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## Student and teacher perceptions of a season of sport education in a regional primary school

J. G. Strikwerda-Brown  
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**STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF A SEASON OF SPORT  
EDUCATION IN A REGIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**BY**

**J.G. Strikwerda-Brown B. Phys. Ed. Dip. Ed.**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the award of**

**Master of Education**

**at the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences,  
Edith Cowan University**

**Date of Submission: December 1999**

## ABSTRACT

An interpretive case study approach was employed to examine student and teacher perceptions of the implementation of a sport education in physical education program (SEPEP) in a Western Australian regional primary school. Choi's (1992) curriculum dimensions were used as a framework. Three year seven teachers implemented SEPEP using a team teaching approach.

The focus teacher, Ms Jenson, a highly regarded classroom teacher, described herself as non-sporty and lacking confidence and expertise in PE teaching. Students in her SEPEP volleyball class were considered less popular and less athletic when compared with those in the other two SEPEP classes. A focus volleyball team comprising five girls and a boy of varying sporting interests and abilities were targeted to determine student perceptions of the program.

Both the students and the teachers were positive in their overall thoughts and feelings about SEPEP. Greater enjoyment of PE classes, improved range and level of learning outcomes and liking of the student-centred structure of the program were reported. The focus teacher and students concurred about problems with the length of the initial organization sessions, gender isolation and poor performance of roles by some students. The teacher and students differed in their perceptions of training sessions, the teacher's role and thoughts about the culminating day. Some problems with the implementation of the program were related to Ms Jenson's lack of experience with the model and expertise in volleyball, such as her lack of appropriate guidance for students

in skill development and coaching roles. However in her view, employing a SEPEP approach to teaching PE was less stressful, more enjoyable and more rewarding for both herself and the students.

The study reaffirms the value of listening to students' thoughts and feelings in PE classes both for teachers and researchers and encourages those in the PE professions to continue to strive for PE that is both valuable and relevant to our consumers.

### Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief :

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature

Date ..... *December, 1999* .....

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Declaration	iv
Acknowledgments	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Chapter	
<b>I INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Background	2
Statement of the Problem	5
Aims of the Study	7
Definitions of Terms	9
Summary	10
<b>II LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>11</b>
Student Perceptions of Physical Education	11
What Do Students Like About Physical Education?	12
Perceived Competence	13
Goal Orientations/Motivation	15
Teacher Behaviour	16
Gender Issues	17
Alienation	18
Physical Education in Western Australian Primary Schools	20
Who Teaches Primary School Physical Education?	20

The Primary School Physical Education Curriculum	22
Curriculum Change in Schools	24
The Need for Change in Physical Education	25
The Sport Education Curriculum Model	28
Research on Sport Education	29
A Curriculum Framework for Physical Education	35
Research Methodology for Studying Student Perceptions	36
Summary	37
<b>III METHOD</b>	40
Conceptual Framework	40
Research Design	43
The Case Study Approach	45
Subject Selection	45
The Teachers	46
The Students	47
Researcher's Role	48
Sources of Data	49
Ethical Issues	54
Time Schedule for the Collection of Data	55
Data Analysis	56
Limitations	56
The Pilot Study	59
The Relationship Between Physical Education and Sport	60
Summary	61

IV	PRIOR TO SEPEP IMPLEMENTATION	63
	The School/Community Context	63
	Physical Education at Connell Primary	64
	The Teacher	66
	Other Teachers Involved in the Study	67
	The Students	68
	A "Typical" Physical Education Lesson, Prior to SEPEP	75
	Discussion	77
	Student Thoughts	78
	Teacher Thoughts	81
	Summary	82
V	THE SEPEP VOLLEYBALL SEASON	84
	Overview of SEPEP Implementation at Connell Primary School	84
	Weeks One and Two	85
	Teacher Planning Prior to the First Student Session	85
	Week One: Introduction of the Students to SEPEP	87
	Week Two: Organisation of Game Modifications, Fixtures and Player Roles	88
	Student Thoughts	89
	Teacher Thoughts	93
	Discussion	95
	Weeks Three and Four	96
	Week Three: First Training and Games Sessions	96
	Week Four: One Training, Second Games Session	98

Student Thoughts	100
Teacher Thoughts	103
Discussion	104
Weeks Five to Eight	106
Week Five: One Training. Third Games Session	106
Week Six: No Training. Fourth Games Session.	108
Week Seven: One Training. One Skills/Games Session	109
Week Eight: One Games Session. One Training.	
Semi-Finals	111
Student Thoughts	112
Teacher Thoughts	114
Discussion	115
Week Nine	118
Week Nine: Preliminary and Grand Finals.	
Conclusion of Season	118
Student Thoughts	119
Teacher Thoughts	120
Discussion	121
Summary	122
VI AFTER SEPEP IMPLEMENTATION	125
The Students	125
Students from the Three Year Seven Classes	125
Students from the Focus Team	133
Discussion	145

The Teachers	157
Ms Jenson	158
Other Teachers Involved in the Study	163
Discussion	164
Differences Between Student and Teacher Perceptions	171
Summary	174
VII    CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	177
Summary of findings within Choi's curriculum dimensions	178
Textual dimension	178
Operational dimension	179
Perceptual dimension	181
Discussion and Recommendations	184
Conclusion	189
REFERENCES	191
APPENDICES	203
A    Student Questionnaires	204
B    Teacher Questionnaires	211
C    Field Notes – Sample Extract	217
D    Class Discussion - Sample Extract	219
E    Student Interview - Sample Extract	222
F    Teacher Interview - Sample Extract	225
G    Ethics Approval	228
H    Letter to Parents	230
I    Connell Primary School Performance Indicators	233

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Research Questions Placed In Choi's (1992) Curriculum Dimensions	43
2 Data Collection Sources Related To The Research Questions	54
3 Procedure And Time Line For Data Collection	55
4 Student Thoughts About Friday Sport	70
5 Reasons For Liking/Disliking Friday Sport	71
6 What Do You Think You Learn In Physical Education Classes?	72
7 Best/Worst Things About Physical Education	74
8 Weekly Timetable Of SEPEP Implementation At Connell Primary School	85
9 Student Thoughts About Friday Sport	126
10 Reasons For Liking Friday Sport	127
11 Reasons For Disliking Friday Sport	128
12 What Do You Think You Learn In Physical Education Classes?	129
13 Best Things About Physical Education	130
14 Worst Things About Physical Education	131
15 Student Liking For Training Sessions	132
16 Reasons For Liking/Disliking Training Sessions	133

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The Conceptual Framework For The Study	42

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The importance of developing and maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle is continually espoused as a major goal of school physical education (PE). As well as the development of physical skills, the formation of positive attitudes and values towards physical activity is a crucial aspect of this goal. This has been reaffirmed in the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998), which lists "attitudes and values for a healthy lifestyle" as one of the major outcomes in the Health and Physical Education Learning Area. Description and analysis of student thoughts and feelings about their PE experiences is increasingly being used to give us important information about the success in achieving this outcome.

A need for change to the approach to teaching PE has been promoted in recent years, both to maintain relevance to post-modern society and to assist in countering challenges to the promotion of PE. These challenges include our increasingly sedentary lifestyle, the influence of the media and changing social conditions. Following a perceived "crisis" of relevance and meaning in physical education in Australian schools in the early 1990's, the educational purposes of the subject have been under scrutiny. In addition, there are changes currently occurring in our schools, at national, state and local levels, aimed at achieving worthwhile learning outcomes for students. Student Outcome Statements (Education Department of Western Australia, 1998), adapted for Western Australian Schools in eight key learning areas, were distributed to all schools in 1998. These statements are linked with the Curriculum Framework. According to Hannen and Ashenden (1996, p14), an outcomes approach can "mean a change in the teacher's work



profile, with relatively more time [spent] on planning, preparing, monitoring and reporting, and relatively less in up-front performance".

Within this period of change, a new curriculum model, the Sport Education in Physical Education Program (SEPEP) has been implemented and in some quarters is seen as a viable, alternative model for teaching physical education. This innovative, student-centred model is being increasingly used in secondary, and to a lesser extent, upper primary school classes. The focus of this research was an investigation of the implementation of SEPEP in a Western Australian regional primary school. The perspectives of both the teacher and the students were investigated. The study was in response to the increasing interest in describing and analysing what students think and feel about their education experiences. A better understanding of student perceptions and of the match between these and the teacher's, should support more enlightened innovation in schools and a physical education that is more responsive to the needs, interests and abilities of teachers and students.

## Background

Much education research looks at teacher effectiveness and student learning, but what the students themselves feel about the subject is often not taken into account. Hickey (1995b) believes that students often remain "passive recipients" of teaching due to "the belief that quality learning is consistent with technically competent teaching" (p21). In the past, researchers have rarely studied student perceptions of their school experiences. Consequently, there has been a general dearth of literature concerning student experiences in the psychomotor learning domain (Dyson, 1995; Sanders, 1996;

Solmon & Carter, 1995; Veal & Compagnone, 1995). Smith (1991) noted this neglect in his article in asking, "Where is the child in physical education research?" Little information has been available about the meaning students attach to their experiences in physical education and about whether or not events are perceived as intended (Lee & Solmon, 1992).

Over the last 20 years, interest in describing and analysing what students think, feel and know about aspects of their education programs has been growing. A complete issue of the *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* (Graham, 1995a) is devoted to discussion and research of student views and thoughts on school physical activities. More and more research is now looking at the gains that can be made from listening to students in physical education classes. According to Lee and Solmon (1992),

Students' perceptions of their skill levels, goal orientations and motivation appear to have a powerful effect on the way they spend their time in physical education class. These factors affect the students' level of intensity and attention during class, the meanings students attach to instructional behaviour, and their interactive behaviour, especially during practice. These elements, in turn, have a profound effect on students' potential to learn. (p68)

There is much we can learn from studying student perceptions. Greater knowledge of individual interpretations of events can help create better understanding between students and teachers (Sanders, 1995), as well as assist in the development and delivery of appropriate curricula which are matched to what the student thinks (Dyson, 1995; Sanders, 1995). How students perceive or give meaning to instructional events can also improve our understanding of how they learn from teaching (Solmon & Carter, 1995; Lee & Solmon, 1992; Rink, 1993). Solmon and Carter (1995) outline the

commonly held belief that people attach meanings to experiences based on individual perceptions of events as well as on prior knowledge. They assert that investigating student thoughts and feelings can provide important insights into the mediating role of student cognition in learning.

As well as being a valuable insight into understanding the effects of what the teacher does, research on student perceptions of PE can have an important role in enhancing students' self-awareness in and developing positive attitudes towards physical activity. This is particularly pertinent since one of the main purposes of school PE is to increase students' desire and ability to participate in the movement culture (Alexander et al., 1995). These desires and abilities are referred to as "approach tendencies" (Taggart & Alexander, 1994). In school PE lessons, student thoughts about such factors as treatment by the teacher, feedback, peer interactions, grouping techniques, task difficulty and expectations can influence their attitudes towards the subject and ultimately may influence their learning. Student self esteem and self-concept can also be affected by these perceptions.

The multi-activity model has traditionally been the dominant PE curriculum model in upper primary and secondary school. It is characterised by short (four to six week) units of a variety of sports and activities, and is typically accompanied by a teacher-directed pedagogy (Siedentop, Mand & Taggart, 1986). Conversely, in the sport education model, teachers take more of a supportive role, helping students own the planning, implementation and involvement in the sporting program (Taggart, Medland & Alexander, 1995). Students are affiliated with teams that are engaged in formalised

competition for a sport "season". For many students and teachers this student-centred program has been seen to be "a breath of fresh air" for a subject that had been considered "boring" and "irrelevant" by a number of its consumers (Locke, 1992; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992).

In recent years, a flurry of PE research has focused upon the implementation of the sport education in physical education program (SEPEP) in Western Australian secondary and to a lesser extent, primary schools. This research has been led by the Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre (SPARC) at Edith Cowan University, in conjunction with the Ministry of Sport and Recreation and the West Australian Education Department.

#### Statement of the Problem

Early experiences in PE are widely believed to be influential in determining attitudes towards and levels of participation in physical activities later in life. It is generally agreed that positive attitudes towards physical activity carry into adulthood and can enhance one's quality of life. Children are believed to form these positive attitudes if their exposure to physical activity is perceived as "pleasurable or beneficial to the self" (Gabbard, Leblanc & Lowy, 1987, p41). Conversely, negative experiences in primary school PE can also stay with and influence students in future years. Following discussions with my university teacher education students, I have found that many of their views about PE are negative and concur with those of Armstrong and Biddle (1992) and those mentioned in Evans (1990). In recalling their school physical education experiences, they described memories of boredom, perceived lack of choice,

feelings of incompetence and negative peer evaluation. Girls in particular recount feelings of embarrassment, discomfort and dissatisfaction with the school physical environment (Evans, 1990).

One of our major goals in teaching PE is to increase the approach tendencies of our "consumers" (Taggart & Alexander, 1994). It is clear that many students are not experiencing enough positive outcomes in PE classes to develop positive attitudes (Carlson, 1995a; Dyson, 1995; Kirk, 1991; Portman, 1995; Sanders & Graham, 1995). Yet this is one of the major outcomes, (that is, to develop positive attitudes and values for a healthy lifestyle), detailed in the Health and Physical Education Learning Area in the recently released Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). Educators are not always aware of what students think about their learning experiences, since an individual's perceptions are not always obvious or predictable. In addition, perceptions are idiosyncratic, so there can be as many different perceptions of a particular event as there are people involved with it. This information, however, can give us a valuable insight into whether certain learning outcomes are being achieved.

As the prevalence of SEPEP in Western Australian schools grows, there remains a dearth of literature on the primary school perspective of this program. In addition, it would be worthwhile investigating SEPEP in regional centres, where the different community structure can impact upon school and community sport involvement and there is usually a strong community sport base.

Early studies of SEPEP in secondary schools have described positive outcomes

for students and teacher satisfaction with the program. Curnow and Macdonald (1995) wonder whether this model is compatible with primary age children. There are concerns, for example, with the major emphasis on competition in SEPEP and with equity principles. Whilst competition is no doubt a motivating factor for some students and would lead to some positive experiences, Carlson (1995b) notes that excessive competition is one negative factor in physical education classes for students who feel alienated. Some of SEPEP's other characteristics, such as team affiliation and a longer season might add to their feelings of isolation. Research can assist the understanding of how students and teachers react in a social structure where students are increasingly independent and become more responsible for the learning environment. This should be of particular relevance, considering the finding that teachers play a minimal role in student interest in and attitude towards PE (Patterson & Faucette, 1990; Hastie, 1996).

### Aims of the Study

SEPEP presents a setting in which student and teacher roles are changed from those in most traditional physical education classes. Students are given increasing independence and responsibility for the learning environment. There is a reduction in direct teacher instruction and a major focus on student team involvement in formal competition. The major purpose of this study was to research the process of implementation of a SEPEP program in a regional primary school, from teacher and student perspectives.

Three major research questions were formulated to provide a focus for the study.

The first two of these include a series of subsidiary questions.

### Research question one

1. How do students perceive the implementation of the Sport Education in Physical Education Program?

#### Research question one - subsidiary questions.

- a.) What are the range of thoughts and feelings of the students about school PE?
- b.) How do these perceptions change over a term of SEPEP?
- c.) Are there variations in the perceptions of students within one team?

### Research question two

2. How does the teacher perceive the implementation of the Sport Education in Physical Education Program?

#### Research question two - subsidiary questions.

- a.) What are the teacher's thoughts and feelings about school PE?
- b.) How do these perceptions change over a term of SEPEP?
- c.) How does the teacher perceive the responses of designated students, within one team to SEPEP?

### Research question three

3. Are there differences between the teacher's and the students' perceptions of the Sport Education in Physical Education Program?

In researching these questions, the ultimate goal was to seek a better understanding of the relationship between student perspectives of physical education

and the SEPEP curriculum model, in order to assist physical educators in attending to a range of student needs in PE.

### Definitions of terms

The following definitions are included to assist the reader to understand terms used in this paper.

**approach tendencies** - positive feelings about sport and physical education, which promote a desire to participate.

**curriculum** - "a multifaceted idea that encompasses various domains of physical education schooling" (Choi, 1992, p72), which includes textual, perceptual, operational, hidden and null dimensions.

**generalist teacher** - the primary school classroom teacher.

**perceptions** - individual thoughts, feelings and understanding of events.

**physical education** – "any process which increases an individual's ability and desire to participate, in a socially responsible way, in the movement culture inside and outside schools. Games, sport, dance, outdoor adventure activities and other active recreational pursuits are all part of that culture" (Alexander et al., 1995, p11).

**specialist teacher** - a teacher who take classes of primary school students for lessons in



"specialist" subject areas, such as physical education, music, art and drama.

**sport** – a prominent part of the school physical education program. Sport is defined by Alexander et al., (1995) as "occurrences of competitive play determined by physical skill, strategy and chance" (p11).

### Summary

Amidst widespread change occurring at all levels of education in Australia, including the development of a national curriculum, a new model of teaching physical education, termed sport education in physical education, has been implemented in many secondary and some primary schools. This research seeks to examine how a class of upper primary school students and their teachers perceive the implementation of this curriculum model. The study is guided by three major research questions, which investigate and compare student and teacher perceptions of the program.

The desire to maximise positive outcomes and to attend to a range of student needs in PE classes underlies the purpose of this research. This emerges from a concern that students are often not achieving meaningful outcomes in primary school PE and as a result, the crucial goal of developing approach tendencies towards physical activity is often not being achieved.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature relevant to the research topic, is presented in five sections: student perceptions of school physical education, physical education in Western Australian primary schools, the need for change, the sport education curriculum model and current trends in research methodology for studying student perceptions.

### Student perceptions of physical education

"Children have been written about from many perspectives, and for a multitude of purposes. Rarely have they been asked to speak for themselves," (Davies in Sanders, 1996, p51). Sanders (1996) offers a number of reasons for the lack of research on student perceptions of their physical education experiences, including:

- children have simply not been asked to speak,
- children's ideas were not taken seriously,
- a belief that children cannot speak for themselves,
- a lack of acceptance, in the past, of an ethnographic/qualitative research paradigm in education and
- that such research was believed to be difficult and time consuming.

What then, can be learnt from studying student perceptions? As previously noted, research in this area is now developing rapidly. Sanders (1996) believes it is essential for teachers to attempt to understand school from the child's perspective and

that regarding children as active learners has important implications for improving teacher effectiveness and children's capacity to learn. The following is a summary of a range of findings and discussion in the literature, with respect to student perceptions of their school PE sessions, within the themes of what children like and dislike about PE, perceived competence, goal orientation, teacher behaviour, gender issues and alienation in PE classes.

### What do students like/dislike about physical education?

Physical educators ideally seek to provide students with positive experiences in PE, which will hopefully lead to a willingness to engage in physical activity for life. Solmon and Carter (1995) claim that "attitudes and values concerning exercise, fitness and health are shaped by experiences almost from birth" (p363). Children form positive attitudes towards physical activity if they perceive such experiences as "pleasurable or beneficial to self" (Gabbard et al., 1987, p41). In a study of determinants of student attitudes towards PE, Figley (1985) found the content of the curriculum to be the major determinant of both positive and negative attitudes towards PE. Teacher feedback, or lack of it, ranked second. The major influences on positive attitudes were found to be specific content, teachers' personal characteristics, comfortable atmosphere, help from the teacher and perceived success. Curriculum content, public atmosphere, peer rejection, teachers' personal characteristics, coeducational classes, lack of teacher equity and fairness, threatening atmosphere and teacher insensitivity and incompetence contributed to negative attitudes. Figley believes that the determinants of negative attitudes are amenable to change and she encourages teachers to pay greater attention to the development of positive attitudes, whilst attempting to alter the negative ones.

Whilst Figley (1985) expressed the view that teachers play an important role in the formation of children's attitudes towards PE, Patterson and Faucette (1990) found otherwise. In a comparison of children's attitudes in classes taught by generalist versus specialist PE teachers, they found that the attitudes of the children in the study were similar, regardless of the type of teacher. It must be noted that Figley's study used PE as the attitude target, whereas Patterson and Faucette questioned students about physical activity in general. Patterson and Faucette (1990) believe that the clarification of these attitudes would be worth studying, using qualitative analyses, such as interviews.

Research has found that a number of students appear to be dissatisfied and even feel alienated in PE classes. Carlson (1995a) noted that up to 20% of children do not enjoy PE. Whilst this also implies that most children like PE, Kirk (1991) warns against praising physical educators as determinants of these positive attitudes, when it could be that "children may like physical education in spite of the way it is taught" (p21). Dyson (1995) contrasts the commonly held opinion that children mostly perceive PE as fun. He found that children generally did not enjoy activities, such as competitive games, in which the emphasis was on comparison with others. Having fun, cooperating, challenging oneself and taking risks were found to be important to students' enjoyment of a 'Project Adventure' PE program that Dyson studied.

### Perceived competence

Perceived physical competence results from student perceptions of their ability in sport and physical activities and influences what students think about themselves.

Perceived cognitive competence, on the other hand, comes from student perceptions of their school academic performances (Cole & Chan, 1987). If students feel that they are competent in a subject, they will generally report that they like it, whereas they will often claim to dislike a subject if they perceive they are "no good" (Cole & Chan, 1987).

In Lee, Carter and Xiang's (1995) study of children's conceptions of ability in PE, the subjects used perceived ability to describe their level of competence. It was found that the younger children tended not to compare themselves to others, which supports previous research findings (Dyson, 1995). The children explained peers' lack of ability as due to lack of appropriate effort. Older children, from around the age of 11 years, on the other hand, see ability as being stable, though most see it as modifiable through effort (Lee et al., 1995; Veal & Compagnone, 1995). If children with negative views of their ability, come to believe that ability is stable and unable to be improved through their efforts, Lee et al. (1995) believe that this can have important implications for physical educators, in that children will "be less optimistic and will eventually avoid participation and develop negative attitudes towards physical education" (p392).

Children's perceptions of their physical competence have been found to have a powerful effect on emotions, such as anxiety and enjoyment, as well as on motivation to sustain involvement in physical activity (Weiss, Ebbeck & Horn, 1997). According to Roberts and Treasure (1993), perceived ability is also crucial in the development of peer relationships and self-esteem of children. Carlson (1998) believes that "the importance of perceived self competence highlights the need for students to see improvement and experience some mastery, in order that their confidence is increased" (p15).

### Goal orientations/motivation

It has been suggested that goal orientations focus children on either effort or ability judgements. Research on motivational thought processes has sought to explain why some students appear to persist with activities and take more responsibility for their own learning (Lee & Solmon, 1992). A student's goal orientation towards learning plays a role in the influence of student self-perceptions and motivation to learn (Lee & Solmon, 1992). Mastery and competitive goal orientations have been targeted by Lee and Solmon's research. A mastery goal orientation is when the student is concerned with mastery of the task at hand. Perceptions of ability and success are influenced by learning or improvement in performance. Those with a mastery orientation are more likely to seek challenge and persist in effort and in the face of difficulty (Lee & Solmon, 1992; Walling & Martinek, 1995). Evidence suggests that when students attribute their success or failure in tasks to their own effort or lack of it, they will be highly motivated to learn (Lee & Solmon, 1992).

Armstrong and Biddle (1992) support the notion that if teachers encourage a mastery view of learning, students are more likely to maintain the belief that they have the ability to achieve. In contrast, students with a competitive goal orientation, where success is measured by comparing one's performance to that of others, are more likely to avoid challenges, show less persistence and put in less effort on learning tasks (Lee & Solmon, 1992, Walling & Martinek, 1995). These students may also adopt failure avoidance behaviours, such as withdrawal, compensation and rationalisation, if they continually fail to achieve their goals (Evans, 1990).

Students' goal orientations in the physical domain can be influenced by teacher behaviour. The motivational climate created by the teacher can have the effect of developing one goal orientation over another and thereby affect students' perceptions of their PE experiences (Roberts & Treasure, 1993). The literature (Armstrong & Biddle, 1992; Veal & Compagnone, 1995; Solmon & Lee, 1992; Walling & Martinek, 1995), encourages all educators to work at establishing a mastery class climate, by emphasising short term goals in learning and skill development as well as by evaluating children for improvement and effort, rather than performance and ability.

#### Teacher behaviour

Solmon and Carter (1995) found that students could discern teachers' differential treatment of high and low achievers in PE. Their study found that even subtle differences could be detected by school children of all age groups. In addition, there were differences in the perceptions of junior primary and older students. For example, young children believed that teachers criticised high achievers more, whereas older children thought low achievers received greater criticism. In studies described by Lee and Solmon (1992), low achievers were perceived to be "receiving more direction, instructions about rules, restrictions and negative feedback", whereas high achievers were thought to receive "higher expectations for success and more freedom and opportunity" (p65).

Students may misinterpret teacher behaviour. Martinek (in Lee & Solmon, 1992) noted differences in what actually occurred in a PE lesson compared with the students' perceptions of the teachers' behaviours. Praise and other feedback were interpreted

differently to how the teacher intended. Students for whom teachers had high expectations reported that they were praised more often than corrected, whereas they were actually corrected more than praised. Also there were differences in how low and high skilled students perceived interactions with the teachers. High expectation students attributed corrective feedback to teacher characteristics and behaviour whereas those for whom the teacher had low expectations claimed corrective feedback was given due to personal factors or because of something they had done.

### Gender issues

Primary school PE lessons are generally coeducational. Teachers need to be conscious of what research tells us about equality of opportunity in these settings. Sex-linked behaviour and attitude differences have been found to affect interactions between students and teachers (Dunbar & O'Sullivan, 1986). This can contribute to differential treatment, often unintentional, by the teacher.

It has been well documented in recent years how teachers often communicate certain gender expectations in PE classes, such as when they reward girls for good behaviour and boys for skill performance (Lee & Solmon, 1992), thus reinforcing the perception that girls are expected to behave and boys to perform skills. Solmon and Carter (1995) found that even young children can perceive PE to be different for boys and girls and that teachers may be unaware of giving them differential treatment. This concurs with Wigfield and Harold's (1992) claim that teachers may not realise the kinds of messages they provide to different students or how they treat students differently, perhaps via a "hidden curriculum". According to Dunbar and O'Sullivan (1986, p174),



"differential feedback and opportunity to respond may have an immense impact on students' behaviour and attitudes towards physical activity".

Low skilled girls are believed to be particularly at risk in PE classes. Many girls find school PE too competitive (Browne, 1992; Carlson, 1995b), with social, cultural, physical and psychological differences between the sexes, particularly from the late primary school years onwards, seen as being detrimental to the successful participation of some girls in competitive sport (Evans, 1990). Another frequently voiced concern of girls in coeducational PE classes is the domination by boys (Alexander et al., 1995). Curnow and Macdonald (1995) see this as a potential problem in SEPEP. Gender issues in SEPEP are discussed further later on in this chapter.

### Alienation

School PE experiences can influence children's peer relationships, their self-esteem and their self-worth (Robert & Treasure, 1993). Children, particularly those who are under-achieving, can experience stress and anxiety in PE classes. This may, in turn, affect their future participation in physical activities. Evidence from studies conducted by Carlson (1995a) and Portman (1995) indicates that there are some students who feel alienated in school PE classes. According to Carlson (1995a), alienation can occur when students find that PE is not meaningful to them. Such students experience persistent negative feelings in PE, and consider the sessions irrelevant and boring. Alienated students in PE classes do not have fun!

