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## Researching Sport Education Appreciatively

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**Abstract:** In order to plan and enact appropriate learning environments in physical education (PE) teachers are increasingly directed to models based practice. The Sport Education model is one of these models for PE curriculum and teaching design that informs the content and pedagogical direction of sport teaching in PE. Despite Sport Education being well researched internationally, there are few examples of research consideration of this model in Australian PE in the last ten years. In this paper the aim is to appreciatively examine two secondary school PE teachers use of the Sport Education model in the context of their familiarisation of the new Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education. At the same time, exploring the use of Appreciative Inquiry to examine models based practice in PE was also an aim of the study. Data were collected from pre and post interviews with the teachers and an end of unit survey of the Year 9 students undertaking the Sport Education unit. The Sport Education model was found to be most suitable to teaching for student evidence of the personal and social skills elements of the Achievement Standard. Appreciative Inquiry was found to be suitable for foregrounding existing examples of teacher use of models based practice, highlighting what it is about the teachers that led them to stay with the model when the literature particular to Australian PE suggests mostly a continuation of the “traditional” physical education method.

**Keywords:** *physical, education, sport, appreciative, inquiry*

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### Introduction

Research concerning the Sport Education curriculum model (SEM) has shown unequivocal results on students personal and social development, but research is scarce about the limits, constraints and possibilities of the model for impact on student learning outcomes (Araujo, Mesquita & Hastie, 2014). Furthermore, there has been little research into the application of the SEM and the achievement of students learning outcomes in Australian secondary schools in the past ten-fifteen years, a time marked by the introduction of standardised curriculum frameworks within educational jurisdictions (Australian states and territories) to coordinate teaching and student learning across education sites and sectors. Indeed, there has been no research consideration of the SEM within the context of student demonstration of the new Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education student achievement standards (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA), 2016).

Although research has evaluated the impact of the application of the SEM from practical implementation perspectives and its impact on various dimensions of student learning, in Australia the teacher choice to develop curricula to reflect the aims of the SEM sits

within the context of a prescribed curriculum framework. Curriculum frameworks contain clear descriptions of student learning outcomes and achievement standards at “benchmark” levels along a continuum of achievement from entry (Foundation Year) to completion (Year 10) of compulsory school education. Research considering the impact of teacher use of the SEM on student learning outcomes is limited (Araujo et al., 2014; Hastie, Calderon, Palao & Ortega, 2011). This research is relevant as it will address the gap in research related to student demonstration of evidence of achievement of learning outcomes by the study’s consideration of the utility of the model for the student achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum HPE at standard 6, Year 9-10.

Further significance of this study is derived from the theoretical framework for the study. To date, SEM research (and indeed, the majority of physical education research) has been conducted through the lens of critical inquiry. Research has either proceeded from the identification of a teaching and learning problem and the subsequent framing of a research question that leads to the use of the SEM as solution to the question, or from the evaluative “verses” proposition that the SEM is possibly better than an alternative, or to what is existing practice for some

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dimension of the teaching and learning equation. There has been no research consideration of the SEM from the positive ontology of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study as the teachers involved with the research were long-time advocates of the SEM, and had established the use of the model in their teaching. The research emerged from the teachers' desire to understand the model and its impact on student learning outcomes from the teachers' implementation of the SEM. The study from which this paper originates was thus not concerned with educational change per se, but with the educative potential of the SEM within the context of the Australian Curriculum HPE, and specifically, the curriculum dimensions related to personal and social skill learning associated with the curriculum sub-strand: Learning through Movement (ACARA, 2016).

### Background

#### *The Sport Education Model*

In 1994 Siedentop introduced in text the SEM. The contextualisation of key features of community sport in PE provided by the SEM responded to Siedentop's research finding that sport in PE was typically decontextualised from the rituals, values, histories and traditions, and culture that give meaning and social significance to community sport (Kinchin, 2006; Siedentop, Hastie & van der Mars, 2011). PE consisting largely of the teaching of isolated sport skills in activities mostly decontextualised from game play as well as the absence of the identifying features typically found in community sport reasonably leads to the conclusion that the teaching of sport in PE is often "incomplete" (Siedentop, 1994; Kinchen, 2006; Pill, 2015).

