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Movement Pedagogy

After completing this chapter you should be able to:

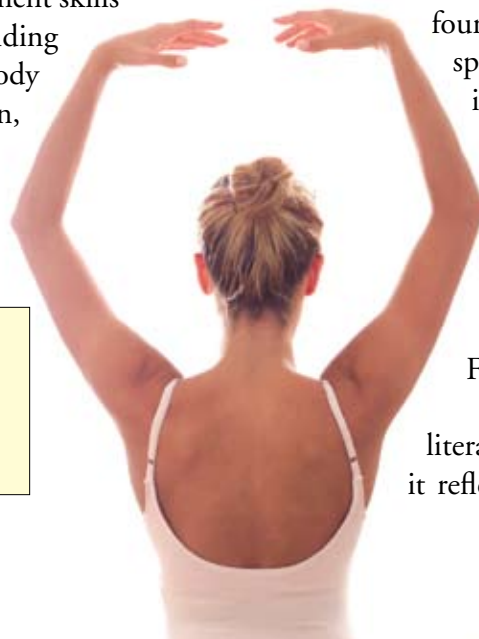
- describe how movement pedagogy has evolved to its present form;
- identify characteristics of the learner, instructor, task, and context that can influence student learning;
- describe how an educator can effectively consider the curriculum, lesson plan, learner, task, and context when planning instruction;
- distinguish effective from ineffective pedagogical practices;
- evaluate how behavior can be managed to enhance student learning;
- identify various features that constitute valid assessment of movement.

Each of us has likely had various degrees of fulfillment through instruction received from teachers, guides, or coaches. If you have served in such an instructional role, you may be aware of how challenging it is. **Pedagogy** is the study of how to effectively instruct. It is both an art and a discipline. In other words, there are some aspects of instruction that can be taught and researched (discipline), and there are others that reflect the personality, creativity, and spontaneity of the instructor (artistry). Learning the content of this chapter will help you become more aware of how to be an effective instructor – as a coach, recreation leader, physical education teacher, personal fitness trainer, consultant, rehabilitation therapist, or one of many other professions – within the movement-oriented domain of kinesiology.

Movement pedagogy is much different today than it was in the past. Historically, people had more physically active lifestyles, partially because they had more physically demanding jobs and relied less on technology and motorized transportation than we do today. Movement instructors used very structured activities to get participants more physically fit and acted much like drill sergeants in the military. In the last century, movement opportunities have expanded to enable more social, health, and mental benefits. Gymnastics-like exercises in which participants imitate the movements of the instructor have increased in popularity (Figure 2.1).

More recently, a more holistic approach called **movement education** has evolved. Movement education teaches underlying movement skills through conceptual understanding (e.g., effort, relationships, body and space awareness), exploration, creativity, and problem solving. This approach differs greatly from more sport-based instruction, which has dominated

Figure 2.1 In the last century, movement opportunities have expanded to include specialized and diverse holistic activities such as yoga and Pilates.



much contemporary movement pedagogy and focuses on skill mastery through and for sport performance. Recent increases in obesity and calls for more holistic education objectives have led to more instructional accountability through, for example, national content standards for quality school physical education. Further, improving lifelong commitments to physical activity, health-related fitness, and wellness has been promoted, which has led to the use of more varied activities and instructional styles.

Delivering Quality Instruction

Research supports the importance of regular movement to holistic health qualities such as reduction of risky behaviors and disease, improved mental well-being, and the development of life skills and character. Movement domains such as physical education, kinesiology, and recreation have incorporated such holistic goals in their programs. The goals emphasize **physical literacy**, defined as having the skills to move purposely, comfortably, confidently, and expressively for the diverse needs of life. For example, the Canadian Sport Centre's Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) plan has established physical literacy as a fundamental aim for helping Canadians develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for being active and healthy. Typically, individuals who are physically literate have the foundation on which to build more specialized movement competencies in disciplines such as dance, sports, and outdoor adventure activities (e.g., backpacking, rock climbing, canoeing). You can learn more about what constitutes physical literacy by completing the informal survey in Figure 2.2.

Although the idea of physical literacy is still relatively new to many, it reflects the current trend away from

Are You Physically Literate?