Some of the reasons given for this dissatisfaction or alienation are:

1. Lack of a clear understanding of the purpose of PE (Graham, 1995b). This may cause attempts at task avoidance and lead to feelings of alienation. Lee and Solmon (1995) found evidence to suggest that males and females receive different messages about the goals of PE sessions.
2. Activities are too difficult and/or demanding for the children, resulting in worry and frustration. Conversely they may not be sufficiently challenging, resulting in boredom (Sanders & Graham, 1995). For students to feel more comfortable in and motivated towards school physical activities, "opportunities for action should balance with an individual's skills" (Sanders & Graham, 1995, p373).
3. Lack of opportunity or encouragement for children to let the teacher know about their feelings and problems in PE classes.
4. The focus of evaluation is often on ability rather than effort (Wigfield & Harold, 1992), which can alienate the low skilled student and promote feelings of hopelessness.
5. Excessive criticism from the teacher and from peers (Portman, 1995).
6. Perceived inadequacy of the PE teacher and perceived differential treatment. (Portman, 1995).

These feelings of alienation are more frequently found in children with low physical skill levels. Portman's (1995) study found that many low skilled students exhibited symptoms of a state known as learned helplessness. He describes this as the effect of chronic failure, resulting in the individual becoming discouraged at minor setbacks, viewing these as clearly emanating from their low ability, rather than from

external factors such as teacher treatment and task difficulty, and giving up quickly after the initial attempt. These students perceive little control over achievement outcomes in PE (Walling & Martinek, 1995). In a study of learned helplessness in a sixth grade student, Walling and Martinek found symptoms of low ability perceptions in both the physical and academic domains. They also found support for the need to take into account other underlying factors that may affect performance, such as home life, peer influence and the school itself. Teachers are encouraged not to overlook the needs of students exhibiting the characteristics of learned helplessness in favour of "more aggressive, efficient, enthusiastic students" (Walling & Martinek, 1995, p465).

### Physical education in Western Australian primary schools

#### Who teaches primary school physical education?

Over many years of involvement with Western Australian primary schools, I have found that the commitment to and extent of PE programs can vary considerably from one school to the next. This also seems to be the case in other Australian states (Tinning, Kirk & Evans, 1993). What constitutes PE can range from taking a class outside for a game or activity, as a respite from school work, to a well organised, timetabled series of lessons which involve the learning and practice of a range of skills. The sessions may be taken by the classroom or generalist teacher or by an appointed specialist PE teacher. Sometimes visitors, such as sports development officers, dance teachers or community sports coaches may run some of the programs.

Generalist teachers vary greatly in their commitment, enthusiasm and expertise in teaching PE. They also have to contend with an increasingly crowded curriculum. All

these factors can influence a teacher's emphasis and commitment to a meaningful and comprehensive PE program. As a result, the quality of PE sessions in our primary schools often suffers and, according to Tinning (1987) and Tinning et al. (1993), can lead to physical "miseducation", characterised by "unjust competition, long periods of inaction for most children, dominance of the game by a few children and a general implicit condoning of inappropriate sporting values" (Tinning, 1987, p10). Although there are devoted and highly competent generalist PE teachers in our primary schools, others (more often females) lack enthusiasm and confidence in teaching PE and, as a result, programs can be poor or even non-existent (Evans, 1990).

In some schools, a "platoon" or team teaching system (Tinning, 1987) operates, where teachers are responsible for only certain components of the PE program. Here students rotate between teachers after a unit of a particular area of the curriculum, such as six sessions of hockey, or different aspects of daily fitness sessions. Even though miseducation may still occur, this system is generally more organised, teachers can become comfortable with teaching a particular unit and it often gives students better opportunities for skill learning (Tinning et al., 1993). Platoon arrangements also increase the probability of lessons actually being held.

Originally specialist teachers were encouraged to work with other teachers to improve their knowledge and teaching of a specialist subject area, such as music, art, drama or PE. However this has rarely occurred, largely due to the ever increasing demands on teachers' time and also because teachers value the break they receive from direct student contact when another teacher takes their class. The primary school

"specialist PE teacher" (in quotation marks due to the questionable authenticity of the title), is generally chosen by the principal, a process which is often criticised. The specialist usually has an interest in the subject area, may have completed some extra PE study units at university and/or is seen as "good at" teaching PE. In a few cases, trained PE teachers have been appointed to primary schools to take on this role.

The specialist (sometimes more than one) is designated to run the whole school's PE program, generally one or two lessons per week with each class. The generalist teacher sometimes supplements this with fitness or other activity sessions. In addition, the specialist has numerous other duties, such as intra- and inter-school carnivals, excursions, correspondence and almost everything to do with PE in the school. Taggart, Brown & Alexander (1995) refer to primary PE specialists as "superteachers", due to the extraordinary number of roles and duties they are expected to perform. Tinning et al. (1993) see the use of specialists in primary PE as being advantageous, even though the number of sessions may be reduced. They believe it is often better for students to have a small number of specialist lessons than regular doses of miseducation.

#### The primary school physical education curriculum

During the 1980's, the Daily Physical Education (ACHPER, 1982) and Aussie Sports (Australian Sports Council, 1986) programs became the unofficial or "defacto" primary school PE curricula in Australian schools. The Daily Physical Education (DPE) program originated in South Australia and the curriculum materials were well received in West Australian schools. The DPE materials were later supplemented by the Aussie Sports curriculum resource (Australian Sports Council, 1986), which had a sports skill

development emphasis, incentives for involvement in the program and was aimed at year four to seven students.

The well detailed DPE lesson plans were welcomed by primary teachers, who had little or no PE curriculum guidelines or programs to use and who were under pressure for planning in an already crowded curriculum (Tinning, 1987). Very few schools in Western Australia took on the full program, which recommended 10 to 15 minutes of fitness plus a separate 20 to 30 minute skills session each day. The program was generally adapted to suit individual school needs and preferences. However many schools implemented the daily fitness sessions, eventually leading to an increased emphasis on fitness, often to the detriment of skills teaching. In some schools, the daily 15-minute fitness sessions became the PE program.

There were some perceived organisational advantages of having fitness programs in the primary schools, such as that they were easier to run and generally required less equipment than skills sessions. However Tinning et al. (1993) were concerned that the quality of school PE programs was suffering under the banner of DPE. Schools were taking the easy way out, ignoring the teaching of skills and the development of appropriate sporting behaviours and they were not catering for individual differences.

Although there were concerns with the separation of fitness from skills and with use of central rather than school-based curricula, gains were made in the promotion of PE in the 1980's (Tinning, 1987). For example, the relationship between health and PE

was promoted in schools. As well, more PE curriculum materials were being purchased by schools (Tinning, 1987), perhaps demonstrating an increasing level of commitment to PE. Currently the DPE program is widely used in Western Australian schools as an unofficial curriculum. Newer resources such as Sports Start (Australian Sports Commission, 1991), Sport It (Australian Sports Commission, 1994), the Fundamental Movement Skills package (Education Department of Western Australia, 1997) and SEPEP (Alexander et al. 1995), the curriculum innovation that is the focus of this research, are being employed, among others, as support materials.

### Curriculum change in schools

A national curriculum project commenced in Australia in 1989, based on a number of agreed national goals of schooling. It led to the development of eight learning area statements and profiles. The Health and Physical Education learning area statement, published in 1994, provided a framework for curriculum development in health and physical education (Curriculum Corporation, 1994). The national Health and Physical Education profile described the progress of student learning through eight levels during the school years and "shifts the emphasis from the content taught to what is being achieved by the learner" (Glover, 1993, p21).

From the statement and profile, Student Outcome Statements (Education Department of Western Australia, 1998) were adapted to suit Western Australian schools. These statements were designed to "describe the outcomes which students could be expected to achieve as they progressed through schooling" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994, p9). They have recently being finalised, after

several years of trialing in Western Australian schools, and aim to give teachers a framework to "plan for, report on and improve students' achievements in the Health and Physical Education learning area" (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994, p23).

The Curriculum Framework, also recently released to schools in Western Australia, provides an overview of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills within the eight learning areas (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). The formation of attitudes and values is considered crucial in the Health and Physical Education learning area. One of the major learning outcomes states that "students exhibit attitudes and values that promote personal and community health and participation in physical activity" (p108).

#### The need for change in physical education

Over the past two decades, health has become a major focus of PE. At the same time a "healthism" view (exercise=fitness=health) was proliferating, which appeared to support the positive relationships between exercise, fitness and health (Tinning et al., 1993). The term Health Based Physical Education (HBPE) was coined to describe PE programs with a health focus. Advocates of HBPE emphasise the contribution of PE to a person's health. The prevalence of daily fitness sessions in primary schools, from the early 1980's is an example of HBPE, although one could argue as to whether some children understand the health benefits of, or the reasoning behind "doing" daily fitness. Tinning and Kirk (1991) noted concerns such as this, asserting that the social context of HBPE and of the healthism view surrounding the promotion of health and fitness, was



being ignored. Social issues, such as the "cult of slenderness", dangers of excessive exercising, "trendy" sports clothing and health food, advertising and environmental pollution were not being explored and could work against those teaching HBPE (Tinning et al., 1993).

Perhaps it was not surprising that when the eight learning areas were first developed, PE was subsumed in the Health learning area. The subject was in danger of losing its identity, until concerted lobbying brought about a name change, from "Health" to "Health and Physical Education" (Taggart et al., 1995).

The early 1990's also saw the promotion of a need for change and improvements in PE in Australia as the national curriculum for schools was developed. A Senate Inquiry in 1992 into sport and PE followed a national conference on a perceived crisis in PE. The Senate Inquiry (1992) concluded that, despite widespread support for PE in schools, there was a problem in its delivery. Less time was being allocated to the subject area in the school curriculum and students' fitness and skill levels were declining. A response to this in Western Australia was the House Report (1994), which came up with similar conclusions highlighting the subject's marginality.

#### Problems with current PE teaching models

"Existing programs and their associated pedagogies have not served teachers or students well" (Taggart et al., 1995, p16). Whilst there has been criticism of the DPE and Aussie Sports programs, often referred to as the "defacto" primary curriculum, Taggart et al. (1995, p16) assert that little has been offered "which might persuade

classroom teachers of the potentially integral status of PE". They believe that classroom teachers and PE curriculum leaders should share responsibility for physically educating children. SEPEP is proposed as a program model with the potential to allow teachers shared ownership of PE in an integrated curriculum. This, in turn, could alleviate the isolationism of the specialist or "superteacher" (Taggart et al., 1995).

Currently, the multi-activity model is the dominant PE curriculum model in upper primary and many secondary schools. It is described (Siedentop, et al., 1986) as one of a number of alternative models, which include a fitness model, sport education, wilderness sports, adventure education, a social development model, intramurals, clubs and drop-in recreation. The multi-activity model offers students a variety of sports and activities in their PE program. The activities are generally presented in short (four to six week) units or blocks and are typically accompanied by a teacher-directed pedagogy.

Concerns about the multi-activity model focus on the brevity of the units, that there is insufficient opportunity for motor skill development and learning of game playing skills, that it is activity-based with little theoretical content and that it is irrelevant for many students, when compared to related activities in the community (Locke, 1992; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Lessons are typically pitched at an average ability level and involve skill drills, practice and games, which can lead to boredom, especially of the more highly skilled students, and alienation and non-compliance by those at the other end of the scale (Taggart & Alexander, 1994). According to Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) the multi-activity curriculum "does not excite or stimulate students" (p287).

There were calls for new curriculum models to cater for a "post modern youth culture". PE was perceived as "boring" and "irrelevant" by too many of its students (Locke, 1992; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Locke (1992) believed that what was offered as PE to students was a failure and he cited problems such as student alienation and demoralisation, negative attitudes and other pessimistic data from studying views of students and teachers about PE. Hellison and Templin's (1991) view was that more student-centred outcomes in PE should be encouraged, such as the development of self esteem, self-actualization and the understanding and development of interpersonal skills.

#### The sport education curriculum model

Sport Education was one of the curriculum models outlined by Siedentop et al. (1986) in their curriculum and teaching strategies text. Siedentop (1994) believes that sport in the PE setting had become decontextualized due to skills often being taught in isolation, absence of team affiliation and short duration units, which did not give enough time for the development of appropriate skills or to experience the ups and downs of a sport season. The main features of sport education, outlined below, characterise the typical context of sport, and, according to Siedentop, were often absent when sport is offered in PE settings.

- Seasons, rather than short (five or six lesson) units, of physical education.
- Formal competition, which may occur in different formats, interspersed with practice sessions. Rules, team size and playing area are usually modified.
- Team affiliation. Players are members of matched, mixed ability teams, with

whom they generally remain for the entire season.

- Student roles are taken on, (such as Sports Board member, coach, umpire, publicity officer), involving organisation, leadership and management of the sport season.
- Record keeping and publicity are undertaken.
- A festive culminating event is held.

(Siedentop, 1994, p9)

As students come to take on greater responsibility for the organisation and running of the program, the teacher progressively uses less direct instruction, moves "off centre stage" and becomes more of a facilitator. The characteristics of sport education tie in closely with the way community sport is run, yet they are rarely seen in "traditional" school physical education based on the multi-activity model - even though it appears to target sport outcomes. Siedentop (1994) describes the major aims of sport education as being to increase student involvement in the organisation and conduct of PE, to promote skill development and to provide positive experiences to all class members. The following section looks at some of the findings regarding the success of the sport education model in achieving these aims, particularly those regarding the experiences of the teachers and students involved in the program. The issue of competition is also discussed, since this is such a major aspect of this curriculum model.

### Research on sport education

Grant (1992) researched the implementation of sport education programs in 34 New Zealand secondary schools and found overwhelming teacher support for the

curriculum model. Teachers also thought that there was less alienation of lower skilled students and of girls. For the students, the expressed value of team affiliation was prominent. They felt that being valued as a team member made allowances for the low skilled players. Grant described how the effect of the competition changed for students over a season. Initially team members just hoped to defeat the opposition. After a few sessions they wanted to improve their skills and game tactics. With more game experience, the interest in tactics increased, as well as the desire of individuals to improve and to achieve success. Grant concludes from his research that sport education could enhance student learning "about things relevant to both sport and physical education" (Grant, 1992, p314).

Following the introduction of SEPEP into Western Australian schools in 1993, teachers (who were mainly secondary, but included a few primary teachers), said they preferred this model to traditional PE. They cited reasons such as fewer management concerns, improved student attitudes and better opportunities for more authentic assessment of students (Alexander et al, 1995; Taggart, Browne & Alexander, 1995). Teachers also reported positive changes in attitudes, particularly from students who had previously been seen as uncooperative (SPARC, 1994). Student perceptions were mainly positive, with most preferring SEPEP to "normal" PE. Student views are further expanded upon in the following section.

#### Student perceptions of sport education

Carlson's (1998) study reaffirmed a general concern of physical educators - that many students do not regard physical education as a "real" subject. Carlson believes that

sport education has "the potential to increase students' awareness and ensure that a range of skills and theory are being learned through, in and about the physical" (p16) which in turn can enhance the value and reality of PE for students. However, Carlson cites factors such as perceived physical competence, the influence of family, the media, peers and prior sporting experiences, other PE classes and structured play as often seeming to be beyond teachers' influence.

Many positive findings have been documented recently concerning students' views on units of sport education. Hastie (1996) found that all the students in his study of an upper primary boys' class were positive about their learning experiences in a unit of SEPEP. Students enjoyed taking on the various roles (some roles more than others) and having more game time. To a lesser extent they liked being with friends, affiliating with a team and having student coaches, rather than a teacher always giving out the orders.

Hastie (1996) describes three major outcomes of his study. Firstly, students wanted to be physically active in PE, particularly when the outcomes of involvement were considered meaningful. Students in his study even enjoyed taking on non-playing roles, such as referee, statistician and scorer, between playing games. Of further interest, is Hastie's observation that, as the season progressed, and students took over the running of the program, there was almost no off-task behaviour observed. Secondly, team membership was valued, for the opportunities of social development. Even lesser skilled students, in one student's view, saw extended team affiliation as being "fun", since "when you change teams every day, some people might not want to play with you"

(student interview, in Hastie, 1996, p101). Finally, as previously noted, students preferred having student coaches rather than teacher-directed practices and games. This supports Patterson and Faucette's (1990) claim that the role of the teacher is minimal in development of student attitudes towards PE.

Research on SEPEP has described the successful inclusion of low skilled students (Grant, 1992; Carlson, 1995b; Hastie, 1996; Taggart et al., 1995). Hastie (1996) believes that the longer seasons offered in sport education could help low skilled students develop positive attitudes towards perceived skill improvement. Carlson's (1995b) study of low skilled girls' perceptions of a sport education season described a reduction in feelings of alienation. She found that, as the season progressed, the girls became more confident and willing participants and felt valued by the team. Even the better skilled students began to treat them as less of a "lost cause" and spent more time and effort in helping them improve.

A study by Curnow and Macdonald (1995) found some concerns with gender equity in coeducational sport education. The boys in the class tended to take on the more powerful roles, often dominating game play. In addition, it was observed that "many boys perceived the girls to be physically weaker and less skilled" (p10). It was also found that there were limitations in skill development among the girls. Hastie's (1998) study of upper primary school girls' perceptions of coeducational sport education found that even though the boys tended to dominate, the girls enjoyed playing in mixed sex teams and taking on greater responsibility for the program. The girls thought they worked harder than when they were in all female teams and they also liked the

competitive aspect of SEPEP.

Curnow and Macdonald (1995) believe that choosing a more "gender neutral" sport could help avoid some of the gender concerns in SEPEP. They also suggested that a student "equity officer" could be appointed to work with the Sports Board to reduce gender bias. Curnow and Macdonald (1995) questioned whether upper primary students were mature enough to run a sport education program.

#### The issue of competition in sport education

Due to a considerable emphasis on "the competition" in the sport education curriculum model, it is important to explore what impact this may have, with respect to student feelings and perceptions. The literature presents arguments both for and against competitive sport in physical education. Competition is sometimes viewed as a "dirty word" or "unhealthy" when associated with children's sport, especially when there is an obsession with the outcome (winning, losing, rewards, etc). In competitive sport, social comparison, (for example, peer comparison), and game outcome are emphasised, often at the expense of individual goals and learning (Weiss, Ebbeck & Horn, 1997).

Terry Orlick, a noted critic of many aspects of children's sport, believes that "by turning everything into a quest for mastery, we rob children of an important balanced life perspective" and that "adults spend too much time trying to get children to achieve mastery over adult goals rather than letting children become absorbed in their own goals" (in Evans, 1990, p22). Carlson (1995a) notes excessive competition in physical education classes as being a factor leading to some students feeling alienated.



On the other hand, it is generally believed that "good competition", in which the focus is more on the process rather than the outcome, can have educational value (Siedentop et al., 1986; Evans, 1990; Siedentop, 1994). Siedentop et al. (1986, p188) assert that "competition is fundamental to play and forms the very core of the sports experience". They suggest that that "good competition" can occur within the sport education model, which encourages the development of good sports persons and of a better sports culture. According to Grant (1992), teachers described the competition element in sport education as being "appropriate" and "meaningful".

Orlick (in Evans, 1990), Evans (1990) and Hellison and Templin (1991) mention some of the negative effects of competitive sport, particularly on low skilled and female students in coeducational classes. These include domination of play and key positions by the more highly skilled students, students coming to value winning over cooperation, and lower self esteem and self concept from persistent losing. Teachers in Grant's (1992) New Zealand (secondary school) study thought that the competition in sport education actually minimised the alienation of these students. Hastie (1996) supported Grant's findings. In his study he found that the sport education model offered low skilled and female students positive experiences and resulted in improved performance and effort. He found that students reacted positively to their differing roles in a SEPEP unit and enjoyed being more involved in the organisation and decision-making.

Perhaps the adoption of roles, the acceptance of greater responsibility and the involvement in decision-making in SEPEP is in many ways consistent with Orlick's suggestion: "letting children become absorbed in their own goals" (in Evans, 1990,

p22), rather than being overly concerned with competing and comparing abilities. In SEPEP, cooperation is required amongst participants to achieve successful outcomes in the game play. Siedentop (1994) believes that it is possible to avoid abuses of competition by offering "developmentally appropriate competition to all students, regardless of skill level, gender or disability" (p13). He views the rivalry in competition as part of the "festive nature of competition and in terms of the standards and traditions that are created by the sport forms where competence is pursued" (Siedentop, 1994, p14).

#### A curriculum framework for physical education

Choi (1992) promotes the idea of a multidimensional curriculum, in describing five different conceptions of the curriculum, which impact on what is included in the curriculum and how it will be implemented. The five dimensions of the curriculum are referred to as:

1. Textual - the curriculum in written form, such as the curriculum package, syllabus, textbooks and teacher handbooks. The SEPEP manual is an example.
2. Perceptual - students' and teachers' thoughts and feelings about aspects of the curriculum. For example, student and teacher perceptions of SEPEP implementation.
3. Operational - what actually happens in the process of teaching and learning, when implementing aspects of the curriculum. Examples are teacher feedback and student behaviour.
4. Hidden - additional things that happen that were not intended or mentioned in the curriculum. For example, students learning social behaviour of which the teacher is

not aware.

5. Null - what is not, consciously or unconsciously, intended to be included in the operational or textual dimensions. An example is the perceptions and skills that the students are not aware of or are not part of their intellectual repertoire.

Choi (1992) believes that research on teaching in PE should be about more than just investigating the act of instruction, and should provide information about its subject matter (curriculum). He also criticises the dominance of the empirical-analytic paradigm in PE research, and suggests that considering different modes of inquiry can assist in providing a new perspective for research, teaching and teacher education. This study was undertaken within the interpretive paradigm (Candy, 1989).

#### Research methodology for studying student perceptions

Research methods are increasingly focusing on qualitative methods to investigate children's perceptions and thought processes (Hopple & Graham, 1995; Sanders, 1996). Qualitative research methods are now becoming viewed as more acceptable for collecting quality educational research data (Lee & Solmon, 1992; Sanders, 1996). Data collection methods for assessing student perceptions include interviews, questionnaires, observation, field notes, artwork, journals and diaries. The use of interviews has recently begun to increase in popularity in the area of physical education (Hopple & Graham, 1995; Sanders, 1996). Ethical requirements, such as gaining permission, no obligation to continue and appropriate discretion with gathered data are, of course of considerable importance in such studies. In the analysis of qualitative data, the information gathered is often reduced into common themes.

Generalising of the results is usually left to the reader, who can hopefully make use of the detail of the research context and scenario to facilitate analysis and understanding of their own "cases" (Burns, 1995).

According to Graham (1995), children as young as five years old can express their feelings, needs and thoughts about what is taught in physical education and how it is taught. Although children can be valuable informants regarding their behaviour and feelings, there are potential sources of invalidity in their self-reports (Assor & Connell, 1992; Garbarino & Stott, 1992; Peterson & Swing, 1982; Sanders, 1996). Sometimes what a subject thinks and what is actually reported as their thinking may not be the same. Problems also arise from children not being able to accurately assess their own competence and from not understanding questions. However, increased stability in children's behaviour is found from around the ages of nine and ten years (Schunk & Meece, 1992) and the reliability of their self-reports is purported to increase with age (Garbarino & Stott, 1992). In addition, children's self esteem must be taken into account when studying their perceptions. "The better children are functioning psychologically, the more accurate they are likely to be as reporters of their feelings" (Garbarino & Stott, 1992, p38).

### Summary

The first section of this literature review has shown that the commonly held opinion that most children perceive school physical education experiences in a positive light is not necessarily so; a concern, since those of us who promote physical activity are aware of the importance of shaping positive attitudes towards the subject. Significant

numbers of students have reported negative feelings towards school PE, towards physical activity in general and towards themselves. Many children do not enjoy or persist with activities in which they are compared with others, which in turn can alienate low skilled students (often female in coeducational classes). Other studies have found that students regard school PE as "boring" and "irrelevant". While the teacher's role in determining positive and negative attitudes towards PE is considered minimal, the content of the curriculum is regarded as crucial, and this is amenable to change.

Primary school PE in Western Australian operates in a myriad of ways, ranging from a game outside as a respite from school work to a well organised, timetabled series of lessons in a variety of PE units, taught by a generalist or specialist PE teacher. The South Australian Daily Physical Education files are still primarily used as a defacto curriculum. A need for change arose from dissatisfaction with current PE curricula in primary and secondary schools, which was contributing to a "crisis" in PE. The SEPEP curriculum model seems to have the potential to respond to many of these concerns, as well as to satisfy the key principles and values in the Health and Physical Education learning area.

The introduction of SEPEP into Australian schools coincided with a call for the replacement of the dominant multi-activity curriculum model. SEPEP is a relatively new curriculum model, is student-centred and involves learning on a number of different levels. It is modelled on community sport, involves increased student responsibility for a sport "season" and has progressively less teacher direction. Studies of SEPEP have described widespread support for the program as a worthwhile PE

teaching model, which offers enjoyable, relevant and valuable learning outcomes to students of all skill levels. However there are some concerns with gender equity and with the emphasis on competition.

Few studies have examined the student perspectives of SEPEP in coeducational primary school classes. Qualitative research methods are considered the most appropriate for this research. The following chapter provides an outline of how the study will be undertaken.

## CHAPTER III: METHOD

This chapter initially outlines the conceptual framework and rationale for the choice of case study methodology. This is followed by a description of how, when and what data were collected for the study. The data analysis method is detailed and issues such as trustworthiness of the data, limitations and ethics are discussed. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the use of the terms PE and sport within the context of the study.

### Conceptual framework

According to Gibbons and Bressan (1991), "student feelings should receive equal attention and respect in all phases of the teaching/ learning process in all subject areas" (p81). Whilst the literature abounds with studies on teacher effectiveness and on what students do in PE, the perspectives of the students are often not taken into account. The students are actively involved in organisation and decision-making in SEPEP, unlike in traditional PE, and their viewpoints should give us valuable information as to the program's effectiveness. Since student feelings are not always obvious to an observer and can easily be misinterpreted, it is necessary to have students describe how they feel in verbal and/or written form.