The SEM contextualises sport teaching in PE through six major features. The features provide a "design specification" of essential components that identify the model (Hastie, 2012, p. 1). The six features are:

1. Activities are arranged in the format of a *season of sport*;
2. Team *affiliation* is established by teams that endure for the duration of the season;
3. *Formal competition* is included in the season format
4. *Records* are kept to recognise and reward individual and/or team attainment;
5. The season of sport is finalised with a *culminating event* (like a "World Cup", or finals play-offs); and
6. Enthusiasm for sport is encouraged by the use of prompts such as team names, uniforms, team songs, team posters, team announcements and newsletters.

(Siedentop, 1994; Kinchin, 2006)

The six features were identified to enable PE to mimic community sport in an authentic way (Hastie, 2012). A

major philosophy of the SEM is disruption of the multi-activity program format through units that are longer than commonly programmed in PE, and which through this extended nature, enable greater depth of content coverage (Kinchin, 2006). The SEM is arguably the most researched and validated of the models based curriculum and pedagogical programs available in the literature. Five major reviews of the literature are available (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005; Kinchin, 2006; Hastie, Martínez, & Calderón, 2011; Hastie, 2012; Araujo et al., 2014). These reviews suggest that students are attracted to the model, with many preferring the model compared to the PE they had previously experienced (Kinchin, 2006; Hastie, 2012), particularly for those often less inclined to participation (Hastie et al., 2011b). Enhanced enthusiasm for PE from both boys and girls, and increase in student effort in PE during SEM units has also been noted (Kinchin, 2006). Generally, students are positive about team affiliation and the opportunity for specific role responsibility within the team and the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing format of the sport season (Kinchin, 2006).

The research suggests that the majority of teachers introduced to the SEM like and endorse it (Kinchin, 2006). While the SEM is acknowledged for its potential to be a curriculum model that addresses common issues of equity and inclusion in PE, research reports some students still feel excluded in class contexts where there are roles (such as coach or team manager) that have more substance and/or influence on the season format than other roles (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005; Kinchin, 2006; Hastie et al., 2011b). Teachers perceive the SEM as effective in developing personal and social skills. The SEM's essential feature of team affiliation that provides persistent group membership is central in the SE model providing a context for personal and social skill development (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005; Farias, Hastie & Mesquita, 2015).

The development of competence is also one of the objectives of the SEM. Research suggests teachers report perceived improvements in skill, and that while evidence of improvement of discrete skills to date is equivocal there is burgeoning evidence of the SEMs efficacy for tactical development, decision making and game play competency (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005; Hastie et al., 2011b; Hastie, 2012). Research on game competence using quasi-experimental design comparing direct instruction to the SEM showed that although both models resulted in positive changes in skill ability the SEM elicited greater increases in game play knowledge and performance (Hastie, 2012). However, research evidence concerning the SEMs impact on student learning outcome achievement is still warranted (Hastie et al., 2011b; Araujo et al., 2014) and practitioners have questioned the validity of the SEM as a context for skill learning outcomes (Wallhead & O'Sullivan, 2005).

### *Appreciative Inquiry*

Enright, Hill, Sandford and Gard (2014) stated that PE “scholars have certainly worked hard to identify and understand what is broken”, suggesting a “preoccupation with failure and a problem-focussed orientation towards educational change” (p.914). This is a provocative claim, however, there is as Enright et al. (2014) suggested a well-documented research body setting out a continuing litany of failure in PE. This body of research addresses questionable pedagogy, problematic for learning curriculum design, low levels of PE teacher pedagogical and content knowledge, and low learning effectiveness from dysfunctional multi-activity program configurations and causal learning settings. Giles and Anderson (2008) claimed that education research is frequently framed by, and presented in, deficit language and messaging to education discourse generally, and so the treatment of PE curriculum and pedagogy as problems to be solved is not necessarily unique in the field of education.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) emerged as a conceptual reimagining of critically orientated action research in the 1980’s to provide another way of thinking about “change” research projects (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Rather than begin with the identification and articulation of a problem, AI commences with a focus about organisations and/or individuals “at their best” by initially asking questions about success and strengths. A premise of AI is that individuals and organisations will move towards what they talk about and study, at least initially, what works and how to amplify that study – and so in an AI process it is presumed that it is best to begin by focusing on what is working (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003). The shift from problem initiated research to an appreciative perspective is claimed to provide greater transformational potential (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The AI process entails four steps. These are (1) identify the best of what is, (2) identify what might be, (3) collaborative dialogue to achieve participant consent about what should be, and (4) collective experimentation to discover what can be. The “4-D Method” is the most common expression of the four steps:

