VCE Physical Education 2017-2021

Video transcript - exploring a socio-cultural perspective

Hi my name is Justin O'Connor, from Monash University's Bachelor of Education Health and Physical Education team. In this video, we are going to discuss what a socio-cultural perspective is and identify the very socio-cultural factors that relate to the new VCE PE Study Design, Unit 2 Area of Study 1.

This provides a foundation for then looking in more detail at the socio-cultural aspects of the VCE PE. Before exploring some of the specific links that the new VCE PE makes to socio-cultural factors or their influences, it is worth just clarifying what we mean by a socio-cultural perspective. The socio-cultural perspective directs our attention to the issues relating to society and to culture and includes the historical, social, cultural, environmental, geographic and personal factors. And these are reflected in the key knowledge for Unit 2, Area Study 1.

Where we live, what cultural and social groups we are part of, the traditions of particular sports and clubs, and what our personal values are will all play a significant part in shaping participation across our life span. Alongside of course, the biophysical factors that direct their attention to biomechanical and physiological aspects of performance and participation in sport and physical activity.

Unit 2 clearly brings socio-cultural issues to the fore. We would argue that socio-cultural factors play a key part in shaping patterns of participation. For example, who was involved in what activities at what point in their lives. The activities or the sports that are associated with our national identity or particular cultures. The origins of modern day activities, changes in rules over time, media coverage of sport, and the opportunities or the barriers that individuals face in attempting to pursue particular sports or careers.

These might, for example, relate to gender, ethnicity, age, wealth or sexuality. In the same way as there are theories or concepts that we use to explore biophysical aspects of physical education, we draw on theory and use models to add depth to work, that in part, addresses socio- cultural issues.

The key knowledge for Unit 2, Area Study 1, includes components of a socio- ecological model that explores the individual, the social environment, the physical environment and policy factors that impact behaviour. and the youth physical activity promotion model, a model that incorporates these layers into enabling, pre-disposing and reinforcing factors.

Either of these models can be used as a framework to begin exploring socio-cultural influences with students in relation to their own and/or other people's participation. From a practical teaching perspective, there are obviously a number of ways in which key knowledge and key skills for Unit 2, Area Study 1 can be developed. One way is through critical inquiry approaches that promote students centred learning within structured inquiry framework. Inquiry based learning can provide students with the opportunity to use socio-ecological models to analyse socio-cultural influences on physical activity across the lifespan.

In addition, these can be used to investigate and determine factors that influence an individual’s participation in physical activity across their lifespan as well. An inquiry approach can be used to explore different physical activity issues within young people's local communities. Initially, young people might be encouraged to explore a variety of movement opportunities within their school or local community.

This could be based upon their own interests, or could more broadly encompass a variety of perspectives, for example, older adults or diverse cultures.

Learners are then encouraged to think of how these movement opportunities are impacted by a range personal, social, environmental and policy factors. Learners then draw on the strengths of various community stakeholders, to provide information, or even evidence, that is used to inform strategies that can positively impact participation in this particular targeted movement opportunity.

To give you an example of an inquiry project, the students might follow these steps: they might initially do some mapping of community activities, activity spaces, and centres applicable to arrange a different demographics; they might then review and evaluate transport options including walkability and perhaps even visit key community physical activity sites.

After completing this initial mapping exercise the students might become aware of a community facility that offers dance, tai chi, simple strength classes for groups. Yet despite being 800 metres away, there might be no usable footpath that connects a local retirement village to this facility, and even a nearby shopping centre. So the students might collect evidence from stakeholders including council, shop owners the residence themselves and even the management of the facility, and after a presentation, maybe to local government or those stakeholders, they manage to get a new foot path prioritised in next year's budget.

In the meantime, and with structured support, your students might also introduce the retirement village to a community program by hosting a group activity on the residence grounds.

So in summary, socio-cultural factors are important influences on participation in movement, impacting across multiple layers of influence. Adopting an active inquiry approach and using the models as a framework, will allow students to explore a range of personal, social, cultural and environmental factors that impact physical activity participation for individuals and groups.