We often presume reasons for children's actions and behaviour, which may be inaccurate. Many times I have spoken to students (even tertiary students) following a PE session that I have taught or observed and have received comments which differed from what I thought was the case. If students are not given the opportunity to speak, we may

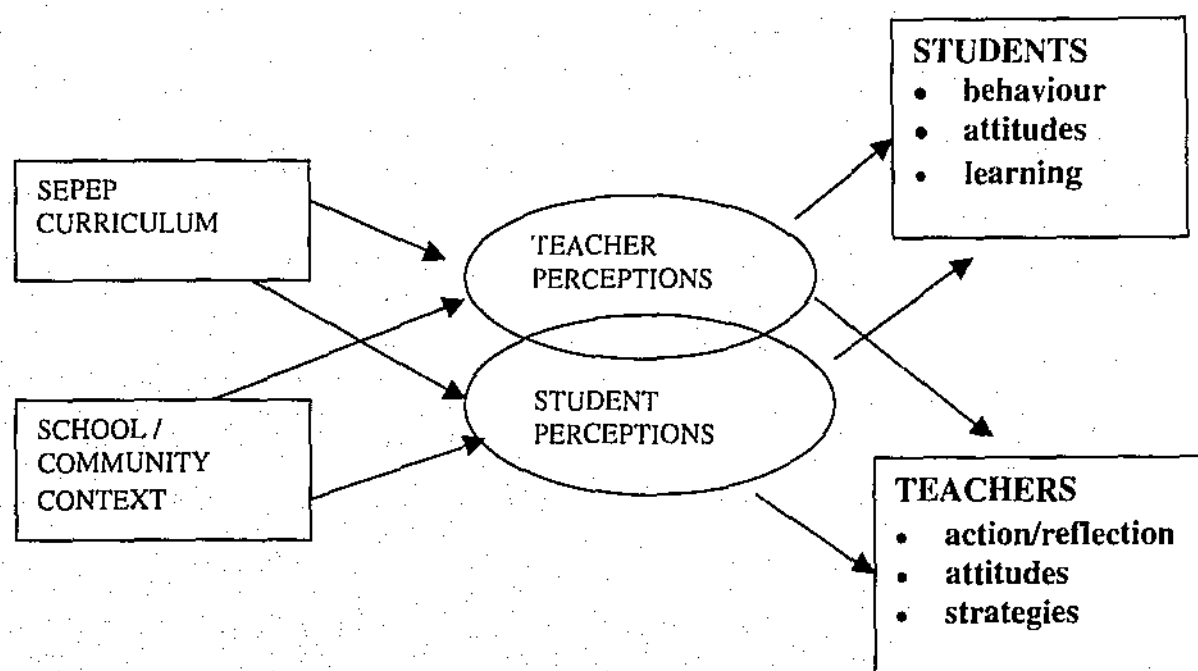
not be attending to their needs, we may be alienating some and boring others! In addition, it is advantageous for the teacher to express thoughts about an aspect of the curriculum, as part of the process of reflection and evaluation, which in turn can enhance student outcomes.

In constructing a conceptual framework upon which to structure the study, I employed Choi's (1992) dimensions of the curriculum and the interpretive research paradigm. Choi's five curriculum dimensions, the textual, operational, perceptual, hidden and null, provide a framework with which to investigate the multidimensional nature of curricula. This research was undertaken mainly within the textual, operational and perceptual curriculum dimensions. The textual dimension refers to the written form of the curriculum, such as, for example, the SEPEP manual and teacher and student planning. The operational dimension is concerned with what happens in the class when the curriculum is implemented, that is, with the teaching and learning process itself, with information gathered through observation. The perceptual dimension looks at the subjects' thoughts and feelings about their experiences with the curriculum. Journals, questionnaires and interviews also provide information about this dimension.

The conceptual framework, illustrated in Figure 1, was developed with the belief that student thoughts and feelings, together with those of the teacher, have an important influence on student behaviour, attitudes and learning. In this case study, the implementation of SEPEP within a school/community context would no doubt affect student and teacher perceptions in many areas, such as the change in student and teacher roles, and the experiences associated with playing in a team for a full ten-week season.



Although student and teacher perceptions of the same events are expected to differ, there is some overlap. It is presumed that, with increased understanding of these perceptions, the overlap can be greater. The framework was also influenced by the researcher's background as a PE teacher, university lecturer, teaching practice supervisor, community coaching consultant, coach and parent.



**Figure1.** The Conceptual Framework for the Study

Although each of the research questions (see Chapter I), could be slotted into one of Choi's (1992) curriculum dimensions, it should be noted that this did not preclude looking at any of the questions from other perspectives as well. The study's research questions were formulated around the perceptual dimension, since the major focus of the study involved students' thoughts and feelings. As shown in Table 1, questions 2a and 2b also lie within the textual dimension, in that the teacher's views

were sought on curriculum material and response to change. There was some inclusion of the operational dimension for research questions 1c and 2c, which involved observation of behaviour of the students in one of the teams.

Table 1

Research questions placed in Choi's (1992) curriculum dimensions

Curriculum Dimensions	Research Questions						
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3
Perceptual	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Textual				✓	✓		
Operational			✓			✓	

### Research design

The beliefs and values that determine a researcher's interest and hence the design of the study are best understood by reference to research paradigms. Candy (1989) describes three different, yet not necessarily totally distinct educational research paradigms, referred to as positivistic, critical and interpretive. The positivistic paradigm involves an empirical/analytical approach, generally characterised by a search for scientific truth. Positivistic research looks for causal relationships and recognises phenomena that are tangible, observable and measurable. Such quantitative research has been the dominant methodology employed in educational research (Candy, 1989; Gage, 1989), although the prevalence and acceptance of qualitative studies is increasing.

Critical research identifies with certain theoretical points of view and is often used in sociological studies. Critical theorists take into account "the relationships between individuals' interpretations and actions and external factors" (Candy, 1989, p6). This research combines critical self-reflection with action for change. Finally, studies that belong to the interpretive realm are concerned with describing, observing and analysing phenomena (Smith, Hattam & Shacklock, 1997). In this paradigm, there is a move away from the "law like generalisations" (Candy, 1989, p3) of positivism. Interpretive research aims to analyse human behaviour in a particular context, studying people's values, attitudes and beliefs and their motives for behaviour. It seeks to understand the meanings of action from the actor's point of view (Erickson, 1986). Methodologies such as fieldwork, case studies and participant observation are associated with this paradigm. Theory follows, rather than precedes, the research as data are generated. Interpretive research on teaching can "examine the conditions of meaning created by students and teachers as a basis for explaining differences among students in their achievement and morale" (Gage, 1989, p5). These differences, although they may be small, can "make a big difference for student learning" (Erickson, 1986, p129).

The nature of the research questions combined with the study's conceptual framework determined the research method employed. The major goal of my research was to seek a better understanding of the relationship between student and teacher perspectives of physical education and the SEPEP curriculum model. Qualitative research methods were viewed as being the most appropriate for investigating the research questions in this study, since people's feelings and perceptions are idiosyncratic

## The case study approach

An interpretive case study approach was employed as the research design or simply as the planned strategy for seeking solutions to the research questions (Burns, 1995). In this study of a regional upper primary school class, case study data collection methods, such as observations, interviews and journals were employed over one school term to research a season of sport education. There has been much debate about the desirability of this form of inquiry. Past criticisms of case study accounts include that they are "subjective, biased, impressionistic and lacking in precision" (Burns, 1995, p329) and have low external validity. Despite these concerns, the case study approach, together with qualitative research and participant observation, has been increasingly accepted in educational research (Burns, 1995). Cohen & Manion (1994) note a number of advantages of case studies, in that they:

- provide rich description of participants' experiences,
- are strong in reality,
- provide a natural basis for generalisation,
- contribute to the "democratisation" of decision making by allowing readers to generalise or make implications for themselves, and they
- are a "step to action". Information may be directly interpreted and put to use.

## Subject selection

The selection of subjects was finalised shortly before a SEPEP workshop, in term one, 1998, for teachers in a country region of Western Australia. Originally one upper primary school class, together with their classroom teacher, was sought to be the

focus of the study. Preference was to be given to involving a generalist teacher, so that integration of PE into other subject areas and time for student reflection and interviews could be more easily monitored. This was also seen to be more relevant to the situation in most primary schools, where generalist teachers commonly teach the PE program.

The resultant selection of subjects differed somewhat from what was intended and is detailed below. The teachers, students and school studied have all been given pseudonyms to conceal their identity.

#### The teachers

The teacher involved in the case study was Ms Jenson, a year seven teacher of four years experience. Ms Jenson, a former mature age student at the university where the researcher is a Physical and Health Education lecturer, heard of the proposed study and volunteered to be involved, as she wished to improve her teaching of PE. She is profiled in more detail in Chapter IV.

Ms Jenson was in her second year of teaching at Connell Primary School. Her students were timetabled for PE every Friday afternoon for an hour. This hour is commonly termed "Friday sport". Prior to SEPEP implementation, she had been involved in a "platoon" style of teaching for Friday sport, with four other year six and seven teachers; each teacher being responsible for taking a different sport. The students were able to choose which sport they would do and as a result each teacher had a mix of students from their own and other year six and seven classes.

The other two year seven teachers at Connell Primary School, Mr Green and Mr Irvine, decided that they would like to implement the sport education program together with Ms Jenson. Thereby the students would be offered a choice of three sports. This meant that students would not necessarily be with their classroom teacher for PE and therefore integration of SEPEP into subject areas other than PE would be less feasible. Despite my original intention being to focus on one class and their generalist teacher, I did not wish to interfere with the decision making in the implementation process. In addition, the study's research questions could still readily apply to this model of SEPEP organisation. Mr Green attended the SEPEP workshop with Ms Jenson, while Mr Irvine had been introduced to the program during a PE in-service course the previous year. Both of these teachers were willing to be involved in the study.

### The students

All three year seven classes (90 students) at Connell Primary were involved to different degrees in the research. All students completed questionnaires prior to and at the end of the study. The 30 students in Ms Jenson's SEPEP volleyball group were observed on a regular basis. One volleyball team (six students) was chosen in the second week of SEPEP implementation for weekly interviews and targeted observation. This team was chosen firstly because it was made up of two students from each year seven class and secondly because, according to Ms Jenson and to responses from initial student questionnaires, it contained a good range of student PE ability and interest levels.

### Researcher's role

My intended role during the study was to be that of a non-participant observer (Burns, 1995). I felt that I could gather better field notes by "standing back" and that it would be an unnatural situation to be involved as an assistant to the teacher. After an initial SEPEP workshop and procurement of the manual, teachers are usually "on their own" for the implementation. In this role, there is less potential for bias than with participant observation, as close involvement with the group may cause observers to lose their perspective as they become involved in the setting they are supposed to be investigating (Burns, 1995).

I familiarised myself with the teacher and the students in the weeks prior to the study, so that the subjects would be comfortable with and used to my presence. It must be noted that in a "natural" setting, a high degree of structure in non-participant observation is not feasible (Cohen & Manion, 1994), particularly in this case, where a certain degree of informal chatting with the participants occurred. This was limited as much as possible to outside lesson times.

As further explained in the Chapter V, despite trying to limit my direct involvement with the students, on one occasion, on Ms Jenson's urging, I ran a volleyball coaching clinic with her class to teach the students basic volleyball skills and game strategies. Even though Ms Jenson had said that she liked volleyball, had previously taught this sport and was keen to now teach it using the sport education model, I discovered that she was actually unfamiliar with the basic skills of volleyball. Within the local community, there was a volleyball association, but it catered mainly for

senior players and therefore most of the students in Ms Jenson's group also knew little about this sport.

### Sources of data

This section outlines the rationale behind the types of data that were collected, describes various methods that were used for gathering data in this study and indicates the sources employed to answer each of the research questions.

The principle of triangulation was employed to assist in establishing trustworthiness of the data collection. Burns (1994, p272) defines triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour". Different methods (questionnaires, interviews, journals and observation) and a variety of data sources (written and verbal information from the teacher and students involved and the researcher's field notes) were employed to improve the trustworthiness of the data. In addition, the steps and procedures involved in the study were clearly documented. Multiple sources of data were categorised and linkages explored and described. Questionnaires and interviews with children and teachers of a similar year level to the research group were trialed before the study commenced, in order to finalise the most appropriate content of the questions and to rehearse interview technique. This also enabled practice of writing up field notes, transcription of interviews and inductive analysis of data.

In order to improve the trustworthiness of the students' and teacher's self-reports, information was collected as soon as possible after the observed lessons.



Strategies were employed to enhance the reliability of the information collected, particularly from the children. In the interviews and questionnaires, the prompts were aimed to be in language suited to the level of understanding of the children. I spent time developing a personal relationship with the students before questioning them. This was made easier by the fact that I regularly visit the local schools and also that I knew a few of the students from having resided in the region for a number of years. The importance of honesty and that the study was non-judgemental was emphasised to the students. All participants were made aware of the purpose of the study. According to Garbarino and Stott (1992), reliability should be less of a concern with upper primary students, aged from ten to twelve years, than with younger children. There is also a perceived advantage in studying this age group, with the belief that increased stability in children's behaviour is found from around the ages of nine and ten years (Schunk & Meece, 1992).

Methods used for data collection are detailed below.

#### 1. Questionnaires

Prior to and following the implementation of SEPEP, students in the three year seven classes completed a simply worded questionnaire (Appendix A), to ascertain their thoughts about school PE and physical activity in general and to determine the extent of student approach tendencies to school and community sport. The questions were initially discussed with each class to help ensure understanding and to encourage more detailed answers. The students took ten to twenty minutes to complete the questionnaires.

The three year seven teachers were also asked to complete questionnaires

(Appendix B). Prior to the study, they were asked for general information about their teaching experiences in and attitude towards PE. At the end of the program another questionnaire was issued to identify their thoughts about SEPEP.

## 2. Observation

During at least one sport education session per week, my observations were recorded on audiotape, with some additional notes in written form. These included observations of the class climate, content of the lesson, the targeted students' responses and behaviour and the teacher involvement. (See Appendix C for a sample transcription). Some of the observations involved class discussions, such as during initial SEPEP sessions and when wet weather forced cancellation of physical activity sessions. (See Appendix D for a sample class discussion extract).

## 3. Semi-structured interviews

This method of interviewing employs a set number of questions or issues to explore, but the interviewer is "free to probe beyond the respondents' immediate answers" (Darst, Zakrajsek & Mancini, 1989, p424). The interviews, all conducted by the researcher, were audiotaped (with permission), using a small, hand-held tape recorder and then later transcribed.

The six targeted students, who were all from the one volleyball team, were each interviewed individually three times during the term on a rotating basis. The first interviews were conducted in the initial two weeks of SEPEP implementation, the second during weeks five and six and the third after the completion of the program in

week nine. These students were interviewed as a group on another three occasions. Student interviews, apart from the third set of individual ones, were conducted as soon as possible following the observed lessons. Questions were asked concerning how the students felt during the lesson, their perceived efforts, success and enjoyment and their perceptions of the content, purpose and worth of the lesson. (See Appendix E for a sample interview transcription).

Short, semi-structured interviews were held at the earliest convenience, (in most cases on the same day of the observed lesson), with Ms Jenson, to ascertain her thoughts on the PE session, the responses and behaviour of the students and the achievement of lesson goals (see example, Appendix F). Longer sessions were recorded prior to and following SEPEP implementation, to supplement information about the teacher's background and attitude with regard to PE teaching and physical activity in general, and finally her overall perceptions of the program, with respect to aspects such as learning outcomes, student responses and her role.

On a less organised and formal level, other students in the volleyball group were questioned to ascertain their views on SEPEP training and competition sessions. This information was compared with that from the target group. In addition, the other two year seven teachers, Mr Green and Mr Irvine, were regularly asked for their thoughts about their SEPEP basketball and soccer classes respectively, to determine any similarities or differences with the volleyball program and Ms Jenson's views. The Principal of Connell Primary was interviewed during the first week of term to assist in gathering information about the school demographics.

#### 4. Student and teacher journals

Students in all three year seven classes were asked to keep weekly journals to record their thoughts and views about SEPEP. Students were encouraged, under the direction of their teachers, to write about their roles, enjoyment or otherwise of the sessions, perceived skill development and any other aspects upon which they wished to comment. Despite the best original intentions of the three teachers, the journal entries were not always recorded weekly. Although most student diaries contained at least five entries for the term, many of these simply recorded what had happened in the PE sessions, rather than student perceptions of events. Had I been able to be present while students wrote in their diaries, the information may have proved more useful to the study. The students in the focus team were regularly encouraged by me to complete diary entries and some of this information was valuable to the study.

Ms Jenson also kept a journal, in which she was encouraged to regularly reflect on her thoughts and feelings about the program, (rather than just giving an account of what had happened). In addition, I kept a weekly journal to supplement my recorded observations and record my perceptions of what was happening within the volleyball group, the targeted team and with SEPEP implementation in general.

#### 5. Other sources

Documents from Connell Primary were used to gain additional information about school demographics and their philosophy concerning school physical activities.

The sources that were used to answer the each of the research questions are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2.

Data collection sources, related to the research questions

Data Collection Method	Research Questions						
	1a	1b	1c	2a	2b	2c	3
Questionnaire	✓	✓	✓				✓
Interview			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Journal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

### Ethical issues

Ethical approval must always be obtained before any data are collected with human subjects. Permission was gained to conduct the study from the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee (Appendix G). The Principal of Connell Primary gave written consent for the research to take place. Parents were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and those with children being interviewed were required to give written permission for their children to be involved (Appendix H). All those involved were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data was coded and not associated with the teachers', students', or school's real names. A summary of the results of the research was to be provided following the completion of the write-up for teachers, children and parents to consider.

### Time schedule for the collection of data

The time schedule in Table 3 below summarises the steps followed in conducting the study and the sequence in which they were performed. Data for the study were gathered during school terms one, two and three, from February to August, 1998. The bulk of the data collection occurred in term two, during SEPEP implementation.

Table 3

#### Procedure and time line for data collection

##### **Term Week Data Collection**

I	8	Pilot testing of questionnaires, interviews, observation and data collection techniques. Selection of school and teacher. Observation of a "typical" Friday sport session, taken by Ms Jenson.
	9	SEPEP workshop (conducted by the researcher), for primary and secondary teachers in the region, attended by Ms Jenson and Mr Irvine. Ethics approval granted.
	10	Student Questionnaire 1 administered to all year seven students at Connell Primary. Teacher Questionnaire 1 issued to the three year seven teachers. First formal interview with Ms Jenson.
II	1	SEPEP season commenced at Connell Primary.
	2	Interview with Principal. Target students identified. Student diaries issued (collected and analysed every two weeks).
	2-9	Observation, student and teacher interviews during one or two SEPEP sessions per week.
	9	Student Questionnaire 2 administered to the year seven students. Teacher Questionnaire 2 issued to the three year seven teachers. Student diaries collected. Final interviews of three of the five target students.
III	1	Final interview of Ms Jenson. Final interviews of two target students (previously absent).

## Data Analysis

"The analysis of case study evidence is the most difficult and least developed aspect of the case study methodology" (Burns, 1995, p324). There are no set rules or formulae to deal with the often copious amounts of information collected in case studies. Prior planning, however is essential. Data analysis of this study was inductive, ongoing and progressive, with themes established as they emerged. Notes from the interviews, field notes and journals were organised as an ongoing process, in order to determine where the study was heading and to facilitate the writing of the report. Accordingly, a descriptive framework was developed to assist in the analysis of data. Content was analysed and categorised as soon as possible after each school visit. It was kept in chronological order and arranged into categories. Methods such as flow charts, diagrams and tables were employed to study linkages, such as those among the students and between the teacher and students. The research questions and conceptual framework were continually referred to in order to guide the probing of data for linkages.

## Limitations

There are some obvious limitations in a study such as this, which can threaten its credibility. These limitations are listed below together with strategies that were implemented to counter them.

1. Obvious presence of a non-participant observer in an otherwise "natural" setting.

I was conducting research in a setting in which my presence was familiar and with which I felt comfortable, due to regular school visits in the region. In the weeks before the start of the observations, I spent time with the class, talking to the students

about what they did in PE classes and distributing questionnaires. Taking on the role of non-participant observer offers less potential for bias than with a participant observer (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Burns, 1995) and there are better opportunities for more accurate observations to be made by the observer.

2. Involvement as a participant by the researcher.

On one occasion, as previously mentioned, upon urging from Ms Jenson, I ran a volleyball coaching clinic for the students, as she was unable to find another suitable volleyball teacher to show her class basic skills. This is consistent with suggested strategies made at the SEPEP workshop, where teachers were encouraged to make use of regional sports development officers or other local "experts". I have performed this role before in schools, as a representative of the local volleyball association. Following the one-off skills session, I reverted to the non-participant role and made it clear to Ms Jenson and her students that I wished henceforth to be no more than an observer during the PE sessions, which they appeared to heed.

3. Subjective bias of the observer.

Bias can occur in all forms of inquiry, but especially in the interpretation of events in a case study (Burns, 1995). Personal views can easily influence the direction of the inquiry and the selection of evidence. However value-free observation is known to be impossible in any research and is even viewed as being "patently absurd" (Smith, Hattam & Shacklock, 1997, p1). The principle of triangulation was employed to assist in establishing trustworthiness of the data. In addition, to reduce bias, I aimed to be as objective as possible, particularly in the interviews, and tried to avoid "putting words



into student mouths", to reduce bias. My background, experience in PE and reasoning behind the study have been outlined.

4. The small sample size and the use of only one observer.

This can limit the reliability of the study. However this is compensated for by the richness of description of participants' experiences possible with a case study, which in turn can generate a better understanding of the situation.

5. Problems with questioning students.

These include student responses not being totally honest (for example, wanting to give the "right" answers), or students not being able to accurately articulate how they feel. Encouragement, rather than enforcement was employed in this regard. It is also believed that regular practice at writing and verbalising thoughts and feelings would have assisted in improving the accuracy of this information. Questions were simply worded, generally open ended and carefully sequenced to suit the students being studied. Students were encouraged to be honest, with anonymity and absence of repercussions from their answers guaranteed. From previous experience, children of this age are usually fairly honest and direct in expressing their feelings and opinions.

6. Tape recorder use during interviews may affect student responses.

Again, familiarity with this procedure before the study and over time should have helped alleviate self-consciousness of the participants.

## 7. Problems with generalisation.

How can we generalise from one case study to another situation or case?

Proponents of case studies believe that the readers make the generalisations, relating them to what they already know and to their own situations.

### The pilot study

Prior to the study, in term one, data collection techniques were trialed with a year seven class at a school in the same town as Connell Primary. I had previously spent time with this class and the students all knew me. This pilot study proved to be extremely valuable in refining, rehearsing and finalising aspects of the study's data collection methods.

Student questionnaires were trialed to ascertain suitability and understanding of questions, whether the questions elicited the types of responses that I was after to answer the research questions and the approximate time needed to complete the forms. As a result and with the aid of the classroom teacher, a few of the questions were reworded and some were deleted.

In order to practise observation and field note taking skills, I observed this class in a PE lesson, recording my observations on tape and adding to them with written comments. I focused on one student for short periods of time and on the whole class at other times. Notes on lesson content, student responses and behaviour, class climate and teacher behaviour were recorded.

Two male and two female students who, according to their teacher, had varying degrees of interest and ability in PE, were interviewed and audiotaped first as a group and then individually using a semi-structured format. The students were asked to give their thoughts about the PE lesson and its perceived purpose, about PE and sport in general, comment on their sporting ability and give their views on the best and worst aspects of PE lessons. This was done to rehearse interview technique, determine suitability of questions and find out what sorts of responses the students would give. The students all differed in the types and amount of responses they gave. All students seemed very conscious of the tape recorder initially and opened up more as the interviews progressed. Two of the students needed a degree of prompting to give more detail in their answers. I found I had to stray from my line of questions sometimes if they were showing an interest in talking about an aspect. This tended to make the student more comfortable with and willing to respond to forthcoming questions.

### The relationship between physical education and sport

Due to the often blurred distinction between PE and sport, it is important to outline how these terms are used within the context of this study. In Chapter I of this paper, definitions of the terms sport and physical education (PE) were given. Many people, particularly those outside the PE profession, use these terms interchangeably as though there is no difference (Tinning et al., 1993). For example, the PE program in schools is often termed "sport" or sometimes "games". PE has often been equated with students "going out" and playing games and different sports and as not much more than a break from classwork, rather than a subject of educational value. Tinning et al., (1993) argue that PE should be more than just teaching physical skills, such as the skills

required to play sport. A more educative approach in which cognitive, social and affective dimensions are also included is recommended. The relationship between sport and PE is examined in more detail in Murdoch (1990) and in Tinning et al. (1993).

Prior to the implementation of SEPEP at Connell Primary School, where this study was based, the year seven students were timetabled for a weekly one hour session of PE on Friday afternoons. This was termed "Friday sport" by both teachers and students. For some students, Friday sport was supplemented by fitness activities or simple games during the week by their classroom teacher. For the purposes of the study, with implementation of SEPEP, the term "Friday sport" was retained to describe the PE session that occurred on Fridays, when competitive games were generally played. This was also easier to use when questioning students. The other two sessions held during the week during SEPEP implementation were called "training sessions". "PE" referred to the combined program, which included all the school physical education sessions in which the students and teachers were involved.

### Summary

An interpretive case study design was employed in this study to provide a detailed description of the implementation of SEPEP in a primary school, from the perspectives of the teacher and students. Choi's curriculum dimensions were used as a framework within the school/community context to study student and teacher perceptions of the program. Data collection methods included observation, interviews, journals and questionnaires. Analysis of data was inductive, ongoing and progressive, with continual referral back to the research questions. Data, in the form of rich

comprehensive description, was organised into themes, with relevant links sought to aid interpretation. This study, whilst not able to be unbiased or value-free, aimed for trustworthiness of data, through employing the principle of "triangulation".

In qualitative research, the emphasis is more on the description of situations, ascertaining meaning and understanding and delving beyond surface appearances and realities (Smith et al., 1997). This is reflected in my research questions (see Chapter I). The research was influenced by the belief of the importance of enhancing positive experiences in PE, both for the development and maintenance of positive attitudes to physical activity and the improvement in physical and social skills. The experiences of the participants can best be studied by asking them, rather than relying only on observation. Accordingly, it was hoped that this study would provide valuable information on the effect of introducing a new curriculum model, SEPEP, into a regional upper primary school class. Whilst the study of just one season of SEPEP was not necessarily going to come up with far reaching implications, the richness of description provided by the case study methodology aimed to improve understanding of a "lot about a little".

Chapters four, five and six outline and discuss the results of the case study prior to, during and following SEPEP implementation respectively.

## CHAPTER IV: PRIOR TO SEPEP IMPLEMENTATION

The results, analysis and discussion of the data collected prior to the implementation of SEPEP in the year seven classes at Connell Primary are presented in this chapter. These data were collected during school term one, 1998. Information was gathered about the school/community context, the teachers and the students involved in the study. Pseudonyms are used for the school, teachers and students involved in the study.

### The school/community context

Connell Primary School is situated in a country town, with a population of approximately 15,000, in southwest Western Australia. It is one of five primary schools (three government and two private) in the area. The town offers a large number of sporting opportunities and facilities to its residents. Information about Connell Primary School was gained through an interview with the Principal, discussion with school personnel and from school documents. At the time of this study, the school had a population of 580 students, of whom, according to the Principal, 60% were from families with a single parent or with divorced or separated parents. The Principal described the socioeconomic background of the children as below the norm.

According to the school information booklet, the major goal of Connell Primary was "to develop confident, independent students possessing socially acceptable attitudes, whilst implementing the determined needs and priorities of the Education Department and our School's Community" (Connell Primary School, 1998, p1).

### Physical education at Connell Primary

Connell Primary School's information booklet defined school sport as being physical education, team games and swimming lessons and described it as being an integral part of the school program. The performance indicators outlined in the same document make reference to a number of PE outcomes. These include "Students develop a concern for, and an understanding of how to achieve, physical health and well being" and "An ability to work cooperatively with others"(Appendix I).