- Discover the best of what is occurring;
- Dream of what is possible when things are at their best;
- Design possibility statements that give life and meaning to the dream of what is possible; and
- Deliver personal commitments to take action

Where much qualitative research is underpinned by logical empiricism that assumes that social phenomena are sufficiently stable to be replicable and therefore permit generalisations, AI on the other hand, is underpinned by a socio-rationalist assumption that social phenomena are unstable as so there is nothing

inherently “real” about any social form. Results from AI’s are therefore more elaborative although generalisations are still possible. AI shifts the interpretivist epistemology common of qualitative research from problems to possibilities (Bushe, 2011; Pill, 2013). Problems are not ignored in an AI as they emerge through the generative manner of the AI four step process (Bushe, 2011; Raymond & Hall, 2008), but a distinctive outcome of an AI is the development of a positive anticipatory image of the future (Cooperrider, 1990). Providing significance for this study, there has been very little use of AI in physical education research. Enright et al. (2014) and Fiorentino (2012) have argued the case for AI in PE research, and Pill (2014) has provided the only research to empirically use AI, in an examination of PE teachers’ use of a game-centred approach.

### **Method**

AI is a form of qualitative research where inductive logic is used to interpret the experiences of the participants and the meanings that arise. Non-probability purposive sampling was used as the participants revealed themselves to the researcher to be interested in researching their own SE curriculum practice. Unlike probability sampling, the study did not evolve from a goal to achieve objectivity in the selection of participants for the aim to necessarily make generalisations to the wider population of interest (PE teachers). Instead, the evolutionary nature of a study following AI protocols and the workings of the study participants were of initial interest and the making of generalisations from the sample a desired but a secondary consideration. AI was also considered appropriate for the study as it was investigating teachers who were long time adherents of the SEM in PE and as such, the SEM was not positioned as the potential solution to a PE pedagogical or curriculum problem in this context. This study was therefore an example of an AI that had as one of its aims to elevate the organisational consciousness of the participants (Whitney, 2004). The use of AI in this study is also consistent with the use of AI to identify instances of leading practice and the nuances associated with that practice in order to inspire change with others who can identify with the stories of practice the research presents (Pill, 2014). Hammond (1998) proposed that one of the assumptions of AI is that language creates our reality. Studies such as this where existing examples of use of models based practice in contexts where teachers believe the model provides curriculum effectiveness may provide a platform for envisaging better PE practice and balance the “pedagogical crises” and “PE as broken” narrative suggested by Enright et al. (2014).

The study thus occurred in the “natural” setting (Brooker, Kirk, Braiuka & Brangrove, 2000) of the secondary school PE and the curriculum implementation objectives of the teachers. There were,

therefore, parallels between the use of AI to organise this study and the pedagogue research tradition (Bishop, 1992) of the teaching experiment which involves researchers working with teachers to study their teaching and students responses to the curriculum (Rovegno, Nevett & Babiarz, 2001; Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006; Casey & Hastie, 2011).

*Teacher data*

The two participants in the study were “specialist” secondary PE teachers in the same co-educational secondary school (Year 8-12) and both teaching different Year 9 PE girls’ classes at the time of the study. The participants provided informed consent for participation following school consent and institutional research board ethics approval for the study. To protect the identity of the teachers and the school, the pseudonyms Tony and Chris will be used. Tony had been using the SEM in his PE teaching “since the 1990’s”, while Chris was introduced to the model when arriving at this school and having to use the model as Tony, in his long standing role as Head of Department, had mandated a unit of SEM in PE in Term 4 for all Year 8 and 9 classes. Both teachers identified themselves as

strong advocates of the SEM, but mentioned working with other colleagues who were reticent about the SEM and held reservations about having to use the model, possibly only using it because it was required by Tony.

The teachers initially met with the chief investigator (CI), author 1, to discuss the tenets of the SEM and how they existed in the teacher’s unit planning to confirm that the teachers were in fact using the SEM. This verification included the teachers providing the CI with copies of the unit plans for the classes. Further, the CI made two visits to the school to observe both classes during the Sport Education unit. Practically, the CI adopted a guiding and supporting role typical of the collaborative nature of AI. An audit trail was created by the CI to track fidelity to the SEM during the units of work (Figure 1). The role of the CI supporting the teachers with their detailed forward planning by reviewing with them the characteristics of the SEM and how they existed in each unit of work, the ongoing conversation through the unit of work and site visits is described by Penney, Clarke & Quill (2005) as a “key role for university staff” (p.26) researching collaboratively with teachers.

