VCE Physical Education 2017-2021

Video transcript – Contemporary issues associated with physical activity and sport

My name is Justen O'Connor from Monash University’s Bachelor of Education, Health and Physical Education program. I'm going to be talking today with my colleagues Dawn Penney and Laura Alfrey about the issues that could be explored in Unit 2, Area study 2. Unit 2, Area of Study 2 focuses on contemporary issues associated with physical activity and sport.

Students have to select and explore one issue from a socio-ecological perspective to evaluate the effect of individual, social, policy and physical factors on participation in physical activity. In addition, they have to develop an understanding of the historical and current perspectives of the issue and forecast future trends.

So Dawn can you tell us what issues we might identify as contemporary issues for this Area of Study, and how might we approach the teaching in it.

Obviously students are more likely to enjoy the Area of Study if the issue they have chosen is one that they recognise and can relate to. So I would encourage teachers to help students select an issue that is genuinely meaningful to them and that will provide a great context through which to explore the key knowledge and apply the key skills identified in Area of Study 2. Whatever issue you choose, the challenge that clearly arises is how to bring it to life and build learning activities around a practical dimension, so that students are actively participating in physical activities while also having a variety of opportunities and responsibilities associated with things like structured observation and other data collection that can inform their reflection.

The key skills for Area of Study 2 include; participate in, and reflect on, physical activities that illustrate the participatory perspective of the selected issue.

Given that emphasis, can you talk a bit more about the sorts of roles students could be challenged to take on and the activities they can participate in and reflect on.

Certainly, there are a lot of possibilities. Students can be encouraged to get involved in activities through various roles including officiating, coaching or being a member of a committee for an event, or for a club. This will extend the insights that they can bring to reflection. Different roles will provide different viewpoints and enable the students to extend their reflection and understanding of the issues.

For any particular issue, the physical activities that they participate in, and reflect on, can be included in a mix of school-based and community based activities, and can also extend to using events on TV or on-line. That mix can provide contrasts that can extend their understanding of the issue. For example, between community, club and professional contexts, or cultural contrasts, through looking at events from another country, or looking at an event from another period of time and giving a historical perspective.

So there are obviously many possibilities for the contemporary issues that teachers might focus on. But can you talk us through a few of these ideas.

One issue that is certainly timely to look at is female participation in sport. With the developments in AFL particularly, it’s an issue that is in the media headlines. Or you might look at other issues associated with gender. For example, the growth and provision for girls and women’s soccer, relative to men’s and boys. Participation in a variety of physical activities, that students identify, as historically linked to gender, can be a basis of exploring different experiences from contrasting gender perspectives and positions.

The use of technologies in physical activity and sport is another great area to explore, opening up the possibility for students to look at, and try out using technologies that feature in personal participation including for example personal tracking, fitness monitoring devices and also some of those that are shaping contemporary professional or elite sport for participants.

Referees, officials, coaches and spectators including video and digital technologies used to gather data about performance and to inform key decisions about goals being scored, balls being in or out, and so on. Practical sessions can explore various technologies and a set of questions can be provided to structure investigation of the sort data that is generated, its possible use and limitations.

What about the use of social media apps to encourage participation through social connection? Social media is a tool used by many agencies and by individuals to promote and support participation.

Yes, that’s a great current issue and students can be supported in using apps to try to engage and support others to participate and they can reflect on their own experiences as a participant.

Cultural identity and participation in sport is another issue that could be explored for the focus on, for example, Indigenous cultures and participation, or other cultural groups relevant to the specific school, community and national context. The aim in taking this focus would be to enable students to look more closely at how inclusive of people from different cultures, various physical activity and sport opportunities really are. They can look into who, from this cultural perspective, is able to access and excel in certain activities, roles or at particular levels and why. What barriers have particular cultural groups faced in the past and what barriers do they face now in trying to become involved in particular activities, or trying to pursue their interests and abilities further.

So getting students to look at the cultural diversity and in particular sports or teams could be a good starting point. I mean for example, the cultural makeup of the different Australian teams in the Olympics perhaps. Maybe in other national or professional settings, like for example cricket, and maybe even in local contexts.

Yes, statistics on those sorts of things can be really revealing. More practically, participation in different activities can also be used as a focus for then looking at issues of cultural identity in sport and ways in which this is expressed and this could open up opportunities for students to be trying new activities that are prominent in other cultural contexts and reflect on links that are commonly made between specific activities and cultural identity.

Rather than labelling particular activities with particular cultural identities, I’d encourage teachers to be exploring the associations that students come up with and to use online resources to explore different emphasises. For example, I watched a television program that explored track and field athletics, and particularly sprinting, as an integral part of Jamaican culture.

Another issue that we might look at is social class and sport participation, or more specifically, social disadvantage and social elitism, playing out in relation to who is able to access various physical activities or sports, and/or pursue representative selection, is an issue that is often overlooked, and potentially a good one the students can explore from a personal perspective.

Just making a record of all the hidden or indirect costs associated with any participation over a week, a season or year, for example can be very revealing. Students can be encouraged to maintain their normal patterns of participation for example, without using cars as a means of transport, that’s one task you could set for homework.

The rise in popularity of so called informal sport is another issue that I see as really relevant to many students. The growth of alternative forms of sport and leisure is now really well documented. Bay swimming, mass participation events, park running, bunch riding, ‘Tough Mudder’, informal park and soccer-cricket are all examples.

So once again, we could add participation in these alongside structured evaluation of them? Yes, I think that mix of participation and evaluation would enable students to gain a good personal understanding of the trend and help them think about things such as how the trend impacts more formal sport participation and what the implications are for the provision of infrastructure to support contemporary forms of participation.

Key to this Area of Study is to consider what issues are relevant for young people as this will generate more ideas. For example ‘Pokemon Go’ was a phenomenon that clearly promoted physical activity, and it might be good to explore something like this in this Unit of study. Unit 2, Area of Study 2 is a unit that encourages teachers and students to explore various factors impacting contemporary physical activity and sport participation. This area of study also challenges students to consider past, current, and future perspectives.