There was no documented PE policy at Connell primary at the time of the study. The Principal of the school said that "it's a policy that they (the teachers) are required to do the correct amount of Phys. Ed." (Interview, 7/5/98) and that PE would probably become a priority area the following year. According to the Principal, the "correct" amount of PE for upper primary was an hour of PE each week, plus an hour of sport. In addition to this, some teachers also ran regular ten to fifteen minute morning fitness sessions. The Principal said that he saw PE as an important part of the school program. In his opinion, "there should be fitness for everybody, there should be a minimum of one hour per week on Phys. Ed. and...there should be a sport period plus swimming, plus the other things (such as carnivals)". He indicated that the staff were an important influence on whether PE could be a priority, because "if you've got a staff of people who are not interested, you are wasting your time" (Interview, 7/5/98).

Upper and middle school sport sessions at Connell Primary were organised using a team teaching or "platoon" system (Tinning et al., 1993). Year six and seven students usually went out together for an hour of sport each Friday afternoon after

recess. Students were given a choice of one of four or five sports to play for about five weeks, before changing to a different activity. Year three and four sport was organised in a similar fashion on Wednesday afternoons, whilst year one, two and three class teachers determined their own PE programs. An internally appointed specialist teacher (a secondary trained PE teacher) was organised to take some PE lessons with the junior primary classes.

One of the year seven teachers, Mr Irvine was unofficially designated as the school's sports coordinator. This role included ordering and maintaining sports equipment, being in control of the sports budget and organising athletics and swimming carnivals. The school was fairly well equipped with sporting equipment. Other teaching resources available included the Daily Physical Education Files, Aussie Sport books and Sport It teaching manual. The Principal was usually supportive when requests were made for PE resources and attendance at PE teacher inservice courses.

There was some community involvement in school PE at Connell Primary. Parents and community coaches sometimes came into the school to help with team sports, such as cricket and football and with sport carnivals and inter-school activities. The Principal did not allow community sporting teams to be affiliated with the school, as he was concerned with the associated legal implications. Having taught in both city and regional schools in the state, he did not believe that there was generally much difference between them in their approach to PE. However he admitted that in certain communities, school PE could be influenced by the needs of the local children and by community expectations.



### The teacher

Ms Jenson was a 33-year-old Year Seven generalist primary school teacher, married with three primary school aged children and in her fourth year of teaching. She had been a mature-age student at university, where she was dux of the education course in her final (third) year. Ms Jenson had won teaching awards during her brief career and was regarded as an excellent classroom teacher. She volunteered to be involved in this study, as she believed physical education was a subject that she did not teach well and in which she needed to improve.

As a teenager, Ms Jenson's personal involvement in sport had included playing golf and netball, and since then an occasional game of squash or golf. She described herself as not being terribly sporty and recalled frequently trying to avoid participating in PE during her high school years. During her first of three years of study towards a teaching degree at university, Ms Jenson completed one compulsory first year physical and health education core unit. No other physical education units were studied. My previous contact with Ms Jenson had been as a lecturer in her core PE unit, as her supervisor during teaching practice and on a couple of occasions in Connell Primary School whilst supervising students on teaching practice in her class.

Ms Jenson took a class for Friday sport sessions, but unlike the other two year seven teachers, rarely did any other physical activities with her Year Seven class. With regard to the teaching of sport, she aimed to get the children involved and enjoying the particular game that they were playing (Teacher Questionnaire 1). Despite believing that the students enjoyed the Friday sport sessions with her, Ms Jenson said that she failed at

teaching students technical aspects of the game and the students did not learn much. "I just try and make it fun in my general attitude towards it and I hope that rubs off" (Interview, 12/5/98). When asked for her reasons for aiming for fun and involvement, Ms Jenson recalled negative memories of her own school PE experiences, such as being picked last or not at all for teams in primary school and writing notes for herself and her friends in high school, to be excused from participating.

Prior to SEPEP implementation, Ms Jenson did not spend time planning her sports sessions and did not make use of any of the PE teaching resources available at the school. "I just basically rocked up (to the class)," she said (Interview, 3/8/98). One of the other two year seven teachers would indicate to her which sport she would be doing for the five Friday sessions and "we [the teachers] just did as we were told, and we were all quite comfortable with that, although I have never been comfortable that I've taught it very well" (Interview, 3/8/98).

#### Other teachers involved in the study

Two male teachers were also involved in the SEPEP implementation. Although the original intention had been to study Ms Jenson's year seven class for a season of SEPEP, the two other year seven teachers at Connell Primary, Mr Irvine and Mr Green, indicated that they wanted all the year seven students to be involved in the program. The three teachers decided to implement SEPEP using a team teaching approach. Their students were to be offered a choice of three sports. This meant that students in Ms Jenson's SEPEP group would be drawn from the three year seven classes. Therefore integration of aspects of the program into the classroom curriculum, as suggested in the

SEPEP curriculum materials and at the workshop as a method of enhancing student outcomes, would be more difficult. However this model of SEPEP organisation gave the students a choice of sports and allowed the three teachers to work together to implement the program.

Mr Irvine attended the SEPEP workshop with Ms Jenson. He had been a primary teacher for 22 years. Information from informal interviews and responses in the initial questionnaire (see Appendix B) indicated that Mr Irvine enjoyed teaching PE, had a vast amount of experience in playing, teaching and coaching various sports and had been a school physical education coordinator for nine years. He took his year seven class for daily twenty-minute physical activity sessions as well as being involved in coordinating and teaching Friday sport.

Mr Green, a primary school teacher of 20 years experience, also enjoyed teaching physical education, although he felt that he did not teach it well. He had an interest and background in sport teaching, playing and coaching. His weekly PE teaching program included daily fitness and PE lessons with his class, as well as Friday sport. Mr Green wanted to see PE as a school priority, with an appointed PE specialist. He said he had trouble finding the time to fit in the fitness, PE and sport sessions. Although Mr Green did not attend the SEPEP workshop, he had heard about the program at a PE inservice course the previous year and was very keen to try it.

#### The students

Students from the three year seven classes at Connell Primary were given

questionnaires at the end of term one to gauge their thoughts on school physical education prior to the implementation of SEPEP. In term one, the year seven classes had combined with two year six classes for Friday sport. (The Year six students were not surveyed.) The students were given a choice of four sports which were played for five weeks (or half of a term) at a time. Year seven students were usually able to play the sport of their first choice. At the time the questionnaires were administered, students were playing volleyball, tennis, cricket or teeball.

A total of 72 students completed the questionnaire. (17 students were absent). Of these, 19 had been playing volleyball for Friday sport sessions, 19 tennis, 17 cricket and 17 teeball. Questions focusing on student feelings about their Friday sport sessions, what they thought they learned, whether they talked about PE with their classroom teacher, their participation and thoughts about community sport and their views of their own sporting ability were analysed. Where applicable, similar responses were categorised together. For example when giving reasons for liking PE, responses such as "it's cool" and "I enjoy it" were put in the "fun" category.

Table 4 shows the tallied responses from students when asked to indicate whether they liked or disliked their current Friday sport sessions or whether they were unsure. Most of the boys (30 of 35) had chosen to play cricket and teeball, whilst the girls (33 of 37) had generally opted for tennis and volleyball.

Approximately two thirds (64%) of students responded that they liked Friday sport. About the same number of male and female students liked the sport sessions.

More boys than girls (nine compared to five) disliked Friday sport. Eight girls were unsure in their opinions on the sessions, compared to four boys. Volleyball was the most liked sport, with only one student reporting that they did not like it. (Ms Jensen was the volleyball teacher.) Mini-tennis was the least liked activity.

Table 4

Student thoughts about Friday sport

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>LIKE</b>	<b>DISLIKE</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>MALE/ FEMALE</b>
Volleyball	16	1	2	19	0M/19F
Tennis	8	6	5	19	5M/14F
Cricket	11	3	3	17	16M/1F
Teeball	11	4	2	17	14M/3F
<b>TOTAL</b>	46 (64%)	14(19%)	12(17%)	72	35M/37F
<b>MALE/ FEMALE</b>	22M/24F	9M/5F	4M/8F	35M/37F	

Students were asked to list their reasons for liking, disliking or being unsure of what they thought about Friday sport. These reasons were tallied and tabulated in either like or dislike categories (Table 5). Some students gave more than one response. The most common reasons listed for liking Friday sport were concerned with the students having fun. Others included that they liked the teacher, that they were happy with the exercise/fitness from the session, that they enjoyed the break from the classroom and

that they liked sport in general. All the comments about liking the teacher came from Ms Jenson's volleyball group. Comments included that she was considered "funny", "cool", "fun" and "good". Only one student gave the teacher as a reason for not liking volleyball.

Table 5

Reasons for liking/disliking Friday sport

LIKE	FREQUENCY	DISLIKE	FREQUENCY
Fun	14	The teacher	13
The teacher	8	Boring/sometimes boring	9
Exercise/fitness	7	No proper game	6
Break from classroom/work	7	Other students	5
Like sport	7	Weather conditions (hot)	4
Other students/friends	5	Other	13
The sport they were playing	5		
Other	10		

Teacher-based factors, such as students disliking their allocated teacher or the way the teacher conducted the classes, rated as the most popular reason given for disliking Friday sport. Boredom with the sessions rated second and other common reasons included not playing the proper game, other students and the weather.

When asked what they thought they learned in their school sport sessions, over one third of the students (35%) believed that they learned nothing or not much (see Table 6). Of the students who did respond that they learned something, aspects of the game, such as skills and how to play the game, teamwork, warm-ups and rules were the most common answers given. Some students listed more than one aspect of learning.

Table 6

What do you think you learn in physical education classes?

LEARNING OUTCOMES	FREQUENCY
Nothing/not much	25
How to play the game/sport	18
Skills	12
Teamwork/cooperation	10
How to stretch/warm-up	8
Rules/scoring	5
Fitness	4
Other	6

Students were asked to list what they thought were the best and the worst aspects of school PE (Table 7). It was explained to the students that "school PE" included both Friday sport and the fitness sessions that were done with Mr Green and Mr Irvine. Some gave more than one response to these questions. Over one third (35%) of students rated

getting away from the classroom and from school work as the best aspect of school physical education. Fun was the second most frequently given response, followed by fitness, being with friends and particular sports. Five students wrote "nothing" as their response, which implies that there was not anything good to report about their thoughts about PE. This is listed separately in Table 7 as it is classed a negative response to the question.

When asked for the worst thing about PE, Table 7 shows that particular sports and the teacher were the most common responses. Twelve students (17%) named particular sports that they did not like playing as the worst thing about PE. The teacher was rated the second worst aspect. Other students, sessions perceived as boring, not having enough PE, dissatisfaction with the choice of sports and the weather were other common answers. "Nothing" and "Not enough" are listed separately in this category as they would be considered as positive responses. "Nothing" (15%) was the second most frequently reported response to the worst thing about PE, inferring that these students liked everything about PE. "Not enough" implied that these (six) students wanted more PE time during the school week.



Table 7

Best/worst things about physical education

<b>BEST</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>WORST</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
Break from classroom/work	25	Certain sports	12
Fun	15	Teacher	10
Fitness	12	Other students	8
Friends	7	Boring	6
Certain sports	5	Insufficient choice	5
Improve/learn skills	4	The weather (heat)	4
Like sport	4	Other	18
Choice	3		
Other	17		
		**Nothing	11
*Nothing	5	**Not enough	6

\*Responses that would be considered negative views towards PE.

\*\*Responses that would be classed as positive views towards PE.

### A "typical" physical education lesson, prior to SEPEP

During week eight of term one, Ms Jenson was observed taking what she described as one of her "typical" Friday sports sessions. The observed class was comprised of 24 year six and seven students, five males and nineteen females, who had opted to play volleyball for a five week period. This was their third one hour session. Three of the girls were not participating and sat on the sidelines chatting for most of the session. A student teacher, who had changed into tracksuit pants for the lesson sat on the sidelines and kept score for the game. Ms Jenson was wearing a dress and heeled shoes.

A volleyball net was strung across the centreline of a basketball court. An equipment monitor collected five volleyballs for the lesson. The observed lesson was initially comprised of a demonstration of the underhand serve by Ms Jenson, with students asked to practise the serving action without the ball, whilst standing on the court. For the next five minutes a game was played where Ms Jenson served the ball and the team of eighteen students on the other side tried to return the ball back over the net to get a rally going. Very few rallies ensued, with the ball frequently landing on the ground after the service.

Most of the remainder of the session (approximately forty minutes) was spent playing a volleyball game using one ball, with half the class on either side of the net. Two games were completed. Instead of using a whistle to signal service, Ms Jenson used the word "collywobble". The students' serves were unsuccessful in going over the net in more than half of instances. When they were successful, the ball usually fell to the

ground on the opposing side. As a result, few rallies ensued. On rare occasions, two or three hits occurred in a row.

After the first game, approximately five minutes was spent playing a game using four balls, one at a time being served from different parts of the court to try and get a rally going. In addition, during what she described as a "slow" part of the game, Ms Jenson said to the students that they needed to "wake up" (Field Notes, 27/3/98). She instructed all the students to perform activities such as squat down, jump up and turn around. The game then continued.

During the second game Ms Jenson quietly spoke to one student for silly behaviour. Three students were sidelined in the "sinbin", which meant exclusion from the game and from contact with other students for up to 15 minutes, for not rolling the ball properly to the server and for time wasting. These three students did not seem to be bothered by sitting out but were eager to return to the game when allowed.

With five minutes to go until the end of the session, Ms Jenson called in her students for a concluding discussion. She mentioned to them that they had improved in their serving and calling for the ball and asked students for any other areas in which they thought they had done well. Nominated students then packed away the equipment.

Ms Jenson appeared enthusiastic throughout the volleyball session, joking with the students and continually encouraging them. Comments made by Ms Jenson to the students indicated that she was unfamiliar with specific teaching points of volleyball

skills. For example, for a failed serve, she instructed: "Try and get it up more" and when a student showed her the volleyball digging action, saying: "Can I do this in the game?", she replied: "Yes, that's a good action". A few general coaching points were give such as "Try and get the ball up higher" and "You need to hit forward more" (when the serve was unsuccessful) (Field Notes 27/3/98).

Observations and informal student comments indicated that most students enjoyed the session and liked the teacher. They often laughed at Ms Jenson's comments and during the game. There was much excitement when a team won a point, with students cheering and jumping up and down. Most of the students rarely contacted the ball apart from when they were serving and they were static for much of the lesson. The observed skill level was poor.

### Discussion

The research took place at Connell Primary School, one of five primary schools in a town in the southwest region of Western Australia. The town's population of 15,000 was well catered for in terms of sporting facilities and associations. The school's 580 students were considered to be below average in socioeconomic level. Connell Primary was well equipped with sporting facilities and equipment. The Principal was very supportive of physical education, but aware that the effectiveness of the PE programs varied throughout the school according to the interests of his teachers. There was no documented PE policy.

The focus year seven teacher, Ms Jenson, who volunteered to be involved in the

study, described herself as “non-sporty” and recalled negative memories of her personal school PE experiences. Despite being regarded as an excellent classroom teacher, Ms Jenson was aware of her lack of expertise regarding the teaching of PE. This was evident during my observation of a typical one-hour Friday sport lesson, in which students were in large teams, inactive for much of the session and received little skill instruction. Ms Jenson was enthusiastic and encouraging throughout the lesson and the students appeared to enjoy themselves.

Two other year seven teachers involved in the study, Mr Irvine and Mr Green were much more confident about and experienced in teaching PE. In contrast to Ms Jenson, the two male teachers regularly took their classes out for physical activity sessions in addition to Friday sport. Both were keen to try SEPEP with their students. Mr Irvine and Ms Jenson attended a SEPEP workshop run by the researcher, after which the three Year seven teachers decided to implement the program as a team.

The results of data collected prior to SEPEP implementation are discussed with reference to research questions 1(a) and 2(a), concerning firstly the range of thoughts and feelings of the students involved in the study about school PE, and secondly the teacher's thoughts and feelings about school PE.

### Student thoughts

#### Research question 1(a): What were the range of thoughts and feelings of the students about school PE?

The finding that 64% of the year seven students surveyed responded that they

liked Friday sport concurs with the view that most children like school PE (Carlson, 1995a; Kirk, 1991; Moroz, 1996). However this also implies that there were a number of students who were not favourably inclined towards the subject. Volleyball was the most liked sport of the four being played, with only one student of nineteen reporting that they did not like it. (Ms Jenson was the volleyball teacher.) Mini-tennis was the least liked activity.

From the results of the questionnaires, it was clear that many students deemed the fun aspect of PE as being important to their enjoyment of PE classes. The literature cites studies with similar findings (for example those mentioned in Graham, 1995a). Fun figured prominently in the reasons for liking the current PE sessions and in nominating the best thing about school PE in general. Many students (35%) rated a break from the classroom or from "work" as the best thing about school PE, with fun, fitness and friends deemed important by others.

Portman (1995) believes that teacher-based factors can lead to alienation and dissatisfaction in PE classes. In this study, the teacher featured prominently in the reasons for liking or disliking Friday sport and as the worst thing about PE classes. This supports Figley's (1985) view that teachers play an important role in the formation of students' attitudes towards PE. All the comments about liking the teacher came from the volleyball class. Ms Jenson was considered "fun", "cool" and "good". Only one comment about her PE teaching ("she's a good teacher") was received. The students expressed dissatisfaction when they did not like their PE teacher (for example, "she's mean") or the way their teacher conducted the classes ("she gives us unreasonable

punishment" and "we only do drills - hardly ever play the game") (Student Questionnaire 1). These negative comments came from students in the tennis, cricket and teeball groups.

The initial results support studies of high school students which claim that a number of students find PE boring and irrelevant (Locke, 1992; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1995). Boredom was the second most common reason given (to teacher-based factors) for disliking PE, followed by students being unhappy with not playing the "proper" game, (most commonly from the mini-tennis group), with other students and with the weather. These same reasons were prominent in the tabulated list of the worst things about PE.

Twelve students named particular sports that they did not like playing as their worst aspects, yet the year sevens nearly always were able to play the sport of their choice, from the four or five offered. They could have been referring to other PE activities they did during the week with their classroom teachers. A significant percentage (35%) of respondents believed that they learned little or nothing in PE classes. Others said they learned how to play the game, game skills, teamwork, stretching, how to score and they developed their fitness.

The overall picture presented by the student survey results was rather pessimistic and supports Tinning and Fitzclarence's (1992) view that the multi-activity curriculum "does not excite or stimulate students" (p287). Many of the year seven students at Connell Primary did not enjoy their school PE, were unhappy with aspects of how it was

run, saw it largely as a break from the classroom and did not perceive that they learned anything. Teacher-based factors were mentioned frequently as both positive and negative influences on attitude towards PE. Carlson and Hastie (1997) wondered whether sport education could change student attitudes towards the subject.

### Teacher thoughts

#### Research question 2(a): What were the teacher's thoughts and feelings about school PE?

Ms Jenson's perceptions of her PE teaching closely matched those of her students. She believed that students enjoyed her volleyball sessions, although she "wouldn't say for a moment that they learn a lot about it [the sport]" (Interview, 12/5/98). Despite believing in the worth of "good" PE, Ms Jenson was not happy with her PE teaching skills. She admitted that when opportunities such as professional development and new resources in PE were made available to her, they became "one of those things that just got left" (Interview, 12/5/98).

Due to negative memories of her own school PE experiences, Ms Jenson said that her main objectives for her own classes were for them to enjoy PE sessions and want to participate. She admitted that no planning occurred for her Friday sport classes. Lessons were teacher-directed and she found them quite exhausting, often finishing them "voiceless", due to the enthusiasm she felt obliged to maintain. "I always had the huge commitment to make sure they were enjoying themselves so I had to keep motivated for the hour" (Interview 3/8/98).

The observed lesson format was consistent with what Ms Jenson described in



the initial questionnaire as being how her physical education classes typically proceeded. The volleyball lesson was comprised of skill demonstration and practice for approximately five minutes, a whole class game for the rest of the session and a short concluding discussion on the merits of the students' play. Although Ms Jenson was aware of the importance of and reasons for warming up before activity, she generally did not include warm-ups in her lessons as she was concerned about doing incorrect activities or injuring the students. She claimed she "hadn't found time to seek out the knowledge to learn which ones are best" (Teacher Questionnaire 1).

Prior to SEPEP implementation, Ms Jenson was typical of many generalist primary school teachers, having to deal with the pressures of a crowded curriculum and lacking confidence and expertise in teaching PE. Despite this, she demonstrated an enthusiastic approach to the subject and this enthusiasm was perceived in a positive light by her students.

### Summary

Prior to SEPEP implementation at Connell Primary School, Friday sport sessions were taken by generalist teachers, who employed a "platoon" or team-teaching approach and used a multi-activity model. Ms Jenson, the focus teacher, was a highly regarded classroom teacher of four years teaching experience. In contrast to the two male year seven teachers, Mr Green and Mr Irvine, she described herself as non-sporty and lacking in confidence and expertise in PE teaching. Although Ms Jenson was the catalyst for the SEPEP implementation, Mr Green and Mr Irvine were also interested. As a result, a team approach to SEPEP was planned for term two.

In an observed volleyball lesson taken by Ms Jenson, there were signs of Timming's (1987) physical "miseducation" occurring. There was a lot of standing around by the students, most of whom had no involvement in the game unless they were serving. More than half of the volleyball serves observed were unsuccessful and thereby few rallies ensued. The observed volleyball skill levels were generally poor. However comments from both Ms Jenson and the students in her volleyball group indicated that the students enjoyed the sessions. Ms Jenson was consistently encouraging and enthusiastic. It was understandable that Friday sport lessons frequently left her "exhausted and voiceless".

Responses from a survey of the three year seven classes indicated that two thirds of students liked Friday sport for reasons such as having fun and a break from the classroom. The overall picture however, implied problems with the current PE program. Many students did not enjoy PE, were unhappy with aspects of how it was run and did not believe that they learned anything. Teacher-based factors were prominent as influences on student attitudes.

The following chapter follows student and teacher perceptions over a term (season) of SEPEP as this study investigates whether, as Carlson and Hastie (1997) speculated, SEPEP could alter student attitudes towards school PE.

## CHAPTER V: THE SEPEP VOLLEYBALL SEASON

During term two, 1998, SEPEP was implemented at Connell Primary School. Within this chapter, the data collected during this time are presented and discussed. Discussion centres firstly on what actually occurred during the season and secondly the student and teacher perceptions of events. The focus is primarily on Ms Jenson and six students within one team in her volleyball class. Other comments relate to her volleyball class as a whole and, to a lesser extent, the other two year seven SEPEP classes. The data presented in this chapter was gleaned from tape-recorded observations of one or two SEPEP sessions per week, information from diaries and initial questionnaires from five volleyball students in one selected team, formal (recorded) and informal student and teacher interviews and Ms Jenson's diary.

### Overview of SEPEP implementation at Connell Primary School

Table 8 presents an overview of the implementation of SEPEP for the three year seven classes at Connell Primary. Weeks one and two were spent introducing the program to the students, organising them into three sporting groups and "getting started". Week three saw training sessions and rounds of fixtures under way and continuing until week eight. In week nine, finals for the three sports occurred and the program was concluded. As is normal in schools, disruptions occurred, which shortened the amount of time the classes were able to devote to SEPEP. These included public holidays, a school development day and the shortening of the normal ten week term to nine weeks, due to the relocation of the school site. In week nine, after the SEPEP season had concluded for the term, student and teacher interviews were conducted and

final questionnaires issued.

Table 8

Weekly timetable of SEPEP implementation at Connell Primary

WEEK	MONDAY (1/2hr)	THURSDAY(1/2hr)	FRIDAY (1hr)
ONE	PUBLIC HOLIDAY		introduction; sports allocated; Sports Board elected
TWO	teams selected, roles allocated	more organisation; first diary entries	PUPIL FREE DAY
THREE	training session	training session	games (2 rounds)
FOUR	training cancelled (weather); group and team meetings	training session	games (2 rounds)
FIVE	training session	training cancelled after 5 minutes (weather); group and team meetings	games (2 rounds)
SIX	PUBLIC HOLIDAY	training cancelled (weather); no SEPEP	games (2 rounds)
SEVEN	training cancelled (weather); no SEPEP	training session	skills session; games (1 round)
EIGHT	games (1 round)	training session	semi-finals
NINE	finals (preliminary) (1 round)	grand finals - all sports (Tuesday)	
TEN	no program; school site relocation		

Weeks one and two

Teacher planning prior to the first student session

When Ms Jenson volunteered to be involved in this study, her original intention was to implement SEPEP with just her own year seven class. However, she thought that

it might prove difficult to alter the existing team teaching arrangement for Friday sport. Ms Jenson was not confident that other teachers would be interested in SEPEP "because it seemed to me that the way sport was timetabled and taught had been a long standing tradition at the school" (diary, 1/5/98). She was delighted when the other two year seven teachers, Mr Irvine and Mr Green, showed great interest in trying the program with their classes. As a result, the decision was made to implement SEPEP as a team of three teachers, with three sports being offered.

Ms Jenson and Mr Irvine attended a full day SEPEP workshop late in term one, which I presented. Ms Jenson said that following the workshop, both she and Mr Irvine were very keen to trial the program at Connell Primary School. In particular, they were influenced by the accounts of two teachers who had successfully introduced SEPEP into their respective schools and had spoken enthusiastically to workshop participants about their experiences. The other year seven teacher at Connell Primary School, Mr Green, had heard of SEPEP at a previous PE professional development day and had his own copy of the SEPEP manual. None of the three teachers had previously tried using a SEPEP approach to PE teaching.

From late first term to early second term, Ms Jenson, Mr Irvine and Mr Green had a number of meetings and informal discussions about the implementation of SEPEP. According to Ms Jenson, the discussions centred on "which sports we would do and how we would go about it [SEPEP]" (Diary, 1/5/98) and included consideration of space and equipment available, timetabling of games and training sessions, allocation of sports to the students, which roles would be taken on by students, game rosters and

whether to include a Sports Board. The teachers decided that the year seven students would be given a choice of basketball, soccer and volleyball.

Ms Jenson chose to take the volleyball group since she had attempted to teach it before and "the children enjoyed the game, but I wasn't confident I had taught them the correct skills, warm-up exercises, etc." (Diary, 1/5/98). She expressed a desire that students would "learn more about volleyball than what I taught them [last term]" (Interview, 12/5/98). Mr Irvine chose to take soccer and Mr Green basketball as they claimed they were familiar with these sports, which they felt were well suited to SEPEP and to the space available. Ms Jenson prepared charts for the three classrooms, listing duties for various roles that students would be allocated. She had watched the SEPEP video which she deemed "excellent" and said that she was excited about the program (Interview, 29/4/98).

#### Week one: Introduction of the students to SEPEP

On Wednesday of week one, the three year seven classes were gathered in the school undercover area and introduced to "sport ed." The basic concepts of SEPEP and the philosophy behind the program were explained to the students. The teachers also talked about the three different sports that would be offered, as well as the responsibilities the students would have within their teams. Students then selected their sports using a preference system. "They all had a sheet of paper and they had to write one, two or three, which one they preferred to do the most to the least" (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jenson described the initial student session as a lengthy process, during which the students had to sit and listen for quite some time (Diary, 1/5/98).

