP, it is hard to imagine, how teachers could meaningfully and authentically assess games and sports tactics and strategies.

The above 1994 curriculum was superseded by another system-wide document, *every chance to learn* (ACT DET, 2007). The PE related section, 'The student is physically skilled and active' was analysed for four bands of development from early childhood to later adolescence. Similar to previous documents, there is a strong emphasis on skills and limited mention of tactics and strategy. Indeed, the inclusion of the word 'skilled' in the section title, is in itself, an example of the privileging of skills. The first mention of 'strategy' is in the early adolescence band where it is stated that students 'devise and implement strategies for playing games' (ACT DET, 2007, p. 134). In the marker of progress section for the early adolescence band, the expected standard for students, the requirement is that 'they devise and implement strategies in games, using and adapting a range of movement skills' (ACT DET, 2007, p. 134). There is no other mention of 'strategy' in the remainder of this section and the word 'tactic' is not included.

The findings from the four curriculum documents are consistent with what Williams (2016) found in his ACT study that explored a timeline between 1923 and 2010, '... what has been taught 'in the name of PE' has changed little since the mid-twentieth century. In other words, PE during this period has emphasised skill development using team games and modified sports' (p. 230). From the perspective of habitus our analysis shows how teachers have been socialised into what 'counts' in assessing PE. What we discovered, is that ideas persist in the figuration despite the contemporary notion of QPE presenting an alternative value equation.

Discussion

We used figurational sociology including the concepts of individual habitus (Elias, 1994) and social habitus (Elias, 1991) to gain understanding of how teachers assess the Games and Sports Focus Area of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). To do this we theoretically recreated a figuration using three levels: macro, micro and sociogenesis (Baur & Ernst, 2011). The figuration we studied can be described as ACT primary and secondary school teachers across the government, independent, Catholic and private sectors who are mutually oriented towards assessing their students in PE. Within this figuration, it is assumed that teachers are positioned according to their values and beliefs, some of which are shared.

There were two main benefits of this research. Firstly, it provides understanding of the interconnectedness of PCK and assessment. Since no research of this kind has been carried out before in the ACT, our work offers insights where none existed previously. Secondly, through identifying a gap in teacher knowledge and understanding about assessing the Games and Sports Focus Area of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) the authors suggest that there was a PL need for ACT PE teachers. Indeed Penney et al. (2009) recognised PL as a variable that directly impacts QPE along with teacher values and beliefs.

Regarding competing discourses and ideologies, other research as we have discussed, suggested PE teachers derived their understanding of the substance and pedagogical form of PE from 'everyday philosophies.' These are shaped by enduring themes such as sport and personal experiences of sport

and physical activity. Stolz and Pill (2014) referred to this process as 'interpretative pragmatics' due to PE teachers taking a 'pragmatic' approach when interpreting curriculum documents for the purposes of their teaching. Concerning such teacher values and beliefs affecting QPE (Penney et al., 2009) we have shown through the notion of individual and social habitus how both influence teacher approaches to assessing the Games and Sports Focus Area of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015).

The participants in our study were found to have a strong pre-disposition towards privileging and assessing skills in games and sports while providing limited attention to strategy. The lack of consideration towards the latter was despite this kind of assessment being a requirement within the Achievement Standards of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). By valuing the experiences of teacher colleagues over evidence-based approaches, the continuation of a predominantly skills-based focus towards assessing games and sports was present within the figuration studied. We concur with Mitchell et al. (2013) that restricted skills-based assessment approaches are unsuitable for assessing the breadth of PE.

Conclusion

Assessment undertaken by teachers in our study favoured limited and traditional approaches that were to a greater or lesser extent subjective. This subjectivity was further compounded by teachers assessing criteria that was not part of the curriculum. This 'criteria' instead reflected their values and beliefs, or 'everyday philosophies' for teaching PE (Green, 2002). For example, the teachers spoke about assessing effort, participation, attitude and changing into uniform as assessable criteria. Overall, there was a sense that teachers were grappling with assessing a new curriculum, the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) while struggling to identify assessment approaches that were appropriate for the breadth of the Achievement Standards. There was also a suggestion of teachers doing 'what they had always done' and 'fitting this' to the requirements of the AC: HPE.

Some teachers mentioned that student age, the availability of information and their own level of knowledge about the game or sport being assessed affected their choice of assessment tool. Lachlan's response about modifying his assessment approaches, to include a focus on strategy in addition to skills, was possibly indicative of the figuration altering over time. Nonetheless, the requirement to assess strategy in games and sport is not a new demand brought about by the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015). Through recreating the sociogenesis level of the figuration, we have shown that strategy has been historically mentioned in ACT PE curricula, although not to the same extent as a focus on skill development. More studies are required to find out if figurations of teachers, such as the one discussed here, alter to meet new curricula demands or if they stay relatively unchanged on account of the strength of teacher habitus.

Our identified gap in teacher knowledge about assessing the Games and Sports Focus Area of the AC: HPE (ACARA, 2015) led directly to a PL seminar for teachers about assessing games and sports using GPAL. Striking, net/court and target games, in addition to invasion games were included, to address the shortcoming identified by Georgakis et al. (2015), where teachers expressed a lack of effectiveness at applying GPAL beyond invasion games. The PL event was well attended by teachers across all sectors and from primary, secondary and senior secondary schools. Responses from more than half of the participants in a post-seminar survey showed a high level of satisfaction, with 70% finding the learning offered to be 'extremely valuable'. Further, 90% replied that seminar content had increased their knowledge about assessment in PE and in using GPAL in particular. A possible impact of the research is a raising of teacher awareness about the need for evidence-based and rigorous assessment methods that help them meaningfully assess the learning of activities in the Games and Sport Focus Area of the AC: HPE. Further, developing teacher awareness and competence in assessing games and sports in PE has capacity for enhancing the status of the PE teaching profession and improving student learning outcomes. This may arise from the fact that PE has historically struggled to have comparable status with other subject areas (Georgakis et al., 2015). Also, if a purpose of assessment is to promote student understanding and not just grading (Mitchell et al.,

2013) then teachers need to find instruments of assessment that are reliably fit for purpose. Finally, further research is now required, to establish the extent to which symposium attendees have embedded learning from the PL into their teaching practice. Such research would measure any adaptations to the figuration as a result of the PL opportunity.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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