<u>Unit Preparation</u>	
Meeting with CI	Verification of understanding and inclusion of the six features of the SEM in the units of work.  Mapping to ACHPE Student Achievement Standard for Yr9-10
Teacher Planning	Teachers provided CI with the unit plans for the SEM units of work.
<u>Unit Delivery</u>	
Extended unit of work	9 weeks x 2 lessons per week.
Team Affiliation	Students stayed in the same team for the duration of the unit of work.
Multiple Roles	Students allocated roles in addition to the role of “player”  Teacher managed student performance in the roles
Season of Sport	Unit of work (netball and badminton) organised as season of sport with pre-season focus on technical and tactical skill development followed by competition.
Formal Competition	Unit of work included a season of competition.
Record Keeping	Team performances recorded and a premiership ladder created  Student roles reported on their progress via a sports board
Culminating Event	Sport seasons finished with a finals series between teams.
Enthusiasm	Teams developed shared identity by creating team names, chants and mottos.

*Figure 1. The Sport Education unit implementation audit trail for model fidelity*

The pre-unit and post-unit interviews and data analysis adhered to the 4-D model (Giles & Kung, 2010; Pill, 2014). The questions used in each of the interviews are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The 4-D model was explained to the participants. Typical of AI, the CI took notes during the interviews to enable some collaborative theory building to occur during the interview. Participant checking occurred throughout the interview and the themes identified audited by the interview participant for accuracy. The interviews were also recorded and later transcribed.

Following transcription, each interview was treated as a single data set initially searched for recurring topics, words or phrases to check and refine where necessary the themes developed during the interviews (Brogden & Knopp Bilken, 2007). The transcription of the interview and any refinement to themes were checked with the participants. The four interviews were then re-analysed as a single data set to enable further data reduction and refinement of themes, permitting central categories to emerge via constant comparative analysis (Gribich, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The second author reviewed the data, coding and themes at each stage of analysis.

Table 1. Teacher Pre Unit Teaching Interview

<p>Discovering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When were you introduced to the Sport Education model?</li> <li>• What initially attracted you to the model?</li> <li>• Can you describe a peak moment in your teaching directly attributable to the use of the Sport Education model?</li> </ul> <p>Dreaming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your hopes for this unit of work?</li> </ul> <p>Designing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will you do to facilitate those objectives and outcomes?</li> <li>• Delivering</li> <li>• Why do you believe you have so enthusiastically adopted the Sport Education model?</li> </ul>
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Table 2. Teacher Post Unit Teaching Interview

<p>Discovering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role did the Sport Education model play in student demonstration of the ACHPE student achievement standard - Students demonstrate leadership, fair play and cooperation across a range of movement contexts</li> </ul>
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<p>Delivering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will you continue to do?</li> <li>• What will you do more of?</li> <li>• What will you do differently?</li> </ul> <p>Designing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you most pleased about?</li> </ul> <p>Dreaming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the future of Sport Education in your school?</li> <li>• You are at the end of your career. You have clearly been a leader in implementation of the Sport Education model, for which you are being recognised. What does that citation say?</li> </ul>
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*Student Data*

Data was also collected from the students via an end of unit survey. The class teachers co-constructed the survey with the CI to enable the class teachers to get feedback on aspects of the SEM unit that were of interest to them as well as to the study. The questions were peer checked by author 2, and are listed in Table 3. Each class was a single gender girls' class with 22 students. Both classes ran for two, sixty-minute lessons per week for nine weeks during Term 4 of the school year. Tony's class chose to do Netball and Chris's class chose to do Badminton, with 17 students from Tony's (N=17/22) returning consent and the completed survey, and 10 students from Chris's class (N=10/22), for a total of 27 returns (N=27/44). Analysis of the data involved the CI in constant comparative analysis (Gribich, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), whereby the data was reduced and organised by coding into conceptual categories, followed by analysis of the codes for regularities to generate themes, and then finally a re-reading of the raw data to select statements that illustrate the themes (Gratton & Jones, 2007). The second author reviewed the data, coding and themes at each stage of analysis.

Table 3. Student Survey Questions

<p>What was your team role?</p> <p>Did you like having a team role (please explain)?</p> <p>How did having a team role make you feel (please explain)?</p> <p>What did you like or dislike about having a team role (please explain)?</p> <p>What was your committee role?</p>
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Did you like having a committee role (please explain)?