After school on the following day, the teachers held a meeting to allocate students to the three sports. Only five of the ninety students did not receive their first preference. Four of these, all boys, were placed in the volleyball group in order to equalise the numbers. On Friday afternoon, during their normal one hour sport period, students were again assembled in the undercover area. Mr Irvine outlined how the program would be run and Mr Green briefly explained the various roles and duties to the students. There were a few questions from the students such as "If you are a coach do you still get to play?" (Field Notes 1/5/98), which were all answered by the male teachers. The students were then divided into their sporting groups and attended meetings with their designated sports teachers in classrooms. Ms Jenson's volleyball group comprised 25 girls and five boys. She spent the final thirty minutes of the session discussing team sizes, duties and election of the Sports Board with her students. (See Appendix D for extract of class discussion).

#### Week two: Organisation of game modifications, fixtures and player roles

Two half-hour sessions on Monday and Tuesday of week two were spent on additional organisation for the start of the SEPEP season. (There was a pupil free day on the Friday). Ms Jenson's volleyball group discussed and organised aspects such as team selection, designation of roles and duties, game rules and modifications and the games roster. Students commenced writing their diaries on Thursday with their classroom teachers. It was decided that the three classes would henceforth have two half-hour training sessions on Mondays and Thursdays from 9.00am and two rounds of games in the usual one hour Friday sport time. The only physical activity that had occurred thus far was a run around the school in teams during Tuesday's session.

The Sports Board, together with Ms Jenson, had divided the volleyball class into five teams of six. This was despite recommendations at the SEPEP workshop and in the manual that team sizes should be modified so as to enable greater student participation and skill development. Each of the five teams comprised five girls and one boy.

At this stage a focus volleyball team was chosen for targeted observation. This team, the Crazy Critters, was chosen as it included two students from each of the year seven classes and according to Ms Jenson, the team members had a range of PE approach tendencies, abilities and interests.

#### Student thoughts

Diaries and verbal comments indicated that many students in the three SEPEP classes felt bored and annoyed with the amount of organisation and inactivity in the first two weeks of SEPEP. Some said that the organisation could have been done in a shorter time. Others commented that they understood that this organisation time was necessary. A few students were dissatisfied either with their teams, or that they did not receive their first choice of sport. Most students were looking forward to starting the competitions.

#### The focus team: Crazy Critters

The six students in the focus team, five girls and one boy, chose their roles by consensus. Hayley was the coach, Lisa the captain, Danny the first aid officer and recorder, Shelley and Natalie the publicity officers, and Mary the manager. The following describes these students' previous thoughts about school PE and their



perceptions of the first two weeks of SEPEP.

Student one: Hayley

Hayley did not consider herself as being good at sport but she liked it and claimed that she always tried her best. She was not involved in community sport at the time of the study. Hayley liked being given a choice of sports and was keen on keeping fit. She chose volleyball as she had previously enjoyed the sport, she enjoyed the teamwork, she was better at it than at basketball and soccer and because she liked Ms Jenson. Hayley was happy to be coach although she did not really know what to do. Ms Jenson had said that she would organise some notes on suitable training drills for the coaches. Whilst Hayley accepted that the organisation sessions were necessary, she complained about the length of them, saying she did not like to have to wait so long before playing any volleyball.

Student two: Lisa

Lisa usually enjoyed participating in school sporting activities as "you can have fun while exercising and you miss out on school work" (Questionnaire 1). However she thought that school sport was often boring and should be "more fun and exciting" (Questionnaire 1). She had played mini-tennis during the previous term and did not like the way it was taught. She had played hockey outside of school and claimed that both she and her peers thought she was good at sport. Lisa had chosen volleyball to be with her friends, because she considered it a fun sport and because she did not like the other two sports on offer. She was allocated the role of captain of the Crazy Critters as "everybody thought I was good for a captain and I didn't want to be coach at that time

because it would be too much of a responsibility" (Interview, 22/5/98). After week two, Lisa commented that "it's really fun so far. I'm captain and no-one has any complaints yet" (Diary, 7/5/98). She would have liked to have had some of her friends in her team, but was very keen to start playing the games.

#### Student three: Danny

Danny usually enjoyed sport "because I get to play fun sport and be with friends" (Diary, 7/5/98) and he liked the break from schoolwork. He thought he was good at sport because "people encourage me and I do the right things" (Questionnaire 1). He did not like "sitting around and discussing the rules and taking turns" (Interview, 14/5/98), preferring instead to be playing the game, although he admitted, "you have to learn the rules to play a good game" (Interview, 14/5/98). After week two of SEPEP, Danny was not at all impressed. He was unhappy that he had chosen to play basketball, his favourite sport, but was allocated volleyball. Danny was the only boy in the Crazy Critters "with a pile of girls" (Diary, 7/5/98). He was designated as the team's first aid officer and recorder, as nobody else in the team wanted these jobs. In his initial diary entry, Danny wrote: "So far it's stupid because I'm playing a bad sport, one of my jobs I hate, the rest of the people in my team are girls...and we haven't played any sport [yet]" (Diary, 7/5/98).

#### Student four: Shelley

Shelley said she enjoyed Friday sport as she liked to miss out on schoolwork. When she did volleyball last term, Shelley said she had fun because "I got put in the sin bin heaps" (Interview, 18/5/98) and as a result she did not have to play the game too

much. Shelley said she was "sinbinned", or excluded from the game for short periods of time, on occasions due to disruptive or silly behaviour. She liked having Ms Jenson for sport classes because she was "cool" and not too strict. Shelley did not consider herself as being good at sport in general as her activity was limited due to frequent injuries, in particular a weak knee, and because she wasted her energy on more interesting things. She played netball on the weekends mainly to be with her friends.

Shelley chose volleyball as her SEPEP sport because she liked it better than soccer and basketball and because she liked Ms Jenson. She was happy with her team and with her role of publicity officer, ("I like drawing stuff, and writing" (Interview, 18/5/98)), but had a few reservations about SEPEP, including the increased responsibility and smaller teams. "Last term", she said, "there wasn't as much responsibility, you didn't have to choose jobs, and it was easier, and we had bigger teams too, and we had bigger courts because there were only two teams playing, so that was better"(Interview, 18/5/98).

#### Student five: Natalie

Natalie was quietly spoken and initially shy in the interviews. She did not like sport at school, unable to give a reason why, other than "I just don't like sport much" (Questionnaire 1). Natalie said she was good only at some sports, like netball, which she played on the weekends. She chose volleyball because she enjoyed playing it last term, although she did not get to touch the ball much and "I was always at the back [of the court]" (Interview, 18/5/98). Natalie volunteered for publicity officer with Shelley because she liked drawing. She liked the fact that everyone would learn skills such as

umpiring in SEPEP. She was looking forward to the students running the program, rather than the teachers "ruling it" (Diary, 7/5/98).

#### Student six: Mary

Mary said she was generally not keen on playing sports and did not consider herself as being good at sport. Mary had played volleyball last term and had chosen it again "because it's fun and most of my friends play it as well" (Interview, 22/5/98). Sometimes she had found volleyball boring when she had to stand around for long periods during the game. After the initial introduction to SEPEP, she thought the program was a good idea and liked the idea of smaller teams, "because last time I did volleyball it was harder because there were more people and you didn't know where you were going or what you were doing" (Interview, 22/5/98). She was worried about the responsibilities of being the team manager, but looking forward to performing her role with other students. Mary said she would have preferred even numbers of boys and girls in the teams, so that all the players would have others of the same sex to whom they could relate.

#### Teacher thoughts

The initial SEPEP organisational sessions were described by Ms Jenson as "lengthy" (Diary, 7/5/98). She did not consider them to be the best way of introducing SEPEP, and said that by the end of the second week, the students were becoming restless, due to spending so much time on organisation without actually playing any sport. The teachers were also keen to commence the training and games sessions, all expressing that in future, they would condense the initial organisation sessions. Ms

Jenson was happy with the sport selection process and pleased that only five students had missed out on their first preferences.

Ms Jenson liked the student-centred approach in SEPEP, describing it as being similar to how she taught science, with students taking on different roles. She was very comfortable with giving students a lot of responsibility right from the start and described this first attempt at implementing SEPEP as "discovery teaching" while the students would be engaged in "discovery learning" (Interview, 12/5/98). Ms Jenson had originally wanted the students to be involved in all of the decision-making, but, in hindsight, she thought that "going from what we were to this, is quite extreme, and we probably didn't need to take such a huge leap" (Interview, 22/5/98).

According to Ms Jenson, less athletic students appeared to have chosen volleyball and she also noticed that there were fewer natural leaders in her group than in the other two classes (Interview, 29/4/98). She thought that SEPEP could offer students who were not usually given the opportunity to be leaders the chance to develop leadership qualities. However, she suggested that this could also mean that these possibly less able, less confident leaders could prove to be less effective. Ms Jenson believed that this group of students would find volleyball less threatening than basketball and soccer, in which their lack of sporting skill would be more obvious. She thought that many of the girls who had chosen volleyball would have done so to feel safe in being with their friends.

## Discussion

The three year seven teachers at Connell Primary decided to take a team teaching approach to the implementation of SEPEP. They offered their students a choice of volleyball, soccer and basketball, to be allocated on an individual preference basis. All but five students received their first choice. The first two weeks of SEPEP were devoted to organisation. Both students and teachers thought this was too long and would have liked to include some relevant physical activities during this period. Whilst many could see the value of the sessions to date, a number of students became restless, impatient and bored with the time spent sitting, listening and discussing. Ms Jenson indicated that it took a while to get going due to the teachers' inexperience with the program and in future the sessions would be condensed. The difficulty in making progress with the initial organisation was compounded by the fact that there were two non-teaching days in weeks one and two. The teachers and many of the students claimed that they were looking forward to the start of training and competition.

Ms Jenson's volleyball group was, according to the three year seven teachers, comprised largely of less popular and less physically talented students, when compared to the basketball and soccer groups. Volleyball was a popular choice for girls, who numbered 25 in a group of 30. Four of the five boys in the group had not picked volleyball as their first choice. Despite recommendations to have smaller than normal teams in SEPEP, Ms Jenson and her class decided on five teams of six. (This was much smaller though than the 15 member teams in previous volleyball classes.) Ms Jenson was comfortable at this stage with giving the students plenty of input in the organisation of the program. She admitted not having much knowledge about the game of volleyball.

The focus volleyball team for this study, Crazy Critters, comprised five girls and a boy. Four of the six team members liked school sport, two thought they were good at sport and they all saw fun and friends as being important to their enjoyment of school sport. Four were enthusiastic at this stage about the new way of doing sport and were keen to start playing. Danny was very unhappy about not being in the basketball group, with his all-female team mates and with his roles of recorder and first aid officer. Shelley was concerned about the smaller teams and increased responsibility as her team's publicity officer.

#### Weeks three and four

The teachers decided to devote three sessions per week to SEPEP. Half-hour team training sessions were to be held on Mondays and Thursdays from 9.00am and two rounds of games fixtures were scheduled for the one hour Friday afternoon sport timeslot. It was my intention to record observations during two of the three sessions per week. Each of the members of the Crazy Critters volleyball team was the focus of targeted observation for one session and was interviewed immediately afterwards. Sometimes the whole team was interviewed as a group.

#### Week three: First training and games sessions

##### Monday, 11/5/98. First training session. Focus student: Hayley.

A net was strung along the length of the school's netball court to allow room for the five volleyball teams to practise skills. Hayley, the coach of the Crazy Critters, was responsible for running the half-hour training session for her team. After initial confusion about what they were to do, her team commenced their training. Activities

included running around the court, handball, throwing and catching and keeping the ball up in the air. Hayley allowed others to have input into the session and used their ideas. One ball was used, although more were available. The students appeared happy and involved. Ms Jenson walked around from one team to another offering encouragement. She commended the Critters for how well they were working together. Hayley said later that she had not prepared any activities, but made them up as the session proceeded. She was happy with the first training session, but did not really know what to do as coach. Ms Jenson was going to distribute some notes on volleyball drills to all the coaches.

Thursday, 14/5/98, Training. Focus student: Danny.

Ms Jenson indicated that she would be unavailable on most Thursday SEPEP sessions as she was involved in school administration duties. Another teacher, Mr Gray would take her place. The students knew Mr Gray, who claimed to be familiar with the SEPEP concept. At the commencement of today's session, Mr Gray had a brief discussion with the volleyball group about what was expected of the teams. He stressed that the students should be doing training drills to practise volleyball skills, rather than merely playing mini games. Ms Jenson had given the coaches a handout on volleyball training drills. Despite this, the Crazy Critters' training session was similar to the previous one, apart from an activity where the players were practising serving and returning the ball over the net.

Danny participated enthusiastically. He was quite vocal, giving advice to the others on how to perform the activities, such as "Put the ball up higher" (Field Notes, 14/5/98) as well as giving suggestions for drills. At one stage he fetched a second ball



for the team to use, but this was put to the side. He appeared focused on the tasks and keen to keep active throughout the session, in contrast to the five girls, who were at times observed chatting with each other about irrelevant matters. After the lesson, Danny said that he really liked to be active and involved in sport lessons, rather than "sitting around, discussing rules and taking turns" (Interview, 14/5/98). He liked to have input into the activities and was satisfied that the team had taken on some of his ideas. Danny was feeling more positive about his team, his roles and the sport. He would have preferred there to be another boy in the team, but admitted that "it's still pretty good" and "we get along fine" (Interview, 14/5/98). Danny was looking forward to the competition games, which were to start the following day.

#### Week four: One training. Second games session

##### Monday, 18/5/98. Training cancelled. Sport and team meetings held.

Due to wet weather, training was cancelled, to the obvious disappointment of many students. The three classes met in the undercover area to discuss ideas for students undertaking roles of publicity and recording as well as a few organisational matters, such as being at the venues quickly and care of equipment. Groups then went to the classrooms for individual sport meetings. Ms Jenson commended the Sports Board on picking evenly matched teams, which had made the first rounds of fixtures competitive. She praised the umpires for how well they had controlled the initial games and encouraged the publicity officers to use some of the ideas that were proving effective in the basketball group. Ms Jenson expressed disappointment with some of the students' behaviour in the games and discussed the issuing of penalties, such as red, green and blue cards for different offences. A problem with sick and injured players was referred

to the Sports Board.

Team meetings were held for the final five minutes of the session, with instructions to work on game strategies. The Crazy Critters discussed ideas for publicity. For the first few minutes, all team members contributed to the conversation while it remained relevant to volleyball, but they soon started chatting about other matters and Hayley and Danny left the group to join other students.

Friday, 22/5/98. Second games session. Focus students: Mary (game one); Lisa (game two).

Each round of volleyball fixtures involved two matches of six-a-side volleyball on a reduced size court. Two rounds were played in the one hour session. Less able students were allowed to step into the court to serve in order to allow more chances of success. The students were quickly into games, without a warm-up. Although the occasional rally ensued, the skill levels observed were poor and the demonstrated skills often incorrect. For example, many students "carried" the ball and teams rotated incorrectly. With six players in each team, there was some standing around and some domination of play, usually by the boys in the teams, but students appeared to be enjoying themselves. There was a lot of noisy cheering coming from both volleyball courts, particularly when teams won a point. Ms Jenson stood back and watched the games, offering words of encouragement and helping settle a few minor disputes that arose, mainly within teams. At the end of the matches she called the teams together, read out the scores, then asked the students if they wished to persist with this way of playing sport. All bar two of the thirty students indicated that they preferred this format.

The Crazy Critters seemed to be getting along well and all team members indicated that they enjoyed the game, which they lost. Hayley, the coach, was absent and Lisa, the captain, had taken on her role. Lisa seemed to relish this role, organising player positions, encouraging and praising her team mates during the game and initiating discussion at half time on how to improve their game. Lisa said she was happy with her team's performance in the game. Despite originally thinking that the role of coach would involve too much responsibility, Lisa now wanted to take on that role. The team, she said, was unhappy with Hayley as coach. "They think she's a bit mean, and they think I should be the coach, but I don't know. " (Interview, 22/5/98).

Mary was a willing participant, regularly smiling and laughing, often when she made an error. Her observed skill level was poor and she did not appear confident or willing to move to hit the ball, unless it was coming directly at her. On the few occasions when she executed a successful hit, she appeared very pleased with herself, clapping and jumping on the spot. Mary said afterwards that it was good having the smaller teams, because she was more involved in the game. She liked the different things the students could be involved in besides playing the game and was happy with the extra time they could spend on sport during the week. Last term, she said, "you just played and that was only on Fridays, you had no other things, but now you get to do different things to do with the sport, so it's fun" (Interview, 22/5/98). Mary also enjoyed having the opportunity to chat with her friends when the Crazy Critters were umpiring.

### Student thoughts

Diary and interview comments from the members of the Crazy Critters team

were employed to gauge their thoughts about SEPEP during weeks three and four.

Within this time, they played three volleyball matches, of which they won one, and were duty team for another.

#### Student one: Hayley

Hayley described volleyball as "cool" and "great fun" thus far. Initially she had wanted to play on the bigger courts with a "real net" (Interview, 11/5/98), but by week four she was happy with the way volleyball was being organised. As coach, Hayley had to "tell them [the team] what to do and think up exercises" (Diary, 14/5/98) and she enjoyed this role.

#### Student two: Lisa

The first week of training and games was "fun", according to Lisa (Diary, 14/5/98). She liked the fact that "it's more organised and we get on with our games instead of mucking around like we normally do" (Interview, 22/5/98). Lisa liked her team, although she found that Hayley, the coach was not organised for training and also would sometimes not let them practise skills at the net. She complained that Hayley was "bossy" and "a bit mean" (Interview, 22/5/98). After taking over as coach for a session, when Hayley was absent in the second week, Lisa claimed that she and the rest of the team thought that she would make a better coach.

#### Student three: Danny

Danny was far more positive, now that the training and games sessions had begun. He wrote in his diary that "everything is going good" (Diary, 14/5/98) and told

me "it's fun doing all this stuff, no boring things now" (Interview, 14/5/98). He described the sessions as fun and said he was getting along well with his team. The girls in his team were using some of his ideas for skill practices. He was happier with his roles of first aid officer and recorder, noting in his diary: "the jobs are okay too" (Diary, 14/5/98).

#### Student four: Shelley

Shelley said she was enjoying volleyball training sessions more than the games. She was happy with her team and thought that they were all cooperating and working well together. Shelley liked the training sessions with the Crazy Critters because everyone had a say in the choice of the activities, not just the coach and captain. Regarding the Friday games, Shelley said she found them a bit boring "because the ball seems to go in one spot, it's pretty predictable, and the same person serving it, and it gets pretty boring after a while, because it's just a little team playing" (Interview, 18/5/98). She would have liked to be in a team with her friends.

#### Student five: Natalie

Natalie was enthusiastic after the first games session, coming up to me, smiling and saying that it was "really fun". She liked her team, whom she believed worked really well together. The small-sided games, she thought, were much better than last time she did volleyball as she was able to be more involved. In the current games she "actually got the ball" (Interview, 18/5/98).

#### Student six: Mary

Mary claimed to be enjoying the new way of doing sport. She thought her team was "good", yet she found it difficult having Danny in the team because "I don't really talk to boys very much," adding, "it's not really bad that we have boys in the team, but they should have more boys, so that the boys could talk and the girls could talk, but they should join in together" (Interview, 22/5/98). Mary thought her serving was improving and she was enjoying the games. She found the role of manager "a bit annoying" during training because it was time consuming to set up and pack up the volleyball equipment. However she thought the training sessions were going really well so far and liked the fact that the team worked together to make up their own practice activities.

#### Teacher thoughts

After two weeks of training and games, Ms Jenson said she thought SEPEP was going really well, although there were "lots of teething problems we need to get over [and] lots of issues that are coming up" (Interview, 22/5/98). Mr Gray had told her that despite the coaches having been given handouts with training ideas, teams were sometimes observed by him to be doing silly or irrelevant activities, such as practising serving left-handed. Ms Jenson blamed this in part on the lack of leadership skills in the volleyball group, contrasting them with the basketballers. "They [the volleyballers] are not achievers, and they are not the real sporty ones. In fact the basketball group are really dynamic and if you could see Irene coaching her basketballers, she is fantastic" (Interview, 22/5/98). Ms Jenson was planning to organise a meeting of volleyball coaches to give them some assistance with how to run a training session.

Despite being aware of inappropriate practice activities by some teams, Ms Jenson expressed amazement about the knowledge that other students had shown about volleyball. A couple of the teams were observed doing skills practices and discussing team positions, which had not been taught in her previous volleyball classes, causing Ms Jenson to comment: "I don't know what they were thinking when I was trying to teach them last year!" (Interview, 12/5/98).

It was Ms Jenson's belief that student opinions of SEPEP thus far would vary. She thought that some students would not be sure about whether they should be given extra responsibilities besides that of player. However, she believed that in the first two weeks of competition, the students were excited about the new program and many were enjoying the training and games sessions as well as other aspects, such as the publicity. She was impressed with the publicity ideas that the basketball teacher and students had generated.

Ms Jenson was enjoying liaising with Mr Green and Mr Irvine, in that "It makes you feel more part of the school" (Interview, 12/5/98). Each of the three teachers was able to contribute in different ways to the running of the program. Ms Jenson was responsible for the charts depicting the various student duties, Mr Green looked after the publicity and Mr Irvine generally ran the whole group organisational sessions because of his PE teaching and coordinating experience.

### Discussion

Weeks three and four saw the commencement of training and games sessions for

the three classes involved in SEPEP. Two half-hour training sessions and one hour of games were scheduled for each week. Volleyball games were played on a reduced size court, with less skilled students allowed to step inside the court to serve. Teams were allowed to play with fewer players than the usual six if there were absentees. No other modifications were evident. Students appeared to be actively involved in and enjoying the observed training and games sessions.

Both student and teacher comments indicated that they were generally enthusiastic about the initial training and games sessions, although, as Ms Jenson mentioned, there were some teething problems. Even though it was suggested in the SEPEP manual and at the SEPEP workshop that teachers could use a more teacher-directed approach in the initial practice sessions, Ms Jenson opted to "let the children take responsibility for a lot of their own learning from the beginning" (Diary, 22/5/98). Little guidance was given to coaches other than a handout with some sample volleyball drills. Inappropriate and irrelevant practices were observed, which demonstrated a lack of knowledge about the game by many students. Ms Jenson was unaware of this until told by Mr Gray, who took the volleyball group for Thursday training sessions. She admitted not knowing much about the sport. Ms Jenson expressed surprise at how much more the students knew about volleyball than she had previously thought. She espoused the benefits of running SEPEP as a team-teaching program, which allowed each of the three teachers to take on their own different roles, according to their different areas of interest and expertise.

The Crazy Critters team all felt positive about their first training and games



sessions. Reasons given included that it was better organised, they were doing a variety of activities, they were able to have input into sessions, the team was cooperating well and they liked the increased involvement from being in small teams. Despite losing three of their first four matches, they described them as "fun". Danny had a far more positive attitude now that the organisational sessions were over, he was actively involved and was getting along well with his female team mates. Lisa thought she would make a better coach than Hayley.

#### Weeks five to eight

##### Week five. One training. Third games session.

##### Monday, 25/5/98. Training. Focus students: Shelley and Natasha.

The Crazy Critters took about five minutes to begin training, waiting for all team members to arrive. Danny initiated an activity to start the session, which involved individuals taking turns serving and returning the ball over the net. The team then played a scratch match among themselves. Ms Jenson advised them during their play to use two hands whenever possible to hit the ball, offering reasons why. Only one team was doing a variety of different volleyball drills in this session.

Shelley appeared to be a willing and consistent participant in her team's activities. Her skill execution was often successful and she was vocal throughout the session, contributing to team discussions as well as making frequent comments to the other girls about irrelevant matters. Afterwards, she said she found training beneficial in practising "all the stuff you are going to use in the game" (Interview, 25/5/98). She believed this "stuff" included skills such as passing, hitting the ball over the net and

serving. Shelley had mixed feelings about SEPEP at this stage. She said the smaller teams made you more involved and did not give you the chance to "slack off" (Interview, 25/5/98). However, she did enjoy working with the Crazy Critters team, as they were cooperating well. Shelley liked the games and wanted to have two games sessions per week, although she preferred being the officiating team to playing.

Natalie seemed to take part happily in all the activities. She did not contribute much to team discussions. Whilst Natalie had some success with performing the skills activities, she was observed making more errors in general, than the other team members. In an interview after the training session, Natalie said she thought that the training benefited the team as a whole and "now we can actually serve over the net" (Interview, 25/5/98). She enjoyed having more touches of the ball at training and in the games and believed that her volleyball skills had improved a lot.

Thursday, 27/5/98. Training cancelled. Sport and team meetings held.

Training was cancelled after five minutes, due to wet weather. The Crazy Critters were doing a circle keep-the-ball-in-the-air game that they had done before. No warm-up was observed. Danny sat out for most of the activity. He commented later that he was tired. During a volleyball meeting in her classroom, Ms Jenson explained to the students how their training sessions should be run, emphasising a warm-up to start the session, followed by skill practices, then a warm-down activity. She discussed a couple of strategies to improve play, such as using two hands to hit the ball and setting the ball up to hit it over the net. Students were asked to have team meetings for the last five minutes. The Crazy Critters talked about matters other than volleyball. Danny did not sit

with them.

Week six: No training. Fourth games session.

Friday, 5/6/98. Games session.

This was the first SEPEP session for the week, due to a public holiday on the Monday and wet weather on Thursday. No alternative times had been organised for training. Two rounds of matches were played. Ms Jenson spent the entire session observing students for assessment purposes. At the conclusion of the games, she commended the students who had contributed positively to their teams, such as encouraging other team members and for "being organised" (Field Notes, 5/6/98).

The observed skill level of the volleyball players had improved from the second games session. More rallies were occurring, students were less static on the court and serves were successfully making it over the net more frequently. Although students were observed serving and volleying the ball, there was very little use of other volleyball skills, such as digging, spiking and setting up of the ball in the games. When questioned previously, the Crazy Critters listed passing, hitting the ball over the net, serving and controlling the ball as the skills involved in playing volleyball.

The Crazy Critters were observed laughing, cajoling and often encouraging each other with comments such as "good try", "bad luck" and "good one" (Field Notes, 5/6/98) in their two matches, both of which they lost. Only Danny did not appear very involved in the play. Although he sometimes put a bit of effort in the game, he frequently appeared disinterested, walking away and fixing up the net or sitting down

for short periods. He said later that he did not know why he was not keen about playing volleyball today.

Week seven: One training, One skills/games session

Thursday, 11/6/98, Training.

This was the first training session for the week. Monday's session was cancelled due to wet weather. Mr Gray, the volleyball group's Thursday relief teacher, spent much of the lesson time with one team, teaching them how to set the ball up. He appeared to be quite familiar with the skills of volleyball. During an interview following the lesson, Mr Gray voiced concern about the unusual and often incorrect skill practices being performed by the volleyball teams. He said that the five boys in the volleyball group had complained to him about the lack of friends to relate to in the teams. The basketball group also had a relief teacher today, who told me afterwards that all the basketballers seemed very motivated, they had an active, "full-on" training session and they completely organised themselves, so she did not have to do anything (Interview, 11/6/98).

