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Developing Game Sense Through Tactical Learning

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Introduction

In contemporary school education, traditional learning areas, such as Physical Education, are being expected to contribute to the development of more generic learning outcomes. These expectations create new challenges for teachers with respect to curriculum design, with a need for a shift in pedagogy from teacher-directed to student-centred approaches (Brooker & Clennett, 2006). Game sense provides one student-centred approach that teachers may use to address these generic learning outcomes and the requirements of the curriculum models in terms of knowledge, skills and values and behaviours. In game sense approaches, students are presented with challenges to solve in structured games. Students still develop their techniques (skill execution), but only after they understand the game and the role or importance of the skills in the context of the game.

Learning outcomes from using game sense

As the game sense approach to teaching is a student-centred approach it can be used to foster a range of behavioural, social, cognitive, and affective learning outcomes (Mandigo & Corlett, 2010). Thus, it would be expected to produce cognitive learning outcomes as well as affective learning outcomes. With the changes in curriculum requirements, a more student-centred focus with emphasis on exploratory learning may help teachers encourage learning outcomes that are not discipline-specific.

There are 3 broad categories of learning outcomes that are reflected in the contemporary curriculum models that can be utilised in developing specific learning outcomes for the game sense activities, sessions, and units:

1) **Skills** – (a) Technical (movement patterns) and (b) Tactical (choosing appropriate responses within a game)

2) **Knowledge** – comprehend, apply, analyse, and evaluate. (a) Declarative knowledge – understanding basic rules and techniques and (b) Contextual knowledge – applying knowledge of rules/techniques/tactics to a variety of situations

3) **Values and behaviours** – include feelings/emotions, attitudes, and values and behaviours – it involves learning and understanding about oneself and others.

Teaching for skill transfer across sports

In game sense, games are presented in themes/categories, whereby sports are grouped together, based on tactical similarities, and presented to allow transition/transfer between sports. For example, if a student understands the basic concept of moving into space in an invasion game, they should be able to apply and transfer the concept into other invasion games, such as soccer, hockey, football, lacrosse, and speedball. Games can be classified as invasion games, striking/fielding games, and net/wall games:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>GAME EXAMPLES</th>
<th>STRATEGY EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Invasion</td>
<td>a.Netball, basketball, korfball, team handball.</td>
<td>• Attack: invade an opponent’s space (creating space) to score through a target/goal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b.Soccer, hockey, football, lacrosse, speedball.</td>
<td>• Defence: to occupy/block up space to prevent scoring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c.Rugby codes: Touch, League, Union, Grid iron.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Striking/fielding</td>
<td>Kickball, teeball, rounders, softball, baseball, cricket.</td>
<td>• Batting team: strikes ball away from fielders to allow maximum time for running</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fielding team: occupy positions on the field to minimise running time</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Net/wall</td>
<td>Downball, bat tennis, table tennis, badminton, squash, tennis, volleyball.</td>
<td>• To place the ball away from your opponent/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Occupy positions to minimise the distance to an opponent’s shot</td>
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Table 2: Sports can be categorised into 3 groups, based on tactical similarities

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Teaching game sense – a game example

“Prison break” (Breed & Spittle 2011, Ch 5: Invasion Games pp. 105-107)

Difficulty level: intermediate to advanced

Game outcomes

1) Attacking team – to identify space in the defensive zone, outnumber the opposition, move the ball quickly to catch defence out of position.

2) Defending team – to quickly shift defence around to deny opposition space.

Game description

1) Teams of 5v5 or 6v6. Mark out a square (about 10 x 10 metres) with another one about 3 metres outside of it.

2) One team begins as defenders, the other as attackers with the ball in the inside square.

3) Use a time limit of 90 seconds before swapping roles.

4) Defenders can move anywhere in the outer square, but may not enter the inside square.

5) The aim is for the attacking team to pass the ball around or run with the ball until they can run the ball through the outer square, without being tagged or tackled by a defender.

6) If a score is made, the ball is placed on the ground and a team-mate picks it up to continue play by running it back into the inner square. The same occurs if a tag or tackle is made in the outer square before crossing the outer square.

7) If a score or a tag has been made on one of the four sides, that side becomes out of play (only three sides to protect at one time) until another score or tag or tackle has been made on another side (for example, may not score or be tagged on the same side in succession).

Hint: If the attacking team can pick up the ball quickly and get it moving after a touch or score, then they will create more gaps in the defence.

Variation

Add a defender to inside the square to put pressure on passes (can intercept ball for a point).

Key questions

1) How did you decide whether to run with the ball or pass it? (Did you have a team-mate in a better or more attacking position?)

2) Was it more effective to move the ball quickly or slowly? Why? (Quickly, so that the defenders don’t have as much time to move around and fill up the gaps or deny space.)

3) How do you go about creating a gap (or space) in the defensive zone? (Draw defender, run at defenders; create 2v1).

4) Defenders – how do you work together in order to prevent space for the attacking team? (Communication.)

5) What type of defence is this called? (Zone.) Why is it called this? (Guarding an area or space, rather than a direct opponent.)

Group organisation

Select teams of 4v4 to 6v6. If more than six per team, rotate them every one to two minutes, to ensure that every player has the same amount of game time (set rotations).

Equipment

- Netballs, basketballs, footballs, hockey sticks and balls – enough for each game.
- At least eight cones per grid or game (two squares for each game).
- Enough sets of bibs for half the group (the team without the ball wears them to begin with).

Conclusion

Game sense is a teaching and coaching method that will meet the needs and requirements of current and future curriculum frameworks, as it fosters student learning from a holistic approach, including the development of cognitive, physical and emotional states. Ray Breed and Michael Spittle have produced a book with Cambridge University Press titled: “Developing game sense through tactical learning – a resource for teachers and coaches”. This can be purchased from the Healthy Lifestyles Bookshop (www.healthylifestylesbookshop.com.au). The book includes:

- Theoretical foundations of game sense and curriculum models
- Teaching/coaching methods and how to use game sense and questioning
- Thorough descriptions of invasion, striking/fielding and net/wall games with diagrams, organisation, variations and questions
- 8 complete thematic units of work suitable for primary and secondary students

References


