THE CHALLENGES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

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ICSSPE’S MISSION:

- **SCIENCE**: better informed, more rigorous examination of experience & evidence;

- **EDUCATION**: dissemination & explanation of information, development of the skills for informed choice;

- **ADVOCACY**: promotion of sport & physical education, & positive values.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

• QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION
• HEALTHY LIVING ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN
• ETHICS AND THE INTEGRITY OF SPORT
Physical education develops physical competence so that all children can move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, is an essential basis for their full development and achievement.

Endorsed, with support statements from UNESCO, UNOSDP, IOC, IPC.

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CHALLENGES FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Articulate unique contribution to children’s & young people’s development;
- Secure a sustainable place within school curricula – meet educational criteria;
- Manage overlapping (often conflicting) policy expectations of education, sport and health;
- Provide evidence of physical education’s contribution to educational & social outcomes; lifelong sports participation; health-promoting physical activity.
CHALLENGES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Moral guardian – respect for rules, one’s own & others’ bodies & contributions.

Cultural change in sports, FROM talent identification TOWARDS retaining participation & talent development; FROM hot-housing & over-exposure to competition, TO age-appropriate learning, practice & monitored competition.

Technology transfer between teachers (pedagogy) & coaches, instructors (technical knowledge).

A common, shared pedagogy for all working with children & young people – commitment & practice by all teachers, coaches, instructors, sport administrators.
COLLIDING WORLDS
OF PHYSICAL
EDUCATION &
PROFESSIONAL
SPORT

VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR: EVIDENCE SHOWS DECLINING RESPECT FOR RULES & FAIR PLAY, AS YOUNG PLAYERS ASCEND THE SPORTING LADDER.

QUESTIONS - FOR ADMINISTRATORS OF ELITE & PROFESSIONAL SPORT, SPORTS MEDIA

Should physical education teachers abandon even trying to teach right from wrong, respect for opponents etc?

Are you part of the problem, or part of the solution?
SCIENCE’S FUNCTION – TO OBSERVE/LISTEN, ANALYSE, QUESTION AND INFORM

Martin Luther King:

“It is surprising how many people find it difficult to think about what they know best and value most.”
ICSSPE POSITION: SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF INCLUSIVE, ETHICAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT
UNGROUNDED KNOWLEDGE IS DANGEROUS!
"Science must begin with myths, and with the criticism of myths."

Ch. 1 "Science : Conjectures and Refutations", Section VII

Sport is full of myths, often based on stereotypes & “normative” assumptions – which become the basis of rules.
SCIENCE AND ADVOCACY, WORKING TOGETHER – TO CHALLENGE ANOMALIES AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

- Re-examine “performance”, “science”, “evidence”;
- Challenge stereotyped views of able-bodied/disabled, male/female achievements;
- Question why some kinds of performance are more valued than others – whose performance?
- Revisit ideas of “ability”;
- Acknowledge structural inequalities in sport.
- “Ask Why? – and Change It”.
RECENT CASES – IFs v/s ATHLETES – SYMPTOM OF CHALLENGE

AIBA wanted to impose skirts on female boxers – why?
Defensiveness about “femininity”, media attractiveness.
Athletes not consulted – but resisted and won the right to choose.
(Olympics demonstrated quality of women’s boxing.)

SIMILAR cases in international badminton, beach volleyball – athlete groups have challenged IFs & achieved success – the right to choose.
CHALLENGES TO BOTH CULTURES & NORMALISED PRACTICES IN SPORT

DIFFERENT REASONS FOR COVERING THE BODY – SIMILAR VISUAL IMAGES.

2008 “ACCEPT AND RESPECT” DECLARATION REQUIRES International Federations TO ASSESS THEIR OWN RULES & PRACTICES.
ANOMALIES – exceptions to the rule

- Are a nuisance for both the law and “fairness” in sports competition.
- They call into question, the basis of justice and fairness – especially categories on which judgements and decisions are made.
- Much of the law is based on normative assumptions and behaviours: so are sport rules, many framed in Victorian England.
- “Normative” not the same as “normal”, nor necessarily logical.
SPIEGEL: You're the only male synchronized swimmer in Germany. With your teammates at FS Bochum, you became the top German team. But now you're not being allowed to swim with the German national team in international competitions. Why not?

Stoepel: The German Swimming Association applied to the international swimming association FINA two years ago to let me compete. But FINA rejected the request. I believe that officials just don't want to see any men in this sport.

...You can already sense that at the national level. Many of the judges are more strict in their scoring of me than they are with my female competitors. It's not fair.

But I haven't given up my dream of one day competing in an international championship.
A “dominant paradigm” refers to the values, or system of thought, in a society that are most standard and widely held at a given time. Dominant paradigms are shaped both by the community’s cultural background and by the context of the historical moment. The following are conditions that facilitate a system of thought to become an accepted dominant paradigm:

- Dynamic leaders introduce and promote the paradigm (“policy entrepreneurs”)
- Government agencies give credence to the paradigm
- Educators propagate the paradigm’s ideas by teaching it to students
- Conferences are devoted to discussing ideas central to the paradigm
PARADIGM OR MYTH? – Scientific critique is about changing the lens through which we view the world of sport and the people who play and run it – and changing their minds too.

The greatest barrier to a paradigm shift ... is the reality of paradigm paralysis, the inability to see beyond current thinking.
PARADIGM SHIFTS ARE SCARY!

- If sport is exclusive (eg excludes women, people with disabilities, older people, minorities, children …), why should the emphasis be on changing THEIR attitudes and behaviour?
- If “sport” excludes so many people, surely it is sport which needs to change!
CHALLENGE:

- What kinds of sport, for which people?
- Who decides what is appropriate?
- How are decisions accountable?
- Sport science for older people, people with learning and physical difficulties, people who are overweight or underweight, people who don’t WANT to excel ?????
ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF PARADIGM: “TALENT”

Recognition of the influence of genetics, accidents of birth, v/s situational factors (family, critical mass, culture, role models);

Malcolm Gladwell 10,000 hour rule (Outliers 2008) & Matthew Syed (Bounce 2010) – challenge to popular notion that “talent” is genetic. Supported by Bailey & Morley (2006) – “reward for something for which performers are not responsible” - ie success related to date of birth, situational factors/contingencies, not only genetic inheritance.

Keeping as many participants “in the game” for as long as possible provides a richer pool for development and success. (Supported by leisure data, LTAD model, pedagogical ideologies).

Participation pyramid mythical – should be a house.
VIRTUOUS CIRCLE: BRIDGES BETWEEN FIELDS OF EVIDENCE

- Talented Development – Long Term Athlete Development
- Delayed Selection
- Sustained Participation
- Life Cycle, Participation Data
- Pedagogy – Physical Literacy
AGENDA FOR RESEARCHERS

- Base line data, with commitment to longitudinal monitoring
- Dynamics of participation
- Policy analysis & monitoring, critique
- Academic/health/sport link data
- Pedagogy research – teaching, coaching & learning

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A FRESH LOOK AT SPORT-SCIENCE RELATIONSHIPS

Whether practitioner, researcher or policy maker, commit to respecting the knowledge and experience of the others – and commit to learning from each other.

Knowledge is power – but wisdom comes from understanding how to apply it.
Charles Leadbetter “Seeing the Light”: RSA 2003

“The essence of professionalism depends on the effective performance of 2 separate, but overlapping elements: knowledge and judgement.”

“A lesson for federations & governments? - & scientists!”