Hayley, the coach of the Crazy Critters, was absent today and Lisa took on her role. The team stood around for ten minutes before commencing an activity. Three practice drills were done during the session, with team members stopping between activities to discuss what to do next or to talk about something else. During the final activity, Lisa encouraged her team mates to call for the ball, which Mr Green had been instructing the group next to them to do. During a team interview following training, the Critters said they had enjoyed training today. Shelley had liked the break from school,

but did not think her skills were improving much, Danny had enjoyed today's activities more than usual and Natalie, Lisa and Mary said it had been better without Hayley, who was becoming "bossy" and not allowing others to have input into the sessions (Interview, 11/6/98). All agreed that they were learning more about volleyball, but they had lost most of their games and could improve on their serving and calling for the ball. Lisa commented that "we've got to hit the ball harder" (Interview, 11/6/98).

Friday, 12/6/98. Skills session and one round of games.

Use of sport development officers or members of community sports associations to assist with skills teaching and coaching had been suggested at the SEPEP workshop. Ms Jenson had asked me on a number of occasions to run a volleyball skills session with her students, but I had considered this to be inappropriate to my researcher role. However, I had observed volleyball skills being performed incorrectly, inappropriately or not at all by the teams. Ms Jenson was clearly unfamiliar with the skills herself. There were no volleyball development personnel readily available to assist the students within the locality other than myself, so, somewhat reluctantly, I volunteered to help out. I took a short, intense skills lesson with the whole class, covering basic pointers for the volley, the dig, setting the ball up for an attacking shot and a simple team set up on court for games. Most students indicated that they had previously never known what the terms "volley" and "dig" meant. Following this session, I returned to my non-participant observer role.

One round of games followed. The Crazy Critters were duty team. Three of the four teams playing showed signs of trying the skills practised in the lead-up session.

More rallies were occurring. Within two teams, the boys were observed dominating the play. For example, they frequently went for balls that were coming directly to a female team member and they rarely passed to a team mate, preferring instead to hit the ball over the net straightaway. Despite this, there were few complaints from the girls and the players in general participated enthusiastically. Ms Jenson was continuing with her assessment of students. She gave little feedback to the students during or after the game.

Week eight. One games session. One training. Semi-finals held.

Friday, 19/6/98. Semi-finals.

One extra games session had been held earlier in the week in order to complete the fixtures. During their Thursday training session, the Crazy Critters had received some specialised coaching from Mr Gray. Semi-finals of all the sports were held today. After winning just one game and finishing the season in fifth (last) position, the Crazy Critters were involved in two finals matches today. They won the first and drew the second match, which saw the team promoted to the preliminary final the following Monday. Mary and Natalie, who, according to observation and teacher comments could be regarded as the two least skilled players in the team, were absent, leaving the Critters with just four players. All teams playing in the finals seemed very enthusiastic, often cheering and squealing loudly when a point was won. There were no disinterested or uninvolved students observed. The players' skill levels in the volleyball games had improved and the games were of a higher standard than previously observed. More rallies occurred and the students used digging, setting and spiking skills more frequently.

### Student thoughts

#### Student one: Hayley

Hayley said she was still enjoying volleyball and being the coach, despite her team losing most of their matches. She was pleased and surprised that her team had reached the finals and believed her volleyball skills were improving, but she still did not consider herself as being good at the sport.

#### Student two: Lisa

Lisa was pleased that she had been selected as best player for two of the games. However she was becoming frustrated with her team when they "just want to play around" (Diary, 29/5/98) and Danny often would not join in properly in the games. Lisa wanted to do better warm-ups, more fitness work and learn "more things" about volleyball (Interview, 11/6/98). She thought her team's skills were improving and had high hopes for them doing well, but after Crazy Critters was defeated in two more games in week five, she said, "I really think we need a good coach!" (Diary, 4/6/98). Hayley, according to Lisa, did not do enough to enthuse the team.

#### Student three: Danny

Danny described SEPEP as "okay" during diary entries in week five to seven. His other comments during this time were predominantly negative. In week five he complained of a lack of energy during the previous round of games. In week seven he enjoyed the training session taken by Lisa because he "felt like playing" and because he thought that Lisa was not "as bossy as Hayley" (Interview, 11/6/98). Week six and seven diary entries indicated that Danny was still unhappy that there were no other boys in the

team, he was unhappy with his coach and he did not like it that his team had not been winning. Danny wrote that, "it would be better if my coach wasn't so mean and if my team wouldn't sit on the fence and have a little girly talk at training" (Diary, 12/6/98).

#### Student four: Shelley

In week seven, Shelley said that she liked everything about the PE program that she was doing. However she was disappointed that Danny was not participating consistently "which is a pity because he's really good at volleyball" (Diary, 8/6/98). Shelley enjoyed the break from schoolwork offered by SEPEP. She did not think her own volleyball skills had improved much thus far.

#### Student five: Natalie

Natalie was still enjoying the training and games, but was frustrated with Danny for not always joining in and wrote of her annoyance with Hayley "for ordering us around" (Diary, 8/6/98). She wrote about the games session in week six, in which her team lost both their matches, but she "really enjoyed it because Lisa was coaching" (Diary, 12/6/98).

#### Student six: Mary

Mary's comments were similar to those of Natalie regarding her feelings about Hayley and Danny. She was keen to do more training sessions, which she felt were needed by the Crazy Critters because "we always lose" (Diary, 8/6/98) and she was annoyed that training sessions had to frequently be cancelled due to wet weather. Mary said that Hayley no longer allowed the other team members to have input at training



sessions. At a group interview at which Hayley was not present she said, "Hayley is really bossy. She tells us what to do and sometimes doesn't do it herself" (Interview, 11/6/98).

### Teacher thoughts

Mr Irvine and Mr Green both commented individually at the end of week seven that they were happy with how their SEPEP classes, soccer and basketball respectively, had been progressing. They had both employed a teacher-directed approach in the first few training sessions, giving the coaches a lot of practical assistance and advice. According to these teachers, there were a number of students in both their groups with a high degree of skill and experience in the sports, and they had observed some excellent student coaches in action. Mr Irvine and Mr Green believed that they had more of the "natural leaders" of the year sevens in their SEPEP classes compared to volleyball (Interview, 12/6/98).

Ms Jenson was aware that the attitudes of students had "waxed and waned" during weeks five to seven (Diary, 12/6/98) but described this and some of the squabbles within teams as being "normal" and said that "teams are like that all the time" (Interview, 19/6/98). She was very pleased overall with the students' attitudes towards SEPEP, even the boys who had been "appalling on some occasions" and at other times, such as at the beginning of the program and during the finals, were "excellent" (Interview, 19/6/98). Students had performed their other roles acceptably. Ms Jenson said she had slightly lower expectations of this group regarding their roles, believing that "they are not born leaders, they are not the sort of kids who are usually in these

roles, they are not comfortable with them" (Interview, 19/6/98). However these students could still benefit from the experience, especially if given the opportunity to be involved in such a program in the future.

Ms Jenson saw her role during the training and games sessions as being one of guidance. Encouragement of students "doing the right thing" (Interview, 19/6/98) was also important. She had offered the students assistance when she thought it was necessary, in the form of handouts, advice on performance of roles, helping solve disputes and sport and team meetings. With regard to skills teaching, she admitted, "I worry about deliberately showing them skills and stuff, because I don't feel that I am good enough at them myself" (Interview, 19/6/98). Ms Jenson said that with her busy schedule as a classroom teacher, she did not have time to research volleyball skills or appropriate warm-up exercises.

### Discussion

Weeks five to eight of SEPEP at Connell Primary School saw the sport season progress, with teams involved in training, games, a skill development session and semi-finals. Four of the twelve scheduled practical sessions were not held due to either inclement weather or a public holiday. The teachers found it difficult to reschedule these sessions due to certain timetable restrictions, but also because their team-teaching approach meant the three teachers would have had to accommodate each other in arranging alternative SEPEP sessions. A volleyball meeting held in lieu of training on one occasion was employed by Ms Jenson to discuss aspects of the game with the students, such as reiterating how some of the roles should be performed. Individual

team meetings followed, to discuss strategies and other matters.

Ms Jenson saw her role during this period as including encouragement, guidance and settling of disputes. She was also observed assessing students. She said she did not feel comfortable about giving much skill instruction, due to a fear of giving incorrect advice. Ms Jenson, Mr Gray (who took the volleyball group on Thursdays), and I noted incorrect, irrelevant skills practices occurring during training sessions. Despite observed skill levels improving, students were still not familiar with many of the “proper” skills of volleyball. As a result of this and at the request of Ms Jenson, I ran a short, intense, volleyball skills session with the volleyball class in week seven. During the following games, students were observed attempting skills and tactics learned in this session. Improved skills and highly motivated students, noisy and cheering, were features of the semi-final games. This could have been due to the extra skills session or the pressure and excitement of the finals or perhaps both.

All four teachers involved in the program agreed that there were differences between the volleyball students and the other two year seven sport groups. They believed that the basketball and soccer classes comprised more natural leaders and more students with expertise and experience in the sports they were playing. Ms Jenson believed that her volleyball students could still benefit from taking on leadership roles and other responsibilities, although they needed more guidance.

The perception that the students in the volleyball group, which was almost exclusively comprised of girls, were not considered to be natural leaders, unfortunately

supports concerns women have held about PE for a long time. The criteria we attach to good leadership in PE and the expectations held by teachers regarding the behaviour and performance of student roles by male and female students are worth further investigation.

The ups and downs experienced by her volleyball students were to be expected as part of a normal sporting season, according to Ms Jenson. She found the boys' behaviour disappointing at times during the season, for example when they were disruptive or non-compliant. Ms Jenson believed the boys in the volleyball group had been more motivated at the beginning of the season and now that the finals had begun.

Mixed feelings about the season were reported in the diaries and interviews of the Crazy Critters team. They thought their volleyball skills were improving and still professed to be enjoying the sessions. However they expressed frustration at the team's lack of success in the games. Hayley, the coach was deemed "mean" and "bossy" and Lisa was keen to take over her role. The girls were annoyed with Danny's disinterest in many of the sessions. They considered him to be a good player, who was important to the team playing well. Danny claimed to be enjoying some of the sessions, but was unhappy with the coach, with continually losing, that there were no other boys in the team and with the "girly talks" which often disrupted training. After losing all but one of their qualifying matches, the Crazy Critters concluded week eight with success in their semi-final matches and were promoted to the preliminary final.

## Week nine

### Week nine. Preliminary and grand finals. Conclusion of season.

Preliminary finals were held in all three sports on Monday, with grand finals the following day. The Crazy Critters team played in both volleyball matches.

#### Tuesday, 23/6/98. Grand final day.

The three year seven teachers had decided to devote a full day to SEPEP grand finals. The soccer final was held first, then the volleyball final after morning recess. Basketball was scheduled for after lunch. This would allow students and teachers to view all three sports. Prior to the first final, there were individual sport meetings in the classrooms. Ms Jenson discussed the officiating of the volleyball grand final, allowing students to vote on whom they thought would be best to perform the necessary roles. She then talked about her thoughts about the ups and downs of the season, allowing students to voice their comments and opinions. Playing volleyball in the community was discussed.

The soccer final went on for longer than expected, with a penalty shootout after recess to decide the match. Students not involved in officiating or playing in the match were spectators. Some were keenly watching the match and supporting a team; others were chatting amongst themselves. A few students told the teachers that they were "bored" and "not interested in watching" (Field Notes, 23/6/98).

Crazy Critters were in the volleyball grand final. Natalie was absent, having gone on holidays with her family. Prior to the match, both Ms Jenson and the players

had expressed their surprise at having progressed this far after the team had finished their qualifying matches at the bottom of the premiership ladder (Field Notes, 23/6/98). The volleyball final was well supported, with much cheering. All three teachers encouraged the players, praising effective plays and "good effort(s)" (Field Notes, 23/6/98). Comments made by Mr Green indicated that he was quite knowledgeable about volleyball. Crazy Critters won a close contest. They were obviously pleased with the win, but did not make a great fuss, compared to the soccer and later the basketball winners. They wasted no time in shaking their opposition's hands. Danny and Mary were nominated as best players for their team. Ms Jenson complimented the two teams on their fairplay, the high standard of play and on the marked improvement in their volleyball skills.

The basketball final, according to the teachers, involved the "in crowd", or more popular students (Field Notes, 23/6/98) and initially seemed to have the most spectator support of the three finals. Students had made placards and gathered cheer squads. As the match proceeded, interest by some students appeared to wane. Teachers disciplined a number of students for wandering away, pushing other students, arguing and running around the court with placards. The teachers thought that the students had behaved well and seemed to enjoy the atmosphere and games throughout the day, apart from the last half hour of the basketball match (Field Notes, 23/6/98). Presentations to conclude SEPEP were scheduled for later in the week.

#### Student thoughts

Some students indicated in their diaries, questionnaires and in informal

comments that they enjoyed the novelty, excitement and atmosphere of the grand final day. Others said it was not much fun having to watch others play all day. All the members of the Crazy Critters were surprised, but pleased to make it to the grand final and delighted to win. Prior to the match Danny and Lisa were excited and looking forward to playing, whereas Hayley, Michelle and Mary were extremely nervous about playing in front of a big crowd. Natalie, who was absent for the grand final and thought that might have helped her team win! Danny's diary comments indicated that he was much more enthusiastic about the season now that his team had done so well. After the grand final he wrote:

Today was great fun. We played the grand final. We won. It was challenging, exciting and everyone got a fair share of the ball and I was awarded the best player of the game. I think the whole sport ed. thing is going great. (Diary, 23/6/98)

#### Teacher thoughts

Ms Jenson described the SEPEP finals as "one of the highlights of the year for me, I just thought it was fantastic" (Interview, 3/8/98). She said that the day was such a success because all the matches were tightly contested, she was impressed with the skill level of the players, all the other students were spectators and she thought the whole day "really boosted everybody" (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jenson admitted that by the end of the day, some of the spectators had lost interest in watching, but many were still motivated, with their chants and banners. She thought it was a wonderful way to complete the season, although she thought that a more formal presentation could have been held at the conclusion of the finals rather than later in the week. Ms Jenson was surprised that the Crazy Critters had reached and won the volleyball grand final and was delighted with the improvement in their volleyball skills. She believed that Danny's

positive attitude, effort and skills in the finals had a lot to do with the reason why they won.

### Discussion

All three grand finals were played on one day at Connell Primary as a finale to the SEPEP season. Soccer was played first, followed by volleyball after morning recess, then basketball after lunch. Students not playing or officiating watched the matches. Many of the spectators showed a keen interest in the games, supporting the teams by cheering and waving placards. This enthusiasm waned somewhat as the matches progressed and teachers occasionally had to discipline students for unruly behaviour. Diaries indicated that some students were bored with merely being spectators. Ms Jenson was aware that a few students were losing interest in watching the finals towards the end of the day, but overall, she thought the day was “fantastic” and “really boosted everybody”.

The Crazy Critters surprised everyone (including me), by reaching the grand final and then winning an exciting tussle. Feelings prior to the match ranged from excited to extremely nervous. Naturally the Critters were delighted to win, although their feelings of elation were not as obvious as those of the winning soccer and basketball teams. Ms Jenson was impressed with their good sporting behaviour, high standard of play and improved volleyball skills shown in the grand final. She believed that Danny’s improved attitude, enthusiasm and effort played a major part in the Critters’ victory.



## Summary

In the team-teaching approach used to implement SEPEP at Connell Primary, the three year seven teachers, Ms Jenson, Mr Irvine and Mr Green were each responsible for one sporting group. They also took on other, individual organisational roles according to their interests and expertise. Students were offered a choice of playing volleyball, soccer or basketball for the SEPEP season. All but five students received their first choice.

The first two weeks of the SEPEP season were spent on organisation. Both students and teachers agreed that the organisation sessions were beneficial but too long. Two half-hour training sessions and a one-hour session for two rounds of matches were timetabled weekly for the three Year Seven classes for the remainder of the term. The focus teacher, Ms Jenson, took the volleyball class, which comprised 25 girls and five boys. When compared to the soccer and basketball students, the volleyball group was considered by the teachers to be generally less athletic and less popular. In addition, they needed more guidance in the performance of the additional SEPEP roles, such as coach and publicity officer.

During the season the volleyball students experienced the ups and downs of a normal sporting season. This was reflected in the data collected from the focus team, the Crazy Critters. The Crazy Critters comprised six players, five girls and a boy, who had a range of sporting interests and abilities. Initially they enjoyed the novelty of the new PE program and the regular physical activity sessions. They were pleased with their skill improvement. During the season, there were a few negative comments from students

about aspects of the program, including gender-based concerns. Danny was unhappy at not receiving his first choice of sport, he felt isolated as the only boy in the team and he was sometimes annoyed with his team mates' "girly" behaviour. In turn, the girls and Ms Jenson were unhappy with Danny's attitude and lack of compliance in some of the SEPEP sessions. Other problems concerned the team's lack of success in the games and problems with the coach, Hayley, who was considered "bossy" by the other team members.

Ms Jenson gave her students a lot of responsibility from the beginning of SEPEP. She took on a role of encouragement and guidance. She gave little volleyball skill instruction due to lack of knowledge about the sport. Student coaches were given minimal assistance to competently perform their role. As a result, students were not learning correct volleyball skills and players began complaining that training sessions were becoming boring. A skills session, run by the researcher, was held in week seven to familiarise students with basic volleyball skills and tactics. In addition, the teams received some extra assistance during training from the relief teacher, Mr Gray. Improved volleyball skills were observed in future sessions.

Although enthusiasm in the games had not waned much during the season, with the onset of the finals, the students demonstrated renewed vigour and motivation. The Crazy Critters showed improved teamwork and skills, Danny's enthusiasm returned and the team began experiencing success, surprising many by winning the grand final. Grand final day, which Ms Jenson saw as the highlight of the SEPEP season, included finals of the three sports. The matches were watched and enjoyed by many of the

students, but interest of some of the spectators waned towards the end of the day.

After the completion of the finals, data relating to students' and teachers' overall thoughts about the SEPEP season were collected. Chapter VI examines these perceptions and compares them with prior thoughts about school PE.

## CHAPTER VI: AFTER SEPEP IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter presents and discusses data gathered following the completion of SEPEP at Connell Primary School. Data were collected during week nine of term two and during the first two weeks of term three. Sources of information included student and teacher questionnaires, interviews of members of the focus team and Ms Jenson, as well as student and teacher diaries.

### The students

Data related to perceptions of students from the three year seven classes are initially examined, followed by data concerning the five students in the focus team, the Crazy Critters. The ensuing discussion refers to two of the research questions relating to student perceptions of SEPEP.

#### Students from the three year seven classes

The three year seven classes were given questionnaires (see Appendix A) on grand final day, after the completion of all matches, which also marked the conclusion of the SEPEP season. A total of 80 students completed the questionnaire. Of these, 30 had been playing volleyball, 25 basketball and 25 soccer. Ten students were absent. Questionnaires from new students who had arrived during the term, (for example, two students had joined the volleyball class) were included in the data. Responses to questions were categorised and, where applicable, compared to those made prior to SEPEP implementation. Some students gave more than one response to certain questions.

After experiencing a season of SEPEP, more students liked their Friday sport sessions. At the end of the SEPEP season, 86% of the students reported that they liked Friday sport (see Table 9), compared to 64% prior to SEPEP implementation, an increase of 22%. Just 6% of students disliked the sessions (down 13%) and 8% were unsure (down 9%). The most liked sport was basketball (92% of students), followed by soccer (88%) and volleyball (80%).

Table 9

Student thoughts about Friday sport

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>LIKE</b>	<b>DISLIKE</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>MALE/ FEMALE</b>
Volleyball	24 (80%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	30	5M/25F
Soccer	22 (88%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	25	22M/ 3F
Basketball	23 (92%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	25	14M/11F
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69 (86%)</b>	<b>5 (6%)</b>	<b>6 (8%)</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>41M/39F</b>
<b>MALE/FEMALE</b>	<b>34M/35F</b>	<b>4M/1F</b>	<b>3M/3F</b>	<b>41M/39F</b>	
<b>TOTAL PRE-SEPEP</b>	<b>46 (64%)</b>	<b>14 (19%)</b>	<b>12 (17%)</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>35M/37F</b>

A gender imbalance was evident in the volleyball and soccer classes. The volleyball group comprised 25 girls and five boys. Four of the boys in the volleyball class claimed not to have chosen volleyball as their first preference. In contrast, only three girls chose to play soccer, compared to 22 boys.

In stating their reasons for liking Friday sport, the "fun" aspect was overwhelmingly the students' most common response (see Table 10). It was also the top-rating reason prior to SEPEP implementation. However, the number of students mentioning fun had increased by 26%, from 19% to 45%. The sport they had chosen was also an important factor as was a general liking for playing sport and enjoying the break from the classroom. Four new categories of reasons emerged from the students' responses after SEPEP. Seven students liked "learning about the sport" and a further seven thought that this "new way of doing sport" was better than before. Success and team affiliation were also frequently mentioned.

Table 10

Reasons for liking Friday sport

PRE-SEPEP		POST-SEPEP	
REASON	FREQUENCY	REASON	FREQUENCY
Fun	14	Fun	36
The Teacher	8	The sport they were playing	11
Exercise/fitness	7	Like sport	9
Break from classroom	7	Break from classroom	9
Like sport	7	Learning about the sport	7
Other students/friends	5	The new way of doing sport was better	7
The sport they were playing	5	Success/did well	5
Other	10	Being with a team	4
		Other	17

Reasons prominent for disliking sport prior to SEPEP, listed in Table 11, such as the teacher and not playing the proper game, did not surface as reasons after SEPEP. Other students and boredom were the most common responses. Fewer students disliked sport, so there are a smaller number of reasons in this category.

Table 11

Reasons for disliking Friday sport

PRE-SEPEP		POST-SEPEP	
REASON	FREQUENCY	REASON	FREQUENCY
The teacher	13	Other students	5
Boring/sometimes boring	9	Boring	4
No proper game	6	Other	7
Other students	5		
Weather conditions (hot)	4		
Other	13		

Table 12 lists student responses to what students thought they learned in PE classes prior to and following SEPEP. The most popular responses after SEPEP were skills, how to play the game, teamwork and cooperation and the rules. Prior to SEPEP, the top rating response to what students learned was nothing or not much, mentioned by 34% of respondents. This was now reduced to 11%. After SEPEP, learning skills (41%) was the most popular response while previously 17% of students had mentioned skill learning. How to play the game, teamwork/cooperation and rules/scoring represented another 48% of the total responses, compared to 38% prior to SEPEP. Some students listed more than

one learning aspect.

Table 12

What do you think you learn in physical education classes?

PRE-SEPEP		POST-SEPEP	
LEARNING OUTCOMES	FREQUENCY	LEARNING OUTCOMES	FREQUENCY
Nothing/not much	25	Skills	33
How to play the game/sport	18	How to play the game/sport	25
Skills	12	Teamwork/ cooperation	14
Teamwork/cooperation	10	Rules/scoring	13
How to stretch/warm-up	8	Nothing/not much	9
Rules/scoring	5	Other	13
Fitness	4		
Other	6		

According to 24% of the students, the best thing about PE was having a break from the classroom (see Table 13). This was also the most popular response prior to SEPEP, although then it was given by a larger percentage of students (35%). Fun, fitness, improving skills and being with friends were also seen as positive aspects of PE both before and after a season of SEPEP. Table 13 shows that playing the games was the second most common response (21%). This response, plus being in teams and playing in finals had not been given in the initial student questionnaire.



Table 13

Best things about physical education

PRE-SEPEP		POST-SEPEP	
BEST ASPECTS	FREQUENCY	BEST ASPECTS	FREQUENCY
Break from classroom	25	Break from classroom	19
Fun	15	Playing the games	17
Fitness	12	Fun	15
Friends	7	Fitness	7
Certain sports	5	Improve/learn skills	5
Improve/learn skills	4	Being in teams	5
Like sport	4	Finals	4
Choice	3	Friends	4
Other	17	Other	20
Nothing*	5		

\* Responses that would be classed as negative views towards PE.

Table 14 indicates that after SEPEP, new responses emerged to what students thought were the worst aspects of PE. Answers given in this category included other students, watching not playing, losing and the training sessions. Two of the responses given to the question, namely "nothing" and "not enough", could be regarded as indicating that the students liked the PE sessions. Eleven students commented that there was "nothing" they did not like, while six responses ("not enough") inferred that those students wanted more time for PE. Prior to SEPEP, the most frequent answers for the worst aspects

were particular sports and the sports teacher, both of which were not mentioned after SEPEP. Not participating, losing and training sessions had not been mentioned previously.

Table 14

Worst things about physical education

PRE-SEPEP		POST-SEPEP	
WORST ASPECTS	FREQUENCY	WORST ASPECTS	FREQUENCY
Certain sports	12	Other students	7
Teacher	10	Watching/not playing	5
Other students	8	Losing	4
Boring	6	Training sessions	4
Insufficient choice	5	Other	11
The weather (hot)	4	Nothing**	11
Other	18	Not enough**	6
Nothing**	11		
Not enough**	6		

\*\*Responses that would be classed as positive views towards PE.

In addition to being questioned about Friday sport sessions, which usually involved playing rounds of sporting fixtures, students were asked to rate their liking for the twice-weekly, thirty-minute training sessions (see Table 15). Two thirds said they liked the sessions, with the most liked ones being soccer training (68%), whilst volleyball training sessions (56%) were least liked. Other students (25%) were unsure of what they thought and 12.5% responded that they did not like the training sessions. More students

(86%) enjoyed the games sessions than the training (62%).

Table 15

Student liking for training sessions

<b>SPORT</b>	<b>LIKE</b>	<b>DISLIKE</b>	<b>UNSURE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Volleyball	17 (56%)	3 (10%)	10 (33%)	30
Soccer	17 (68%)	4 ( 16%)	4 (16%)	25
Basketball	16 (64%)	3 (12%)	6 (24%)	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	50 (62.5%)	10 (12.5%)	20 (25%)	80
<b>MALE/FEMALE</b>	23M/27F	7M/3F	11M/9F	41M/39F

Table 16 lists the reasons students gave for liking or disliking training sessions.

The two most popular reasons for liking training were practice for the Friday games and fun, with having a break from schoolwork, performing different roles and fitness also mentioned. Other students and the activities done in training were the most common reasons given for disliking training. Some students expanded on the latter response, stating that they wanted more guidance, the activities were boring, they often repeated the same drills and they did not learn much.

Table 16

Reasons for liking/disliking training sessions

LIKE		DISLIKE	
REASON	FREQUENCY	REASON	FREQUENCY
Preparation/practice for games	17	Other students	12
Fun	16	The activities	11
Break from classroom	6	Other	10
Having roles	4		
Fitness	3		
Other	8		

Students from the focus team

The six students in the focus team, the Crazy Critters, were interviewed at the conclusion of the SEPEP season to gauge their thoughts about the program. Additional data was gleaned from the final questionnaires and, to a lesser extent, from student diaries. The information from student diaries was generally lacking in detail. I had repeatedly encouraged the members of the Crazy Critters to write as much as they could about their thoughts on SEPEP sessions. Since diary writing was done during class time, it was difficult to ensure that students were given enough time to think about and write down their thoughts. Sometimes the diary entries were no more than reports of what happened, rather than perceptions of events. Nevertheless, some of the data from the diaries did give valuable insights into the students' perceptions of SEPEP.