How did having a committee role make you feel (please explain)?

What did you like or dislike about having a committee role (please explain)?

Did having team and/ committee roles in PE this term help you develop better personal and social skills (like team-work, cooperation)? (please explain)?

Was your relationship with your teacher different in PE this term? (please explain)

Was your relationship with your classmates different this term? (please explain)?

Did you find greater opportunity for game participation? (please explain)?

Did the team and committee roles enabled you to demonstrate evidence of achievement of the Australian Curriculum HPE Achievement Standards set for the unit of work? (please explain)?

## Results

### *Teacher data*

Tony was an enthusiast for the SEM from the first time he was introduced to the model at a professional learning event. In Tony's words, "I went to the PD day and thought 'oh well' let's give it a go, I am always open to new ideas. When I go back to school, I just found that some of the results were results I hadn't got from any other form of phys-ed pedagogy" Tony, (pre-unit interview). Like Tony, Chris did not encounter the SEM while undertaking PE teacher education. Chris's introduction to the SEM was beginning at the school where this study occurred and the SEM was an existing part of the PE curriculum. "I saw it and liked it straight away for the benefits" (Chris, pre-unit interview).

The propositions developed from analysis of the teacher 4-D interview data are summarised in Table 4. The necessity for the students to be responsible and accountable to self and each other when they take on roles for the SEM to really work as intended feeds into the proposition that where this student "buy in" occurs, assessment is potentially more effective as the teacher has more opportunity to listen and observe students. For example, Tony noted: "students take on one of the roles and so they have a sense of ownership which enables them to more honestly achieve those (personal and social skill) outcomes", while also noting "roles allow the teacher to stand back and observe more. You know you can then reflect, and prompt, and change

things if you need to get a better idea if students are achieving the curriculum outcomes" (Tony, end of unit interview).

The teachers concluded that the SEM was appropriate for the design of learning that enables students to develop and then demonstrate the selected element of the ACHPE. Central to this suitability was the sharing of responsibility between the students and the teachers necessitated by the role responsibility element of the SEM, meaning that students were purposefully placed by the teacher in contexts where they had to work together in both design and delivery of the season of sport. This is captured in this quote from Tony's end of unit interview:

The teacher steps off centre stage and students have to work things out more for themselves [...] students have to be invested in designing as well as doing [...] They have ownership of the season for it to work. It is their unit of work, and there is real life learning. It is not artificial like a lot of phys-ed lessons are artificial. There are premiership points. They are undertaking roles. They get criticism from other students if they don't do a role properly.

Chris concluded that "when you came to assess it, it was really obvious, you were really clear about what they had done, or maybe, what they hadn't done [...] the questions about social capability and the things that sit in that aspect of the achievement standards come through so strongly in a SEPEP unit" (Chris, end of unit interview). Tony believed the "all girl" class context was also important in the success of the unit specifically being able to reveal and further develop personal and social skills. "The girls said that they were more willing to try things without the boys present. It was especially important for the less assured students who could extend themselves without feeling silly in front of boisterous girls" (Tony, end of unit interview). Chris reflected that,

"I think this model allows the educative purpose proposition of the Australian Curriculum to be seen a lot more. Criticism of PE traditionally has been that it is just a bit about play and sport. This is clearly about sport, but there is no way someone could walk in and not see the educative purpose of what is happening" (Chris, end of unit interview).

It was clear Tony and Chris shared a similar enthusiasm for personal continuous improvement stemming from a desire to enhance student learning outcomes. Attending professional learning events, regular reflection on practice and review of units of work, and a preparedness to learn from others emerged from this enthusiasm. Both teachers offered, however, they felt different from other PE teachers they had worked with. For example, reflecting on why he hadn't come across more teachers using the SEM

and the reluctance of some of the PE teachers at the school to embrace the model, Tony offered, "I just wonder if a lot of physical education teachers are in a comfort zone where as long as the students are reasonably active, no one cares." (Tony, pre-unit interview). Chris also reflected on experiencing PE teachers who lacked enthusiasm for the SEM, including colleagues "who feel they can't do SEPEP for ten weeks because they would get bored, and the kids would get bored" (Chris, pre-unit interview).