Assign a rank of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

_____ I am able and motivated to use my movement potential to improve the quality of my life.

_____ I am aware of how my views of movement are different from the views of others.

_____ I move confidently and efficiently in a wide variety of physically challenging situations.

_____ I sense and respond to changes in my environment (e.g., obstacles) when I move.

_____ I imagine creative new movements I can try before I perform them.

_____ I feel comfortable with and proud of my body.

_____ I am aware that what I experience with my body will influence my mind and spirit (and vice versa).

_____ I am aware of my potential to effectively express myself nonverbally by performing various movements.

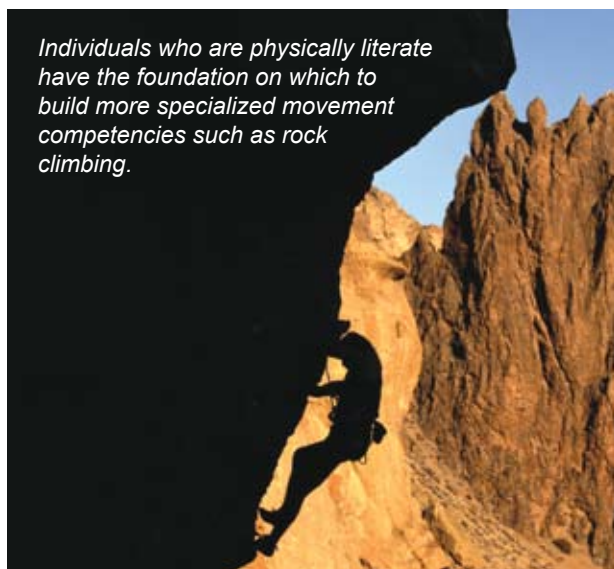
_____ I try to understand, respond to, and affirm the feelings of others.

_____ I can identify and inform others about the things that influence how effectively I can perform movements.

_____ I understand how movement, sleep, and nutrition all work together to improve my overall well-being.

Adapted from Whitehead (2007).

Figure 2.2 Physical literacy survey.



Individuals who are physically literate have the foundation on which to build more specialized movement competencies such as rock climbing.

primarily teaching skill development and sport play toward emphasizing movement appreciation, participation, and proficiency in personally meaningful and chosen activities that are more highly integrated within each individual's lifestyle. Consequently, schools and communities now provide more specialized and diverse alternative movement activities (e.g., dance, aerobics, Pilates, individual and dual sports, outdoor pursuits) taught by more highly trained specialists within and beyond school physical education programs. This has expanded the employment possibilities for movement educators beyond teaching physical education and coaching to include job opportunities in clinics, clubs, and corporations.

Developing Personally and Professionally

Teachers can stimulate or hinder the learning process. Since students' learning is largely influenced by observing models such as their teachers, it is important for instructors to "practice what they teach." Movement educators should appear and behave according to the acceptable standards of their domain or discipline. An educator's appearance (e.g., attire) should not be a distraction to his pupils. Teachers need to consistently be enthusiastic in their role and should demonstrate appropriate confidence, poise, and self-control. They are more successful if they possess expert knowledge and competencies for their domain, are insightful about how students learn, know how instruction can vary to help them learn, utilize instructional skills that are motivating and that foster learning, and are aware of their counterproductive biases and dispositions. For

example, teachers often operate from, and can be unaware of, personal "hidden agendas" that more accurately reflect their beliefs and preferences than what is actually modeled and taught to students.

Teachers' Bias

By nature, every teacher possesses some **bias** that limits her capability to optimally foster learning in all students. Teacher biases can simply take the form of having higher expectations of boys than girls or promoting certain disciplines (e.g., games, dance, gymnastics, and fitness) more than others. Biases can also be evident in how teachers label, group, and interact with students. For instance, physical educators tend to interact more with disruptive students; interact less frequently with low achievers, females, those who sit in the back of the room, and those who are not as physically attractive; and allow low achievers to give up more easily (Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3 When instructors allow their biases or expectations to affect the way they interact with their students, motivation, learning, and achievement can be compromised dramatically.

Educators' Expectations

Instructors should be aware that learners often strive to fulfill their educators' **expectations**. For example, research reports that teachers tend to have superior expectations of students with higher socioeconomic status, students with higher academic averages, and those they perceive to be more attractive. In addition, by placing learners into groups based on ability, an instructor may lead the learners to fulfill the expectations that they perceive the instructor has of them (self-fulfilling prophesy). Thus, instructor expectations can be counterproductive to motivation, learning, and achievement.

Structuring the Learning Context

Social Learning Theory

Many factors influence learning. **Social learning theory** proposes that learning is mainly a result of interactions between personal (e.g., motivations, beliefs, cognitive processing), behavioral (e.g., effort, achievement, learning), and environmental (e.g., instruction, modeling, social setting, task structure) factors. In other words, effective teaching styles vary according to such factors as the purpose of a lesson, student maturity (e.g., cognitive, psychomotor, affective), time of day, number of students, and the available equipment and supplies. Instructors also have different personalities, preferences, and skills that influence their teaching styles. Even though there is no single best way to teach in all circumstances, research has provided insights into teaching methods that are better for certain conditions.

How instructors develop goals, plan, manage the environment, structure learning tasks, and assess progress will have a direct effect on the motivation and achievement of each learner.