Student one: Hayley

Hayley was very enthusiastic about SEPEP, commenting that “it’s much better than the sport we did last term” (Interview (25/6/98)). She said she found the new way of doing school sport “challenging” (Questionnaire 2) and liked the students having more responsibility by taking on roles other than that of player. After the season she said, “I think it’s really good, because the way the kids take over and they become coach and umpire, they can get an experience of having a young coach and then you can compare it with the teachers and it’s a lot more fun”(Interview, 25/6/98).

In particular, Hayley said she enjoyed playing the competition games on Fridays, which in her opinion were “probably the best thing about the sport” and “great fun” (Interview, 25/6/98). She liked the teamwork aspects of the program, noting the fact that the teams were smaller than when she had previously played volleyball. Hayley indicated that this had benefits such as “the team kind of gives you confidence, [whereas] if you were in a big team, people tend to hog the ball and you don’t get it” (Interview, 25/6/98). Prior to the SEPEP season Hayley claimed she “couldn’t hit the ball over the net or anything” (Interview, 25/6/98). She claimed her volleyball skills had improved a lot, mainly due to the regular practice and smaller teams, although compared to the others in her team she said, “I am still not very good” (Questionnaire 2). Hayley said she would like to play another season of SEPEP volleyball.

Hayley liked having two training sessions each week, because it meant coming out for PE more regularly than before. As coach of the Crazy Critters, Hayley indicated that it was “fun thinking up activities and trying to teach them to my team” (Questionnaire 2). She admitted that she had a few problems with coaching, such as when team members did not agree with her, or when she ran out of ideas for skill practices and had to repeat ones previously used, which was sometimes “a bit boring” (Interview, 25/6/98). Hayley would have liked to be given more assistance and more ideas to help her coaching. No-one had actually shown her how to coach. “Ms Jenson gave me a sheet of activities, but other than that nobody helped me,” she said (Interview, 25/6/98). Mr Gray had spent time with them during one training session, helping them with their skills and, in Hayley’s opinion “that’s why we won the grand final” (Interview, 25/6/98).

Hayley indicated that Ms Jenson did a lot of preparation and organisation for SEPEP and “she did a pretty good job” (Interview, 25/6/98). Hayley thought that time constraints meant Ms Jenson could not spend much time teaching the Crazy Critters volleyball skills during the training sessions, because “with one teacher you’ve got to go around and share with all the teams, but if you give to just one team it wouldn’t be fair”(Interview, 25/6/98). Overall, Hayley was happy with how the season had been organised by the teachers, so that even though students were running the program, they did have limits and there was not the problem of “all the kids just doing what they liked” (Interview, 25/6/98).

#### Student two: Lisa

Lisa described SEPEP as “great fun”, “more organised” than before and

“challenging” (Questionnaire 2). She found the Friday games very enjoyable, especially when she experienced success with her team or with her own skills. Lisa liked her team “winning sometimes” and felt good when “hitting the ball over the net and then it falls to the ground and then they miss it” (Interview, 25/6/98).

In addition, Lisa was positive about the students running SEPEP. In contrast to how school physical activity sessions were previously organised, she said that with SEPEP “our teachers didn’t just order us around, we had to figure out what to do by ourselves and how to play the actual game” (Interview, 25/6/98). This was beneficial to the students “because we could do all the training things that we wanted to do, all the topics, and learn how to get the ball up in the air our own way [whereas] if we did it a teacher’s way, it probably wouldn’t be as good for us” (Interview, 25/6/98).

The training sessions, according to Lisa, were often “a bit boring” (Interview, 25/6/98). She wanted to play more practice games rather than do drills (Questionnaire 2) and “there’s not many training things to do, because we don’t know many things. We just tapped the ball over the net” (Interview, 25/6/98). Lisa said that the coach ran out of training ideas and could have done with more assistance from the teachers. She believed that during the SEPEP season Ms Jenson “didn’t do anything really”, whereas Mr Gray was “good at techniques, [and] at getting us to play better” (Interview, 25/6/98). Like Hayley, Lisa thought Mr Gray’s assistance prior to the finals was important to their team’s success.

Lisa was very happy with her role as captain, but expressed an interest in taking on

the role of coach in future SEPEP seasons (Questionnaire 2). She said her team had at times been unhappy with their coach, Hayley, who they thought was bossy and not amenable to their ideas. However, later in the season the team "learnt how to work things out" (Interview, 25/6/98) and this, in Lisa's opinion helped her team do well in the finals. Lisa said that she spent time helping the two least skilled players, Mary and Natalie, with their volleyball skills and as a result "they improved heaps" (Interview, 25/6/98). She thought her skills had improved as well and "now I'm really good at it [volleyball]" (Interview, 25/6/98). In addition, Lisa learned "how to cooperate with team members" (Questionnaire 2).

Lisa said she found the finals games very exciting, particularly the grand final when her team had to play in front of a cheering crowd. She was extremely positive in her overall thoughts about SEPEP and wanted to do this form of sport again.

#### Student three: Danny

At the conclusion of the SEPEP season Danny said he liked playing volleyball, enjoyed learning a new sport and thought he had played well. In his view, the best thing about SEPEP had been "playing the games" (Questionnaire 2). Danny considered this form of sport organisation better because "last term we just went down to the park and played the sport. This way it's more equal and we have to do stuff and be more responsible" (Interview, 25/6/98). Danny liked the fact that the students were in charge. In SEPEP "you had to be more responsible, rather than just having the teacher run around. It was more exciting because we were doing the stuff" (Interview, 25/6/98).



Danny usually liked the training sessions as he enjoyed playing sport, liked "getting out of schoolwork" (Questionnaire 1) and he was happy "just getting out there and holding the ball and learning more about the sport" (Interview, 25/6/98). Sometimes he found training sessions boring, such as when the girls in the team were not participating and he "just wanted to practise serving or something" (Interview, 25/6/98). Other aspects with which Danny was dissatisfied included losing matches, "bad umpiring" (Questionnaire 2) and being the only boy in the team (Interview, 25/6/98). He suggested having at least two boys per team in future competitions. Danny also said that he would still have preferred to play basketball, which had been his first choice. The role of first aid officer was not very taxing, according to Danny. Next time he wanted to be captain or coach.

The volleyball season was described by Danny as initially being "all right, but then it was really boring, but then we started doing well and I liked it" (Interview, 25/6/98). He was surprised but really pleased that his team had been successful in the finals, commenting that all the team members' volleyball skills had improved due to the regular practices and "because we were cooperating more and talking" (Interview, 25/6/98). He described playing in the finals as "good" and "exciting" and thought he played very well (Interview, 25/6/98).

Danny believed that his team learned the skills of volleyball "as we went along" (Interview, 25/6/98). Ms Jenson had little to do with the skills teaching. Danny described her involvement as "just like looking after us, making sure everyone was joining in and getting a share of the ball" and "if someone was sitting out she would make sure they

would play" (Interview, 25/6/98).

In sum, Danny's thoughts varied during the SEPEP season. Despite dissatisfaction with the lack of males in the group, the behaviour of the girls on occasions, successive game losses and not receiving his first choice of sport, he liked the SEPEP format. Danny greatly preferred this new approach to school sport to how it was done previously (Questionnaire 2; Interview, 25/6/98).

#### Student four: Shelley

Shelley said that at the beginning of the SEPEP season, she had not been very impressed at this new way of playing school sport. Initially she "thought it was pretty dumb" because she "thought it would be too much responsibility and everything" (Interview, 31/7/98). Shelley found that she did not mind the responsibility. At the end of the program she said, "I thought it was pretty good because you got to organise all the stuff and the teachers don't boss you around so much. I had a pretty good team too" (Interview 31/7/98).

Volleyball was described by Shelley as "a pretty good game and it's sort of easy, so I like it" (Interview, 31/7/98). She preferred the smaller teams compared to last time she had done volleyball noting that "we got to touch the ball more" (Interview, 31/7/98). Playing in and winning the grand final was another reason for Shelley's enthusiasm about SEPEP (Questionnaire 2). However she claimed that she would have enjoyed the season just as much if her team had not won, "probably because I don't really care about winning" (Interview, 31/7/98). Shelley had felt nervous about the prospect of playing in

front of a crowd, but was pleased she had done it.

Shelley approved of the way the teams were chosen by Ms Jenson and the Sports Board. She described her team as "pretty cooperative" and "pretty good at playing". It annoyed her that Danny sometimes spoiled their cohesion when "he got in a bad mood" (Interview, 31/7/98). Shelley said her own volleyball skills improved a little during the season. Mary and Natalie improved the most. Natalie in particular had needed help with her skills and the team had helped her along (Interview, 31/7/98).

Training sessions were "okay" in Shelley's view (Interview, 31/7/98). Sometimes she found them "boring" (Interview, 31/7/98) because "we always seem to be doing the same activities" (Questionnaire 2). As a result Shelley preferred the games sessions to training. She could see the value of training sessions though and enjoyed the break from the classroom. Shelley wanted to "maybe have training sessions every day of the week" (Questionnaire 2).

Shelley thought the best thing about SEPEP was to do with the students being more in control. She enjoyed having additional roles to that of player "because sometimes you got out of class time doing stuff" (Interview, 31/7/98). Her role of publicity officer was considered to be "pretty easy" (Interview, 31/7/98), but Shelley said she really liked the role, as she was able to draw pictures for the notice board (Questionnaire 2). She also enjoyed being a scorer for the games.

According to Shelley, Ms Jenson played a less prominent role in the new PE

program than previously. She thought Ms Jenson “just sort of watched the teams and gave them some hints if they were doing stuff wrong” (Interview, 31/7/98) and helped solve disputes and problems, such as those they had with Danny. In Shelley’s view, “Ms Jenson wasn’t involved as much and the kids got to do stuff themselves and make their own decisions about what they were going to do in training sessions and in the games and everything” (Interview, 31/7/98). In all, Shelley believed there was “nothing” that was wrong with the new sport program (Questionnaire2; Interview, 31/7/98) and she was keen to be involved in SEPEP again.

#### Student five: Natalie

Natalie’s opinion of the SEPEP volleyball season was that “it was fun because you got to do a lot of things yourself” (Interview, 31/7/98) and “you got to do more than you did with normal sport” (Questionnaire 2). She also liked the greater involvement in the activities and games. Natalie said that when she had played volleyball prior to SEPEP, “we usually had two teams of 15 people, so you never got to do anything. This [new] way we had to be involved” (Interview, 31/7/98).

According to Natalie, the best thing about SEPEP was “doing everything yourself [and] not having a teacher in control” (Interview, 31/7/98). Ms Jenson was much less involved than in the previous sport format. Natalie thought that the teacher’s role in SEPEP was mainly concerned with assisting those players who needed help with their skills. Ms Jenson would, for example, “get anyone who couldn’t serve very well and help them” (Interview, 31/7/98).

Learning skills, teamwork and the responsibilities of the various SEPEP roles were, in Natalie's view, some of the benefits of the program (Questionnaire 2; Interview, 31/7/98). She thought her own skills had improved greatly. Initially Natalie said she "was sort of scared of the ball" (Interview, 31/7/98). Her team had been supportive and used tactics such as avoiding having Mary and her standing next to each other on the court "because we weren't very strong [and] we had to have somebody very strong in between us" (Interview, 31/7/98). Natalie considered herself to be much better at sport "now that we have done sport ed.", because "you got to do more with the smaller teams" (Questionnaire 2). She was disappointed to have been absent for the grand final. Natalie was quite happy with her role as publicity officer, except when there were arguments with other people about her duties. (Natalie shared the role with Shelley.)

Having students run the training sessions was enjoyable and beneficial according to Natalie. She liked having input into the sessions and thought it was good that "the students were able to choose and organise the practices" (Questionnaire 2). Natalie thought the teams needed more than just two training sessions per week.

Natalie liked how the volleyball teams had been chosen and was pleased with the evenness of the competition. She was generally happy with her team, but made mention of a few problems that came up during the season. Natalie was annoyed when players did not join in (Questionnaire 2), such as when Danny "sat on the fence and did nothing" (Interview, 31/7/98) because he had not wanted to play volleyball. She thought that one of the reasons her team did well in the finals was that Danny had changed his tune and "wanted to do volleyball and found it fun" (Interview, 31/7/98). Hayley was described by

Natalie as “a bit pushy when she was coach” (Interview, 31/7/98). Natalie said she had enjoyed the sessions a lot more when Hayley was absent and Lisa had coached the team.

During the SEPEP season, Natalie felt that the Crazy Critters became a bit jaded when they were not winning any games. However they picked up when Danny’s attitude changed and the skills of weaker players such as her and Mary improved. Natalie enjoyed playing volleyball and said she would like to play the sport again in the future. She was looking forward to being involved in SEPEP again in term three and at the time of her final interview, was hoping to be chosen as manager of her SEPEP netball team.

#### Student six: Mary

In Mary’s view, volleyball was much more fun than in the previous term. Her favourite aspect of SEPEP volleyball was “playing the games” (Questionnaire 2). She enjoyed having smaller teams which meant she “had more turns hitting the ball this way” (Interview, 25/6/98) and said she was involved in the games a lot more than previously. Mary thought that her skills were now “way better” than before “because last time I couldn’t actually hit the ball, because I hit it with one hand, now I hit it with two hands” (Interview, 25/6/98). She also believed she now could serve the ball very well. Mary believed she “had learnt a lot” during the season (Questionnaire 2). She thought her volleyball skills must be quite good now since she was named one of the best players in the grand final.

Like the other students, Mary approved of having the students in charge of running the sport program. She said that SEPEP demonstrated that "kids can control sport things and not all the teachers have to do everything, they can relax a bit" (Interview, 25/6/98). Mary thought allocating roles to the students was beneficial and gave the students "something to do" (Questionnaire 2). She enjoyed her role as manager, because everyone helped each other in organising the equipment for training and games.

Mary thought that even though the program was run by the students, the teachers were useful "because they know more than most of us and they help us more" (Interview, 25/6/98). Despite this comment, she believed that Ms Jensen did not do much during the season. Mary described Ms Jensen's main role as "just trying to keep the kids in control" (Interview, 25/6/98). Mr Gray, on the other hand helped the team with their skills. When he saw they needed assistance "he told us how to do it and kept on telling us what to do which made us think a bit more" (Interview, 25/6/98). In Mary's opinion, Mr Gray knew more about volleyball than Ms Jensen.

Training, according to Mary was fun, although she preferred the games sessions. She said the training sessions helped the team members improve their skills (Questionnaire 2; Interview, 25/6/98). She was disappointed when training was cancelled due to the wet weather. Mary spoke of a problem with Hayley, the coach, who was "bossy" and kept doing all the same things (Interview, 25/6/98). Following a team discussion, during which players aired their thoughts and concerns, Hayley had "changed the strategies and that, so we had different things to do, so that was all right" (Interview, 25/6/98). In addition to her concerns with Hayley, Mary had felt frustrated when Danny

sometimes did not participate fully. Although overall she was reasonably happy with her team, Mary thought that if students could choose their own teams, some of these conflicts might be avoided (Interview, 25/6/98).

One of the highlights of the season for Mary was playing in the grand final, during which she felt “special, excited and nervous” (Interview, 25/6/98). Mary said she still would have been happy if they had not won the grand final, as she liked everything about the new sport program. Mary indicated that she would be happy to play SEPEP volleyball for another season “because it’s fun and there are no big teams” (Interview, 25/6/98).

### Discussion

This section includes a summary and discussion of the findings related to student perceptions after implementation of SEPEP at Connell Primary School and refers to research questions 1(b) and 1(c). Firstly, changes in student perceptions of school sport are examined, followed by a discussion of variations in the perceptions of students within one team. The results of the study are discussed within themes that emerged during data analysis.

#### Research question 1(b): How did student perceptions of school sport change during a term of SEPEP?

Analysis of questionnaire responses from the three year seven classes after the implementation of SEPEP at Connell primary revealed some changes in student perceptions of school PE. Changes occurred in the prevalence of certain student responses. In addition, new responses emerged to some of the questions. A number of these new



responses were related to the structure of the SEPEP teaching model. Whilst many of the changes in the students' comments were regarded as positive, there were some negative thoughts expressed.

### Fun and enjoyment

Enjoyment of physical activity is viewed by those in the physical education professions as being a major influence on long term participation. At Connell Primary School, there was a substantial increase (22%) in students liking Friday sport sessions after a season of SEPEP (86% compared to 64%). In turn, 13% fewer students indicated that they did not enjoy the sport (6% compare to 19%). The finding that more students enjoyed PE in a SEPEP format concurs with those of studies by others such as Hastie (1998). It must be remembered that this program was new to both students and teachers. It would be worthwhile examining whether student attitudes remained as positive after a number of seasons of SEPEP.

This study supports the commonly held view that children like having fun when playing sport (Clough, McCormack & Traill, 1993; Taggart & Sharp 1997). Fun was the most common reason given by the students for liking sport prior to SEPEP, which supports Hastie's (1998) findings. At the end of a season of SEPEP, fun was still by far the most popular response, but 26% more students reported having fun in their Friday sport sessions.

Students were less positive about the training sessions. As well as being mentioned as the worst thing about PE by some students, overall, training was not enjoyed as much as

the games sessions. (There were no training sessions prior to SEPEP, so comparisons could not be made.) Although two thirds of the students said they liked training, this was 23% less than for the games. Reasons for these views were largely related to the aspects of the structure of SEPEP and are discussed in a later section.

Carlson (1998) reported on a study in the USA, which found that most students do not see PE as being a “real” subject. For example, Carlson believes that students “often equate fun with play and learning with sitting at desks” (p12). This study appeared to some extent to support Carlson’s belief. Having a break from the classroom was prominent in the reasons for liking Friday sport both before and after SEPEP implementation and for liking training sessions. It also emerged as the most common response for the best thing about school PE before and after SEPEP. In this category however, the percentage of students giving this response was 11% lower after SEPEP. Whether this and the change in some students’ views of their learning in PE (see next section) meant that students perceived SEPEP as a subject which was more “real” than their previous PE classes (Carlson, 1998) would be worth further investigation.

#### Perceptions of learning outcomes

Findings reported by Alexander, Taggart and Thorpe (1997) and Carlson and Hastie (1997), indicating a change in how students viewed their learning in PE after a season of SEPEP, are supported in this study. Prior to SEPEP the most popular response to what students thought they learned in PE was “nothing” or “not much”. After SEPEP, 23% fewer respondents (11% compared to 34%) gave this answer.

The most popular response after SEPEP to what the students thought they learned in PE classes was skills. "Skills" was listed as a learning outcome by 41% of the students, compared to 17% prior to SEPEP. Playing the game, rules and teamwork and cooperation also figured more prominently as learning aspects of SEPEP than prior to its implementation. The latter three responses relate to the structure of SEPEP, which is discussed in the following section.

These changes in student views of their learning in PE are heartening for those involved in promotion of students' values, attitudes, knowledge and skills in PE (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). The increase in the number of students listing worthwhile learning outcomes after SEPEP could infer that they perceived PE as a more valuable, relevant and "real" subject than previously (Carlson, 1988) and that PE for them was more than the "mindless doing" described by Tinning et al. (1993). Nevertheless, it is a concern that some students in the study (11%) still believed they learned "nothing" or "not much".

#### Structure of SEPEP

Many student responses after SEPEP reflected the different structure of this teaching model, when compared to the previous approach at Connell Primary School. For example, new reasons for liking school PE emerged after SEPEP, such as learning about the sport, success and team affiliation. Playing the games was prominent in student responses to the best thing about PE, with students also listing being in teams and having finals. These three responses had not been mentioned prior to SEPEP in this category, although students had mentioned that *not* playing the games was one of the

aspects they did not like prior to SEPEP. The games and the student roles were aspects of training sessions regarded favourably by the students. In addition, playing the games, rules and teamwork and cooperation figured more prominently as learning aspects listed by students after SEPEP.

As with Grant's (1992) and Hastie's (1996) studies, these new responses reflected structural aspects of the SEPEP model, such as the competition (games, finals, winning, losing) and team affiliation. The student responses after SEPEP reflected satisfaction with characteristics which were not present prior to its implementation, such as belonging to a team and playing in a competition in which students, like those involved in community sport, learned more about the sport and played games on a regular basis. They also reflected teacher influences on the program. For example, all the teachers involved in the study encouraged teamwork and cooperation, which were mentioned as learning outcomes by some students.

There were a few aspects of SEPEP with which students were unhappy. Not participating in sessions, losing and dissatisfaction with training sessions were new responses featuring in the worst aspects category. A number of students were unhappy with other students in the group and with the content of the training sessions, which they thought was often boring and repetitive. This dissatisfaction with training re-emerged in the data from students within the focus team.

No students mentioned particular sports or the teacher, the two most common responses prior to SEPEP, in the best or worst categories. The students would be less

likely to be unhappy with the sport they were playing, since at Connell Primary, they were given a choice of three sports. Teacher-based factors were less prominent due to the student-centred nature of SEPEP. They are discussed further in the following section.

#### Student perceptions of the teacher

Teacher-based factors did not rate a mention either in the like/dislike categories or when students were asked to list the best and worst aspects of school sport. This contrasts with student views prior to SEPEP, when the teacher figured prominently in the reasons given for liking and disliking Friday sport and as the most common response for the worst thing about school PE. This change in teacher-based responses, which was also reported in Hastie's (1998) study, coincides with the change in the teachers' role from a highly teacher-directed approach prior to SEPEP to one of facilitator in the student-centred SEPEP model. With this change, one would not expect the teacher to be as prominent an influence on a student's perception of the program.

#### Research question 1(c): Were there variations in the perceptions of SEPEP among students within one team?

Researching individual students in a mixed ability team enabled a more thorough examination and comparison of student perceptions of the SEPEP season. The students in the focus team had a range of sporting backgrounds, interests and abilities. In terms of physical competence, none of the team members would have been regarded as highly skilled. There were many similarities in the perceptions of SEPEP among the six students in the Crazy Critters volleyball team and between their thoughts and those of the other year seven students. Some differences were recorded, notably between Danny

and his female team members and between the coach, Hayley and the others. Differences in perceptions of the teacher's role were also noted.

### Enjoyment/fun

All six members of the focus volleyball team, Crazy Critters, liked SEPEP better than their previous sport/PE classes, which supports findings reported in Alexander et al. (1997); Carlson and Hastie (1997) and SPARC (1994). All these students expressed a desire to keep doing sport using a SEPEP approach. The fun aspect was regularly mentioned as being important to their liking of the program.

When students can see a purpose in PE, they are more likely to feel positive about the subject (Carlson, 1995) and perceive it as being relevant (Carlson, 1998). All members of the Crazy Critters saw training sessions as purposeful and beneficial in terms of skill improvement and practice for the games. However, as the season progressed, the training became boring and repetitive. Games sessions were considered by all the team members to be more enjoyable than training.

### Roles

The assertion by Sanders and Graham (1995) that PE activities should balance with an individual's skills can be applied to student roles in SEPEP. The initial concern of a couple of team members about their additional roles in SEPEP could be expected in this mainly female, generally low-skilled group, who lacked experience in positions of leadership and responsibility. Once the roles were perceived as not being too demanding or difficult, all of the members of the Crazy Critters expressed positive feelings about their

additional duties. Most found their roles easy to perform and were looking forward to trying something different next time.

The more confident students took on the more dominant roles. Hayley, an articulate and academically talented student of average sporting ability, took on the role of coach. Lisa, who also performed well academically and was considered good at sport, was the captain and took on the coaching role when Hayley was absent. In the other four volleyball teams, the finding that male students are more likely to take on the dominant roles in co-educational SEPEP classes (Hastie, 1998) was supported. Despite being the only boys in their teams, three of the five boys in the volleyball class had coaching roles.

The coach of the Crazy Critters, Hayley, indicated that she was not given sufficient guidance with how to fulfil her role. The others agreed that she needed assistance to provide greater variety in the training sessions. The students appreciated the assistance of Mr Gray in a couple of the training sessions, regarding his help as being crucial in their team reaching the finals. Mr Gray was obviously more knowledgeable about volleyball than Ms Jenson.

In addition to expressing dissatisfaction with training, Hayley's team mates complained about her being "bossy" and not allowing them input into the sessions. These complaints appeared to arise after Lisa took on the coaching role when Hayley was absent for training in weeks four and seven. Prior to this I had observed Hayley frequently asking the others for help with training ideas and would not have considered her bossy. The problems seemed to stem from Lisa being keen on coaching and not being particularly

fond of Hayley as well as Lisa's influence on the opinions of the others, rather than coming from Hayley's coaching approach. Hayley did not seem to be aware of the problem.

Carlson and Hastie (1997) note that the fine line between being a classmate and being a "boss" can be responsible for problems with leadership among students. In addition, assisting student coaches with both coaching technique and appropriate skills practices, particularly in the case of students such as Hayley, who was inexperienced in coaching and unfamiliar with the game of volleyball, is a major part of the implementation of SEPEP. Such guidance had been stressed at the SEPEP workshop. Problems found with student coaching remain an issue for SEPEP (Taggart & Cameron, 1998).

#### Structure of SEPEP

As with the findings from the year seven questionnaires, many of the focus team's responses were related to the structure of SEPEP and supported those from Grant's (1992) and Hastie's (1996; 1998) studies. These students made comments regarding students being in charge of the program, performance of roles other than player (see previous section), smaller teams, greater involvement in the SEPEP sessions, team affiliation, playing regular games and winning and losing.

The members of the Crazy Critters were overwhelmingly in favour of the student-centred nature of the program. Many of their comments indicated their liking for having the students rather than the teacher in charge of running the program. They also noted that this format was beneficial to them. For example, Lisa liked the fact that "our teacher



didn't just order us around" and she believed that "if we did it a teacher's way, it probably wouldn't be as good for us" (Interview, 25/6/98). Danny thought that SEPEP was "more exciting, because we were doing the stuff...we had to be more responsible" whereas "last term we just went down to the park and played the sport" (Interview, 25/6/98).

Having smaller teams and being more involved in the activity sessions was noted by all the members of the focus team. Natalie compared SEPEP volleyball to her previous volleyball classes in which she rarely got to touch the ball. "This [new] way we *had* to be involved", she said (Interview, 31/7/98).

Previous SEPEP studies have found that student motivation is enhanced in the program because they like playing games in a "proper" competition (Grant, 1992; Alexander et al., 1995; Hastie, 1996). The members of the Crazy Critters all mentioned playing the games in the competition format as a positive aspect of SEPEP and said they liked volleyball as a sport. Shelley said volleyball was "a pretty good game and it's sort of easy so I like it" (Interview, 31/7/98). The non-threatening, non-contact nature of volleyball may have been well suited to this group of students.

Comments related to team affiliation regularly emerged and supported Hastie's (1996; 1998) findings. The players believed that they generally cooperated well and often worked together to develop game strategies and help the less skilled players in the team. The team worked on strategies to develop the weaker players' volleyball skills and other players were observed giving them encouragement during games.

Winning and losing emerged as influences on student perceptions of the SEPEP season. As expected, the players in the Crazy Critters team were very happy with their victory in the finals. Their comments about playing in the grand final included feeling happy, excited, nervous and special. The members of the focus team claimed that winning was not crucial to their positive views of SEPEP, but thought it was important for teams to experience at least some success during the season to maintain interest in the competition.