Both teachers acknowledged a need in future to place more detail in role descriptions and ongoing oversight into some of roles such as media, statistician and publicist – what Chris and Tony both described as the more "nebulous roles". Both also felt compromised in their capacity to balance the three SEM aims of competent, literate and enthusiastic even though the unit of work went for the entire nine week duration of the school term. The desire to achieve maximum activity time each lesson was balanced against time required for team meetings, role group meetings and time to allow the students to administer the season. This was in part addressed by adding "PE Homework" to the unit of work which involved the students meeting, preparing and producing for the role responsibilities.

Tony reflected that, "there was a push on the model in the 1990's, and funding around for various sports" (Tony, pre-unit interview), referring to the 1995 Sport Education in Physical Education (SEPEP) Program (Alexander, Taggart, Medland & Thorpe, 1995) resource and the professional learning funded by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) that accompanied the release of the resource. "The SEPEP program was also really well resourced. It did give you a bit of a head start" (Tony, pre-unit interview). Tony was introduced to the SEM at this time, and he reflected on the importance of this professional learning in shaping his attitude to give the model a try.

"A guy came in for a couple of hours. He was the PE Senior at a secondary school. He was fairly old grizzled sort of guy. He had tried it and extolled the benefits of it. That picked my interest. You know, someone who has been around for a long time, a grizzled old veteran who didn't take things on lightly" (Tony, pre-unit interview)

However, Chris indicated a relative absence of SEM professional learning opportunities in more recent times, with conferences more likely to emphasise game-based models such as the Game Sense approach. Chris believed that, "Need to make sure SEPEP sessions are provided at conferences. It needs to be consistently ensured teachers are hearing about it and having the (PD) opportunity" (Chris, end of unit interview). This perspective was shared by Tony, who suggested that;

"I think a number of years ago there was a big push. It was taken up by some people, but if my understanding is right, the funding dried up. I think the sporting bodies drove it and then the funding dried up and there has only been dribs and drabs of it since. I guess there hasn't been the champions of it, has there [...] You need to have the opportunity at conferences to see it in action" (Tony, end of unit interview)

*Table 4. 4-D Teacher Propositions*

*What should be (Dream)?*

It is necessary for the students to be responsible and accountable to self and each other when they take on roles for the Sport Education model to really work as intended.

Scaffolding to provide structure and support for student role responsibilities.

*What could be (Design)?*

Assessment is potentially more effective as the teacher has more opportunity to listen and observe students.

Sport Education model more accepted by the other PE teachers.

*What was (Discover)?*

Some roles are more prominent than others during the season

Only two lessons per week means compromises are made in weighting of Sport Education features contribution to class time and student engagement

Sport Education model makes the job of assessment of student accomplishment of the personal and social skill elements of the Achievement Standard easier

The potential for more explicit teaching of personal and social skills is the motivation for adoption of the Sport Education model

The Sport Education model unit can be less work in class as you are facilitating, listening and observing, and adding direction and information as you have prepared and enabled the students to have role responsibility.

Preparation and planning for student role responsibility takes more teacher time out of class than other PE units of work.

*What next (Deliver)?*

Sport Education model needs a "champion" in Australia

### Student data

The student data in Table 5 revealed that students liked the extra responsibilities of the roles as helping others was valued, and having a role made them feel more important and valued in the class. However, there were two negative responses concerning role responsibility indicating more homework required to prepare for the role and having extra responsibility was disliked. For example, typical of the responses about the need for PE homework to prepare for the roles, "We would often forget to do some of the media work because we didn't want PE homework" (Student 3, Chris's class). Students experienced positive feelings about role responsibility, mostly associated with being able to have some leadership and be of help to others making them feel important. However, two responses indicated that some students felt extra pressure. This feeling is captured by this quote: "I felt there was even more pressure in (sic) my shoulders on top of studies" (Student 3, Tony's class). Of a similar type, this response by a different student to the question "What did you like or dislike about having a team role?" further emphasises this feeling of "pressure" – "There was a lot of pressure to do your job because you didn't want to let your team down" (Student 5, Tony's class).

Overwhelmingly, the students mostly believed that the role responsibilities provided a context by which they developed teamwork and organisation skills, and to a lesser extent and depending on the role, leadership skills. Those students in coaching roles were most likely to indicate they believed their leadership skills had been developed. However, other students expressed feeling more "needed" because of the addition of the team and committee role responsibilities into the PE unit of work.

