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Objections to FMS thinking

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Five Objections to FMS

- Association of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) with Physical Literacy
- The Number of claims that are made
- Current research agenda
- The pedagogical approach
- Dualist approach

Sailing Long Term Athlete Development (Canada) resource

“The Fundamental movement and sports skills **are referred to as physical literacy**. Individuals who do not develop physical literacy (which consists of agility, balance, coordination, speed, **jumping**, etc) before the onset of the adolescent growth spurt **are unlikely to achieve success in sport**, including sailing.”

Physically literate individuals:

“Demonstrate a wide variety of basic human movements, fundamental movement skills and fundamental sports skills.”

<http://canadiansportforlife.ca/ten-key-factors/physical-literacy>

“Early exposure to fundamental movement skills is essential as they form the **first building blocks of physical literacy**”.

<http://canadiansportforlife.ca/educators/ece-preschool>

Physical and Health Education Canada make the same connection:

“The Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) series created by PHE Canada The series designed to enable the **development of physical literacy** as a solid foundation for supporting long-term sport and physical activity participation.”

<http://www.phecanada.ca/node/626>

The FMS claims

- “Children’s acquisition of fundamental movement skills is essential for children’s **participation and success in sport.**”
- “Fundamental movement skill (FMS) proficiency or the ability to perform basic skills (e.g., throwing, catching and jumping) has been linked to participation **in lifelong physical activity.**”

Building Blocks

- “FMS are considered to be **the building blocks** to sport-specific skills and include motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking and running.
- “Fundamental activities such as running, jumping, skipping, sliding, catching, kicking, and striking are **the basic components of the games, sports, and dances** of our society.”

Health

- “FMS proficiency has also been **linked to better health related measures**, including lower weight status and higher cardiovascular fitness, providing further evidence for the importance of developing strong motor skill proficiency in children.”
- “This data suggests that low levels of motor skill competence may be **contributing to the high levels of inactivity** and **consequent rise in the number of overweight and obese** individuals apparent today.”

Canadian definition of Physical literacy

the development of **fundamental movement skills** that enable the child to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities, in both indoor and outdoor environments that benefit the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of the whole child.

At the end of the latest definition

“These skills enable individuals to make healthy, active choices that are both beneficial to and respectful of their whole self, others and their environment”

This is far too simplistic - young people need far more capabilities than FMS to achieve this

FMS and Research Agenda

- I find it difficult to identify research to show that FMS is the carefully considered best option amongst several alternatives.
- I am also concerned that the science in the FMS research appears to make too many assumptions and inappropriate associations.
- There is a danger of **confirmation bias**.

Pedagogical

- The work of Gabriele Wulf and Arnaud Boutin linking neuroscience and learning opens up **new ways of organising** how young people learn. This work does not seem to have penetrated FMS approaches with **inexperienced and inadequately trained practitioners**.
- Misplaced **conscientiousness** may also lead teachers to rely on **overly rigid practice** regimes.
- Also, **different ways of thinking** about pedagogy in PE are not being used in FMS

Final Objections

- FMS is a **dualist approach** and neglects the essential **embodied nature** of learning.
- A FMS approach is **too narrow a conception** of a quality physical education programme.
- It tends to focus **only on motor skills**.
- It tends to be associated only with **a sports pathway** which is only one aspect of physical education.
- FMS is **not contextually focused** therefore techniques are in danger of being taught in isolation.

Fundamental Movement Skills among children
in New Zealand:
Sport New Zealand (2012)

- Small increases in skills levels over time are seen
- Most skills improve with age
- Boys and girls excel at different skills
- Skill levels vary widely among children of the same age and gender

First Conclusion

In reading the literature and discussing it with colleagues in Europe and Scandinavia they appear to have a different interpretation of FMS compared with countries like Canada, Australia and England.

These voices need to be heard

Second Conclusion

There is a need to establish a platform for reasoned debate in order to generate a common shared agenda for improving practice as opposed to an adversarial point-scoring contest that can only hinder progress

Discussion

Two Questions that need to be addressed:

1. What is the primary purpose of FMS?
2. What is the primary focus of FMS?

Thank you

Revisiting Health

- The traditional view of health-focused-physical education is a **medical model for preventing ill-health** and this can be seen as negative.
- It is also a **“taken-for-granted”** assumption in the Physical Education world
- We need a new model that **focuses on the positive** and represents a guide to practice

Is the issue with FMS one of values
and what is an appropriate focus
for physical education?