Figure 2.4 A positive learning climate that keeps students feeling safe and motivated not only minimizes negative experiences but also fosters optimal learning and achievement.

Positive Learning Climate

Learning can be enhanced when instructions are clearly communicated and understood, supplies are adequate and organized, and students are well managed and feel safe physically and emotionally. This describes a **positive learning climate**. In such a setting, educators enable students to work cooperatively with others, give them input into decisions so they feel autonomous, and sufficiently support them. Better instructors encourage questions; demonstrate caring; give students choices; generate interest in the content; structure tasks to stimulate problem solving and learning, not just performance for a grade; and do not publicize results. Having negative experiences in physical education, perceiving one's ability as low, learning in an overly competitive environment, and facing social evaluation pressures reduce the long-term activity levels of students in and out of school. Providing a positive learning context can enable students to succeed on appropriately challenging tasks, foster motivation, reduce anxiety, and stimulate students to more effectively self-regulate their learning (Figure 2.4).

Understanding Each Learner

Developmentally Appropriate Instruction

Understanding each learner and the learning process can improve teaching. It appears that successful teaching is based more on what the students learn and do and less on what the instructor does. To learn best, students need to have prerequisite knowledge, information-processing and perceptual motor abilities (see Chapters 9 and 10), fundamental motor skills, and confidence with which to acquire new capacities. In other words, teaching needs to be developmentally appropriate – at the appropriate social, psychological, and physical level of the learner (Figure 2.5). The Council on Physical Education for Children states that activities must be “of a frequency, intensity, duration and type that leads to optimal child growth and development and contributes to the development of future physically



Figure 2.5 Teachers and coaches must understand who they are dealing with and adjust their instruction accordingly – on a social, psychological, and physical level.

active lifestyles.” Other considerations include the difficulty of assigned tasks; the size, speed, and weight of objects (e.g., balls); the duration of verbal instructions and activities; the quantity of to-be-learned content; and the complexity of the language being used for teaching.

Students’ Beliefs

To foster more learning in students, instructors should be aware of their pupils’ beliefs. Research has reinforced the importance of certain factors on performance, such as how confident students feel about their capability to learn and perform a task (**self-efficacy**); the reasons they give for success or failure (**attributions**); and how interesting, important, and useful they believe a learning activity is (**task value**). For instance, how confident students feel about performing learning tasks varies according to how difficult they perceive a task to be and where in the task they are. Some students have beliefs that restrict achievement. One such belief is **self-serving bias**, in which students make affirming attributions to themselves (“I am skilled”) when they succeed yet unfairly blame external factors (“The teacher is incompetent”) when they fail.

Learning Styles

A student’s preferred **learning style** is another important learning factor. Learners have as many as seven different styles of intelligence (e.g., spatial, interpersonal, musical, bodily kinesthetic) that respond differently to teaching. For many years the main approach to teaching involved “conditioning” learners to perform using external reinforcements such as rewards or punishments. For example, coaches might use negative reinforcements (e.g., running laps) as a punishment when players’ performance lags, while providing more playing time, leadership roles, or choice of activities as rewards if they respond more productively. Then a more cognitive-based approach called **self-determination theory** emerged, asserting that individuals naturally want to achieve their

Although external reinforcements can be used effectively to “condition” learners to perform at their best, the challenge for educators and coaches is to help learners perform for intrinsic reasons as well as for external rewards.



potential and can do so if they effectively regulate their minds, wills, emotions, bodies, and settings. This theory proposes that educators need to help learners perform for intrinsic more than extrinsic reasons by enabling them to value and enjoy learning for the sake of learning (e.g., gaining new awareness and capabilities) rather than for some external reward (e.g., receiving a prize or gaining the approval of significant others).

Constructing Learning

Most recently, learning scholars have theorized that pupils learn best when they feel empowered to construct their own learning while working collaboratively with others. This approach is called the **constructivist method** because tasks are structured to prompt students to understand rather than memorize, cooperate with others instead of learning alone, and construct authentic (real-world) responses to problems that may have more than one right answer or multiple paths to a

correct solution. As a result, movement educators are beginning to use different styles of teaching depending on the content and setting to try to enhance learning for more students. For example, coaches can help their players construct their own learning by not giving them all the answers to the tactical and skill challenges they face, by having team meetings that require individuals to critically think through team obstacles, and by using open-ended questions (those that do not have one right answer) for the athletes to resolve.

Varying Instruction

Backed by supportive research, movement educators (e.g., teachers, coaches, leaders) have typically used a more **direct method of instruction** (i.e., the educator *delivers* all the content). This has been successful in helping people learn highly structured content that can be implemented progressively based on how difficult it is. However,