Students who felt their relationship with the teacher was different in this SEM model unit of work compared to other PE units felt they were being treated "more like adults" and had more input into decision making about the unit of work, which they valued. However, equally totaled was the number of students that did not believe their relationship with the teacher changed, either because they already had a good relationship with the teacher or they just didn't feel it had changed. However, most student believed the peer relationships in the class had changed. "We became much closer" (Student 6, Tony's class) and "I got closer to my class mates through working together" (Student 1, Chris's class) typify the responses.

Mostly the students believed that the game format improved opportunities for participation in the game and got more people involved. The three responses contradicting this theme all came from Tony's netball class, with two of those respondents not liking the modified game, "because we wanted to play netball" (Student 9, Tony's class). However, students believed that their sport skills improved over the course of the

unit of work, as did their personal and social skills. For example, "Yes, because we got to make our own decisions and take responsibility for our actions" (Student 14, Tony's class). There was only one respondent to the contrary, and this was because "I don't know my mark" (Student 1, Chris's class). In summary, students believed the SEM for the unit of work enabled them to have more impact on decision making about the PE experience. This is captured by the following comment: "Because of our team and committee roles we had more input into decisions made and the way the season was planned and played out" (Student 8, Chris's class).

*Table 5. Themes from the student survey*

Students liked the extra responsibility of the team role
There were negative aspects of role responsibility
Role responsibilities did help to further develop student's teamwork and organisation abilities.
The Sport Education model did not necessarily change the student-teacher relationship.
The Sport Education model changed students' relationship with each other.
Students believed the Sport Education model enabled them to show evidence of accomplishment of the elements of the ACHPE Achievement Standard mapped to the unit of work.

### Discussion

The SEM was not part of the two teachers PE teacher education. Tony noted that there was a "push on model in 1990's" through which he was introduced to the model, and there was indeed a large scale research project and accompanying professional learning program in Australia (Alexander, Taggart & Thorpe, 1997; Alexander, Taggart & Luckman, 1998; Alexander & Luckman, 2001). The SEM was described as an "exemplary context for pursuing a broader range of learning outcomes than PE has traditionally sought and achieved" (Alexander et al., 2001, p243). The push on the SEM at this time was likened to a "crusade" (Alexander et al., 1998). Tracking the path of the SEM since the period of the SEPEP research project is difficult as there is scarce reporting in the literature of SEM initiatives in the Australian context in the last ten years (Pill, 2008, 2010; Spittle & Bryne, 2009). This perhaps add some support to the view from the teachers in this study that the momentum surrounding the SEM has not been sustained since the trialling and research by Edith Cowan University's Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre (SPARC) with Australian Sports Commission (ASC) funding, with the



result that it is not presently common in Australian secondary school PE and that SEM in Australia requires a new “champion”. Pill (2010) suggested the need for continuity of SEM research in Australia because of the enduring cycle of curriculum renewal and the support PE teachers would need in curriculum review and refinement, however, little seems to have occurred since the original Sport and Physical Activity Research (SPARC) Centre and Australian Sports Commission (ASC) funded research and implementation initiative of the mid to late 1990’s (Alexander et al., 1998). The majority of teachers in SEM research literature endorse the model and having experienced it, continue to use it (Kinchin, 2006). This suggests the helpful role of pedagogical research in assisting PE pedagogical change for the practioners involved and reinforces the need for continuity of research initiatives in the SEM in the Australian context in order that the model become more commonplace in school PE curricula.

The teachers in this study identified student “buy in” as imperative to the successful implementation of the SEM. In this study, the teachers largely presumed this buy-in given the nature of the students and the high socio-economic background status of the school. Previous research into student perceptions of the SEM in Australia indicated broad student acceptance and indeed preference for the SEM compared to previously experienced curriculum and pedagogical forms of PE (Alexander et al, 2001; Kinchin, 2006; Hastie et al, 2011b; Wallhead & O’Sullivan, 2005). The literature is clear that generally students are very accepting of the SEM, and the results from this study provide further weight to that evidence.

The role of the teacher in a SEM unit is different to the directive and reproduction style of PE teachers (Alexander & Luckman, 2001), using what Metzler (2011) described as the traditional PE Method (Metzler, 2011). Both teachers described their role in the SEM as being more of a facilitator, describing the relational dimension with students in a way that positioned the students as co-creators of the learning environment as teacher with students worked collaboratively to both design the season of sport and enact the in class activities that comprised the season of sport in PE. Although there was not universally a student feeling that the SEM unit created a changed relationship with the teacher, students acknowledged they were treated differently and “more like adults” because of the role requirements in the SEM unit.

One of the reasons for the research was the teachers wanting to test the SEM as a context for teaching and assessing that met the ACHPE direction at Year 9-10 to enable “opportunities for students to refine and consolidate personal and social skills in demonstrating leadership, teamwork and collaboration” (ACARA, 2016b). The teachers believed that the SEM enabled them to better collect evidence of students capacity to demonstrate “leadership, fair play and cooperation” as

well as competency to “apply and transfer movement concepts and strategies to new and challenging movement situations” towards student demonstration of the Achievement Standard (ACARA, 2016b). Central to this conclusion was the SEM feature of role responsibility allowing two distinct contexts. The first being the more opportunity for the teacher to observe students and interact consultatively. The second context being the role responsibility feature necessitating meaningful peer-to-peer interactions to plan and then execute the requirements of the season of sport in PE. Kinchin (2006) highlighted that the social system encouraged by the SEM is a major factor in promoting meaningful and supportive peer relations in a SEM unit. However, it was concluded by the teachers and noted by some students that not all roles were equal, in the sense that some roles had more to do both in class and in preparation outside of class than other roles, with students in coaching roles most likely to indicate their leadership skills had been developed.

While it was inconclusive in this study as to whether student-teacher relationships changed as a result of the SEM, the students did believe that peer relationships in the SEM changed or were different than in other forms of PE. This was attributed by the students to the need to work more collaboratively with their peers than normally is the case as in the SEM they have to “create” in partnership with each other and the teacher the format of the season of sport as well as the content that will create the student experience of the season. Students also noted they often were required to work in groups with people they would not normally choose to work with, and so they got to know people outside of the normal class social structures that had existed. The SEM literature suggests that the use of persisting teams in the model can foster student appreciation of the opportunity to get to know new people, and generally students like the team affiliation feature (MacPhail, Kirk & Kinchin, 2004; Kinchin, 2006) and that this feature is one that promotes student enthusiasm for the model (Hastie, 2012).

Another feature of the SEM is the use of modified sport forms for the formal season of sport. Students in this study reflected that they believed their sport competence improved, which is consistent with research findings that the SEM is a model capable of fostering skill improvements (Hastie 2012). However, some students did not enjoy the modified sport forms, particularly in the netball unit where these students not appreciative of the modified rules “just wanted to play netball”.

## Conclusion

Consistent with other findings concerning teachers’ appreciation of the SEM, for the teachers in this study the SEM was attractive as they perceived greater student ownership and thus engagement in learning. The teachers appreciated the release from direct

instruction and move to a more supportive “facilitator” role permitting the opportunity to give more attention to student assessment and support to student achievement of the elements of the achievement standard assigned to the unit of work (Hastie, 2012). The AI method for the study was appropriate as the SEM was not being initiated as a solution to a curriculum or pedagogical issue, rather, the motivation for the teachers involvement in the research was to further understand the SEM as existing practitioners of the model, and to find the applicability of the model to the ACHPE Student Achievement Standard for Year 9-10. AI in this study therefore revealed how the teachers came to be persisting with the use of the SEM in their teaching and advocates of the model.

The teachers in this study identified that for the SEM to become more commonplace in secondary PE teaching it needed to be part of the professional learning landscape and that it needed a “champion” such as was the situation that existed at one time with the ASC funding of SEM resources, teacher professional learning, research, and affiliated sporting bodies sports promotion of the model. In this study, AI also showed that in this school the model had its “champion” in Tony who as the PE Coordinator had enforced the use of the model in the schools PE program. Therefore, when Chris came into the school there was the opportunity to observe the model in action and learn from a more experienced other. Supportive environments such this have been noted as potential contexts for pedagogical updating (Curtner-Smith, Hastie & Kinchin, 2008). In addition to AI’s use as a research method capable of “shining a light” on existing models of practice for others to learn from, as was the case of its use in this study, AI’s other use as research method is to appreciatively guide change. There are few existing examples of the use of AI in the PE literature, and so this study adds to that scarce scholarly collection, however, there are no examples of the use and thus consideration of the suitability of AI as a research method for change in PE curriculum and pedagogical practice. There is therefore a need for research using AI specifically for the purpose of capturing appreciatively pedagogical and curriculum reform and renewal.

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