In order to maintain student interest and enthusiasm in PE, it is important to offer them opportunities to experience success (Alexander et al., 1995). Feelings of despondency with continued lack of success were mentioned by the Crazy Critters and were also borne out by Danny's behaviour. Although highly motivated in the first few weeks of the season, the Crazy Critters thereafter became somewhat dejected about losing all but one of their games in the qualifying rounds. Danny had initially been an enthusiastic and active participant, but after his team had lost a few matches in a row, he would sometimes leave a match in frustration or participate with little obvious effort. Danny's enthusiasm returned for the finals games. Danny said he did not like losing games and sometimes was unhappy with the umpiring. When Danny's team was not achieving success, he adopted failure avoidance behaviours as is characteristic of students with a competitive goal orientation (Evans, 1990). A discussion of gender issues, which may also have influenced Danny's behaviour, follows.

#### Gender issues

Not surprisingly, considering the makeup of the volleyball teams, issues of gender

arose in the focus team, affecting all team members. Although Danny, the only boy in the Crazy Critters, said he really liked the new format for school sport, he expressed some feelings of dissatisfaction and isolation during the SEPEP season. Alienation, in this case, did not appear to stem from lack of perceived competence (Carlson, 1995b), but occurred because Danny was unhappy to be isolated from his male peers, which affected his enjoyment of the program. He was also annoyed at not receiving his first choice of sport.

Danny's attitude and behaviour affected the other team members. His lack of cooperation and interest in some sessions was a source of annoyance to all his teammates, who regarded Danny as the team's best player. Danny's teammate, Mary, said she understood his feelings of frustration at being the only boy in the team and supported his comments that there should be at least two boys in each team.

#### Perceived competence

Carlson (1998) believes that students need to perceive improvement and mastery in PE in order to increase their confidence. Feelings of improved competence in turn add to students' enjoyment of physical activity (Gorely, 1998; Hastie, 1998). Each of the students in the Crazy Critters team thought their skill level had improved over the season. Two students claimed they were now good at sport, which contrasted to how they felt prior to the volleyball season. Individuals also made comments regarding the improved skill level of other team members. The team was aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their players. For example, Mary and Natasha were regarded, by themselves and the others in the team, as the weakest players. Danny was considered the team's most competent volleyball player. The perceptions of skill improvement were backed up by comments

from the teachers and my observations. They support the view that SEPEP can offer students with a range of sporting abilities some degree of success (Siedentop, 1994; Alexander et al., 1995)

### Student perceptions of the teacher

The students in the Crazy Critters team had a range of opinions about the teacher's role in SEPEP. The students all agreed that Ms Jenson was less involved in the lessons than previously. Hayley thought that Ms Jenson initially did a lot of preparation and organisation for SEPEP and thereafter was mainly a supervisor of the sessions. Danny and Shelley saw Ms Jenson as an encourager, who also helped solve disputes. Natalie said that Ms Jenson helped some students with their skills, while Lisa and Mary thought she did not do much at all, besides keeping control and making sure everyone was participating.

These variations in perceptions of the teacher's role offer further evidence of how individuals can have different perceptions of the same events. In this case, lack of understanding by some of the students of Ms Jenson's role resulted in misinterpretations of her behaviour. Lee and Solmon, (1992) believe that students' interpretations of events can affect their potential to learn. Accordingly, better knowledge of students' interpretations can improve understanding between students and teachers.

### The teachers

The main focus of data relating to the teachers' perceptions after a season of SEPEP concerned Ms Jenson, the volleyball teacher. This section also includes data collected from the other two year seven teachers involved in the SEPEP

implementation, Mr Green and Mr Irvine.

### Ms Jensen

Ms Jensen was interviewed following the completion of SEPEP to gauge her perceptions of the program and to determine how her perceptions of school PE had changed over a term of SEPEP (Research question 2(b)). Additional data was gathered from her diary and from field notes. Ms Jensen was extremely positive in her overall thoughts about SEPEP and was keen to implement it again in term three.

I like so much about it, that is why I'm doing it again. I like that the kids get into a competition, I like that they get to be coach and captain and they get to be self-directed, and they get so involved, they do all the publicity stuff and they write things up on the noticeboard, and the noticeboard looks fantastic at the end of term. (Interview, 3/8/98)

When questioned about her role in SEPEP, Ms Jensen described it as vastly different from that in her previous PE teaching. In her view (which was supported by my observations), her main duties were "making sure that it was all organised properly, that everything was ready for them to go, to make sure that disputes and things like that were dealt with on the spot and to keep motivating them" and mainly "just to be there" (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jensen said that at times, she was like a mediator, "especially if they weren't happy with their coach" (Interview, 3/8/98).

Ms Jensen was comfortable with student-centred learning in her classroom teaching. From the commencement of SEPEP, she was keen to give the students a lot of responsibility for the program, interfering only when she thought the students were in dispute or needed her assistance.

For a start, I was probably wanting to be very democratic and wanted it to be very much their thing, so I really stood back and basically let them go and see what would happen, and even if it wasn't going quite right, I still let it go to see how they would resolve it rather than me jumping in and saying, 'You need to do this and you need to do that'. I suppose it's a bit like a pendulum. I went far enough that way and then I started to spin back and get more: 'Perhaps if you did this or you did that'. (Interview, 3/8/98)

In contrast to her previous lack of preparation for PE sessions, Ms Jenson found that with SEPEP she spent time planning and organizing PE and "I got better at those kinds of things" (Interview, 3/8/98). She found the planning to be time consuming as there was a lot more organization required than previously, particularly at the commencement of the program. Ms Jenson claimed to enjoy the organizing, such as making the charts and posters, because "I enjoy learning and knew what I was doing was going to be good" (Interview, 3/8/98). She said that the SEPEP workshop and the SEPEP file were very useful to her in her planning. Sharing the organizational duties with Mr Green and Mr Irvine had been beneficial, enjoyable and "took the load off as well" (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jenson said that working as a team had made the three teachers discuss the sport program together, both formally and informally. From a professional point of view, she deemed this to be "good and healthy" (Interview, 3/8/98).

Ms Jenson liked the students being offered a choice of sports and was happy with the way the students had selected them using a preference system. The issue of only a small number of boys in the volleyball class had been a concern, particularly since four of the five boys claimed they had not received their first choice of sport. She believed that election of teams by the Sports Board, with her guidance, had worked well.

After SEPEP, Ms Jenson said she felt more confident about teaching PE. She had

generally found the SEPEP sessions “stress-free”, particularly the Friday games sessions, after which she no longer went home “exhausted” (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jenson believed that one did not have to be an expert at the sport to teach it effectively using a SEPEP approach. She claimed she would be happy in the future to try teaching a sport of which she knew nothing about using a SEPEP approach. For example, “if someone told me I had to do lacrosse, I would take it on, because it would be interesting and we would all have to learn together” (Interview, 3/8/98). Ms Jenson said she would happily recommend the program to “non-sporty teachers” (Interview, 3/8/98).

#### Ms Jenson's thoughts about the students

It was Ms Jensen's belief that most of the year seven students liked SEPEP a lot more than the previous PE program. She thought that even some of those students who had not been enjoying PE classes prior to SEPEP, were positive about the new approach. However, she indicated that it was almost unavoidable to have a positive response from every child in PE.

There are going to be some kids who it doesn't matter what you do for them, they will still not like sport. But for the kids who like sport, they are really enjoying it even more, and the kids who really hated sports, I don't think it's made it worse for anybody, and that's a step in the right direction, and some of these kids really love it. (Interview, 3/8/98)

Ms Jenson thought that the students' learning had been enhanced in a number of areas. Their game skills had improved immensely over the term compared to previous volleyball and other sport units she had taken. In her opinion, the one-off skills session that I had run with the students plus the handouts outlining volleyball skill practices that she had distributed to the coaches had contributed to this (Diary, 30/7/98). “I had shown

them some [skills] before, but that [the skills session] was good and that was different, so I think that was an improvement on the last volleyball term (Interview, 3/8/98). The grand final, she said, "really illustrated to what extent the players had improved. Players really showed off a myriad of new skills and strategies that they had learnt over the course of the term" (Diary, 30/7/98).

In addition to students learning games skills Ms Jenson said SEPEP had helped develop other skills such as teamwork and fairplay as well as how to perform their various roles. With her guidance, the students "learned along the way how best to criticise, without being abusive" (Interview, 3/8/98). In general the students liked learning their various roles, such as umpiring. Some of the students struggled with the responsibilities. Although many improved as the season progressed, there were some individuals and teams who had problems with organisation and attention to roles throughout most of the term.

Ms Jenson believed that the students enjoyed the training sessions, as they were always organised and ready to train, even if it was raining and they were upset if training was cancelled. She qualified this by saying that not all students liked the training as "some kids don't like sport anyway" (Interview, 3/8/98). The team training sessions, Ms Jenson observed, "bordered on being sometimes bizarre to really excellent" (Interview, 3/8/98). She thought that the volleyball teams had problems with running training sessions because the program was new to the students and also because most of the volleyball coaches did not know as much about the sport when compared to those, for example, in the basketball group. "No-one had a lot of volleyball experience. Lots of them didn't really equate the



football or netball practice they do, you know just the warming-up exercises and those kinds of things, with volleyball" (Interview, 3/8/98). There was not even a team that could demonstrate good practices to the others.

The level of student participation during SEPEP was greater than in Ms Jensen's previous Friday sport classes. She noticed that the students were now more involved in the games and practice activities. "Beforehand there were so many not getting the time with the ball, or time in action, whereas they are all the time now" (Interview, 3/8/98). One female student did not participate regularly, often claiming to be feeling unwell, but "she would have done that before as well" (Interview, 3/8/98). On occasions, some of the boys would "spit the dummy" (Interview, 3/8/98) or leave the game in frustration, which Ms Jensen believed was due to them feeling under pressure to perform well in the games.

Gender issues had arisen during the term within the volleyball group. According to Ms Jensen, having just one boy in a team made the boys unhappy and negatively affected the group dynamics. The boys in the group would have felt isolated. Only one of the five boys had chosen to play volleyball, so most of them did not want to be there initially. However as the season progressed and teams progressed towards the finals, she thought that most of the boys enjoyed playing volleyball, especially participating in the finals.

Even towards half way to three quarters of the way through [the season] a couple of the boys started to get very unhappy and quite vocal and even trying to ruin it in lots of ways by being mouthy and not playing any more, spitting the dummy. That was really difficult because I thought, we are going to lose all the boys here and that's going to make it hard for everyone. In fact what happened towards the finals was that they got more serious about their own game, but it was very much towards the end. Then at the end they said they enjoyed it, yes, most of them did. (Interview, 3/8/98)

### Other teachers involved in the study

In questionnaires and informal discussion following the SEPEP season at Connell Primary, the other two teachers who implemented the program with Ms Jenson reported wholehearted support for SEPEP and professed its suitability for upper primary classes. Mr Green and Mr Irvine had chosen their sports, basketball and soccer respectively, because of some familiarity with them. Both teachers had spent time in the initial training sessions assisting students with skill practice ideas, gradually reducing their direct involvement and helping individual players and teams as well as offering advice to students on their various roles.

Mr Irvine and Mr Green believed the students benefited from SEPEP in terms of learning outcomes. Mr Irvine noted improvement "in both skills and strategies" (Teacher Questionnaire 2), while Mr Green described student achievement as "better than expected" (Teacher questionnaire 2). The teachers agreed that the students enjoyed SEPEP, particularly the competition, and they thought that the students generally cooperated well.

Training sessions for soccer, according to Mr Irvine, were "well organized and varied" with "little help required" (Teacher Questionnaire 2). Mr Green said that basketball training initially worked well "but tended to fall away a bit towards the end of the term" (Teacher Questionnaire 2). Both teachers were very pleased with the way students had responded to their additional roles. Mr Green qualified this by noting that there were "a couple of exceptions of course" (Teacher Questionnaire 2).

The length of the season was appropriate, according to the two teachers. The initial organisation sessions would be condensed next time SEPEP was implemented, so that the students could be involved in physical activity sooner. Mr Green saw that after the first week, the students became "sick of talking and wanted to get going" (Teacher Questionnaire 2).

Mr Irvine and Mr Green found assessment of the students to be much easier than before. With reduced teacher involvement in the running of SEPEP sessions, they were able to assess students both during games and training. They found the SEPEP workshop and file invaluable in setting up the program. In Mr Green's view, "it's all very well giving people a file, but you need to go through it with teachers, as an in-service course" (Teacher Questionnaire 2). Both teachers were looking forward to implementing SEPEP again.

### Discussion

The results of data relating to teacher perceptions after SEPEP implementation are summarised and discussed with reference to research questions 2(b) and 2(c). Firstly changes in teacher perceptions over a term of SEPEP are examined, followed by discussion of the focus teacher's perceptions of the responses of students within one team to SEPEP.

#### Research question 2(b): How did teacher perceptions of school sport change over a term of SEPEP?

As with Grant's (1992) study, the teachers involved in implementing sport education at Connell Primary School were positive about the SEPEP curriculum model

and believed it was well suited to upper primary students. Ms Jenson's comments at the end of the SEPEP season were extremely positive. She claimed that, with the SEPEP approach, she found teaching PE less stressful, more rewarding and enjoyable, and more beneficial in terms of student learning outcomes. Her encouraging thoughts however, do not necessarily imply that there were no flaws in the implementation.

The differences Ms Jenson found when using a SEPEP approach to teaching PE, compared to her previous experiences of teaching PE, are summarised and discussed below, within a range of themes that emerged during the analysis. Comments on evaluation of the program implementation are included.

#### Student enjoyment of SEPEP

Ms Jenson's comments about student opinions of PE using a SEPEP approach supported the finding that teachers perceive changes in student attitudes towards PE with implementation of SEPEP (Alexander et al., 1997; Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Teachers in these studies reported greater student enjoyment and motivation in SEPEP. The students in the volleyball group were more interested and motivated than her previous classes, according to Ms Jenson. She thought that the students enjoyed both the training and games sessions. Ms Jenson noticed that her students were a lot more involved in the SEPEP approach due to the smaller teams, modified rules and designation of roles. This, she thought, could have enhanced their enthusiasm as well as their learning.

Ms Jenson saw that there were a small number of students who did not appear to enjoy SEPEP. She appeared to accept this as normal, commenting that there would always be some students who do not like PE. Walling and Martinek (1995) encourage

teachers not to overlook such students, who may have symptoms of low ability perceptions in both physical and academic domains. Whilst she did not necessarily overlook these students, Ms Jenson's comments indicated that she was perhaps not overly concerned about them.

### Student learning

Teachers who have implemented SEPEP have commented on resultant enhanced student learning (Alexander et al., 1997; Grant, 1992). Prior to SEPEP, Ms Jenson admitted that she did not teach PE well. She knew that the students enjoyed her sessions, but she did not believe that the lessons resulted in worthwhile learning outcomes. In Ms Jenson's view, students learned a great deal more in the SEPEP season than in her previous PE classes. She claimed that student learning was enhanced in areas such as volleyball skills, teamwork, fairplay and various roles such as umpiring and publicity. Ms Jenson's observed emphasis on fairplay and effort, which is encouraged in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995), supports a mastery view of learning in PE (Armstrong & Biddle, 1992).

### Planning and organization

With a SEPEP approach, Ms Jenson spent more time preparing for PE sessions than previously. Ms Jenson claimed to enjoy the planning and found that she "got better at those kinds of things" (Interview, 3/8/98). Planning and preparation is considered an integral part of effective teaching, yet, like other teachers, (Evans, 1990), Ms Jenson previously "just rocked up" for physical education classes.

In addition, as reported by Alexander et al. (1997) and Grant (1992) and in other

SEPEP studies, Ms Jenson found she had more time to assess students during SEPEP, due to students running the program. Other studies, such as that by Taggart et al. (1995), examine student assessment in SEPEP in more depth.

#### Teacher's perception of her role

The SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995) stresses that there is no set rule on when during the SEPEP season the teacher should change to a more facilitative role. However it does note that teachers generally keep control longer with their first SEPEP class. Whilst some teachers in other studies (such as Alexander et al., 1997) found it difficult to back away from a teacher-directed approach, Ms Jenson was comfortable with allowing the students to take control. She often employed a student-centred learning approach in her classroom teaching.

However Ms Jenson thought she might have given the students too much control too soon, without enough guidance. She justified this by saying that she was learning about the program along with the students and did not want to keep "jumping in" and interfering "even if it wasn't going quite right" (Interview, 3/8/98). Her more experienced colleagues, Mr Green and Mr Irvine, were more directly involved in teaching the students at the beginning of the SEPEP season.

Compared to the basketball and soccer groups, the volleyball students and their teacher, Ms Jenson were less familiar with their sports. Ms Jenson was also less confident and experienced in PE teaching than the two male teachers. This lack of expertise would have contributed to the lack of direction given to students about the coaching of the sport.

Both Ms Jenson and the students would have benefited from additional guidance in these areas, either from Mr Green or Mr Irvine, or from other appropriate sport advisers.

#### Use of a team-teaching approach to SEPEP

Ms Jenson valued the team teaching approach that was used for implementing SEPEP at Connell Primary. A team teaching model of implementing SEPEP in the primary school has several advantages. Each of the three teachers was assigned roles for the organization of the program, depending on their interest and expertise. This offered other benefits such as sharing the workload and learning from the others. In addition, the teachers were able to offer the students a choice of sports. Despite these advantages, with the team approach, the three year seven teachers found it difficult to integrate aspects of the sport program into other learning areas such as mathematics and language, as encouraged in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995). This can occur much more readily if classroom teachers implement SEPEP with their own classes.

#### Attitude to PE teaching

After trialing the SEPEP model, Ms Jenson said she felt more confident about teaching PE. She recommended the program to all upper primary teachers, but significantly to those who, like her, considered themselves “non-sporty”. These comments offer hope to those who voice concerns about the enthusiasm, confidence and commitment of a number of (mainly female) primary school teachers regarding the teaching of PE (Evans, 1990; Tinning et al, 1993). Despite there being observed problems with Ms Jenson’s SEPEP lessons, they were a great improvement on the “physical miseducation” (Tinning et al., 1993) previously observed in her PE classes.

Research question 2(c): How did the teacher perceive the responses of designated students, within one team to SEPEP?

Teacher perceptions of the students

Sanders (1996) encourages teachers to seek out student perceptions of their PE experiences, in order to help create better understanding between themselves and the students. When asked for her opinions about the members of the Crazy Critters during the SEPEP season, Ms Jenson had a few comments, but did not give the impression of having an in-depth knowledge or understanding of the perceptions of these students. This is surprising, considering her regular contact with these students during the term. Two of the students, Hayley and Danny, were in her Year seven class. She was less familiar with the others.

Ms Jenson described the Crazy Critters as an “interesting group” composed of a range of different types of students. She saw Shelley as a popular student, who performed well at school. Hayley was intelligent but socially not as adept. Natalie and Mary were both timid and quiet, “like peas in a pod” (Interview, 3/8/98). Lisa was considered to be “a really nice girl” who was keen on sport but of average ability. Danny, who enjoyed his sport, had an unpredictable temperament.

At the beginning of the season Ms Jenson “thought that they would be a good group” (Interview, 3/8/98). She was perplexed when the Critters were losing most of their games and was at a loss to explain why. In her role of mediator, Ms Jenson recalled having to deal with the dissatisfaction of members of the Crazy Critters with their coach, Hayley. She noted that Lisa enjoyed taking on a leadership role when Hayley was not



there.

Ms Jenson was amazed to see the Critters come up from the bottom of the ladder to win the grand final. Whilst Ms Jenson was delighted for the team, she "still couldn't believe it" (Interview, 3/8/98). It should be noted that Ms Jenson had been absent during the final training session prior to the finals, during which Mr Gray had spent time coaching the team.

#### Student learning

Ms Jenson believed that the volleyball skills of all the players in the Crazy Critters improved greatly throughout the season. In the finals, Ms Jenson thought the Critters performed more to the level that she had originally expected of them. In her opinion, the fact that they had been able to "come up and win" reflected the evenness of the competition. Ms Jenson was aware of her lack of PE teaching expertise and admitted that the skill improvement was helped by my coaching session and Mr Gray's assistance, rather than by her input.

Whilst Ms Jenson was obviously interested in the skill progress, participation and attitude of her volleyball students, her lack of confidence and expertise in PE teaching was evident in her dealings with the Crazy Critters team. She frequently gave encouragement to the students as well as advice on performance of roles. She dealt with team problems, such as complaints about Hayley's coaching and Danny's disinterest in a positive way. Rarely, however, was she observed giving any skill feedback to the students.

### Gender issues

Hastie (1998) found that boys were perceived as more serious than girls in competitive games and they were often expected to be more proficient at sport. Ms Jenson saw Danny, the only male in the focus volleyball team as being the best player in his team. She believed he had a lot to do with the team's success in the finals. Ms Jenson was also aware of the negative influences Danny had on the team's performance. She sensed the girls' frustration with Danny on a few occasions, when his interest in the games seemed to be waning. Ms Jenson thought that Danny and a couple of the other boys in the volleyball group might have felt the pressure of the competition, resulting in poor attitudes and behaviour during some sessions.

Danny's isolation from his male peers was also noted by Ms Jenson. In her view, as the sole male member of the team:

Danny did stand out a bit. Towards the end he is a lot of the reason why they [his team] won, because he really got in there and played his heart out. He stood out a lot in the skills sessions too and the other games because he just spat the dummy. (Interview, 3/8/98)

### Differences between student and teacher perceptions

The following discussion refers to the study's final research question. Student and teacher perceptions were compared to investigate differences in their thoughts about a season of SEPEP. The discussion primarily relates to Ms Jenson and the students in the Crazy Critters volleyball team. Where applicable, findings allude to the other year seven teachers and students involved in the study.

Research question 3: Are there differences between the teacher's and the students' perceptions of SEPEP?

Through observation and listening to students, Ms Jensen, the focus teacher, was able to form opinions about what the students thought of SEPEP. Many of her perceptions were the same as those of the students. In addition, there were some contrasts in the student and teacher perceptions. The similarities between student and teacher perceptions of SEPEP included that:

1. They liked the SEPEP approach.
2. SEPEP was preferred to the previous PE format.
3. They liked the student-centred approach.
4. Learning outcomes for the students were enhanced.
5. The initial organization sessions were too lengthy. Students should have been involved in physical activity sooner.
6. There were problems with the boys in the volleyball group, such as feelings of isolation, being unhappy with not receiving their first choice of sport and disruptive behaviour.
7. There were some problems with the responses to additional roles undertaken by students, such as the Crazy Critters' problems with their coach.

A few differences were discovered between student and teacher perceptions of certain aspects of SEPEP. These included that:

1. Ms Jensen did not seem aware that a number of students were unhappy with the biweekly training sessions. After the novelty of having regular training with student coaches had worn off, students expressed feelings of boredom, due to the lack of variety in

the skill practices.

2. Students were not aware of Ms Jenson's role. For example, some did not think Ms Jenson did anything. Others believed she was quite knowledgeable about volleyball, despite the fact that she rarely gave any specific skills advice.
3. Ms Jenson was very enthusiastic about the culminating grand final day, whereas some students found the day tedious, having to watch other students play finals all day.

The similarities found in student and teacher perceptions implied that Ms Jenson was aware of both positive and negative student feelings about SEPEP. Awareness and understanding of the students' thoughts could enhance the effectiveness of any changes she and the other teachers wanted to make in future SEPEP seasons (Dyson, 1995; Sanders, 1996). In contrast, Ms Jenson's lack of awareness about student perceptions of her role, training sessions and the grand final day could hamper her evaluation of the SEPEP curriculum model and negatively affect the subsequent implementation of future SEPEP programs with her classes.

Discussions and diaries are two methods of gathering student thoughts about their PE sessions, which can help create better understanding between students and teachers (Sanders, 1996). They could have proved useful in discovering student dissatisfaction with aspects of the program such as training sessions and the grand final day. It should be noted that during this study, Ms Jenson was not given access to the student diaries that were part of the collected data.

When outlining student roles in SEPEP, Ms Jenson could have clarified her own

role for the students as well as the emphasis of her assessment, to avoid misinterpretation of her behaviour, which can affect student perceptions (Lee & Solomon, 1992). Thereby students would have known, for example, to seek her assistance for disputes and they would have been aware of the criteria on which they were being assessed. Admitting to the students and the other teachers that she lacked knowledge about the sport of volleyball may have encouraged students to seek assistance from other teachers, such as Mr Gray or Mr Green. Ms Jenson could have used these teachers to assist students with learning volleyball skills, particularly in the initial SEPEP sessions. In addition, students may have been able to assist Ms Jenson in nominating community members who could assist with the volleyball program.

### Summary

After a season of SEPEP, data from the three year seven classes at Connell Primary School were examined to study any changes in the subjects' perceptions of physical education. A more in-depth understanding was gained through study of the focus teacher, Ms Jenson and the targeted volleyball team, the Crazy Critters. After SEPEP, changes were found in both student and teacher perceptions.

Themes that emerged in the analysis of student perceptions included fun and enjoyment, learning outcomes, the structure of SEPEP, perceived competence, gender issues and student perceptions of the teacher. As found in previous studies, more students enjoyed their sport sessions and a larger percentage reported having fun than with the traditional PE teaching approach. Students noted more learning outcomes with SEPEP. Many student responses were related to the structure of SEPEP, such as the competition (playing games, winning, losing, finals), team affiliation and roles. Students

were generally positive about most aspects of SEPEP, particularly the student-centred nature of the program and the regular playing of games. Negative comments were received regarding not participating, losing and training sessions. Students in the focus team all reported improved skill competence. Gender issues that arose included isolation of the boys in the volleyball group and their resultant poor behaviour and attitudes at times. Teacher-based factors appeared to be less of an influence on the students' attitudes. Students seemed unclear of Ms Jenson's role in SEPEP.

Analysis of teacher perceptions resulted in themes of student enjoyment, student learning, gender issues, planning and organization, teacher roles, perceptions of the students, use of a team teaching approach and attitude towards PE teaching. There were many similarities in student and teacher perceptions. Teachers were aware of students' positive thoughts about SEPEP. Ms Jenson's thoughts concurred with those of the volleyball students about the problems brought about by the length of the organization sessions, the small number of boys in the volleyball group and the performance of roles by some of the students. However there were discrepancies between student and teacher perceptions with regard to the teacher's role, student dissatisfaction with training sessions and thoughts about grand final day. Ms Jenson found that with a SEPEP approach, PE teaching was less stressful, more enjoyable and more rewarding, even though it involved more preparation than her previous sport sessions. She was prepared to recommend the program to other non-sporty generalist primary school teachers. The team teaching approach used by the three Year Seven teachers had advantages such as sharing the workload, learning from peers and offering the students a choice of sports. However a team approach also meant fewer opportunities to integrate PE with other learning areas.

Implementation of SEPEP meant there were many changes which improved the PE outcomes for Year Sevens at Connell Primary. However due to Ms Jenson's lack of experience and expertise in teaching PE, she did not perceive some of the problems with her implementation of SEPEP, which were observed during the study or commented on by her students. Implications of the results of this study are considered in the concluding chapter of this paper.

## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The desire to maximize positive outcomes in PE, in order to develop students' approach tendencies as well as their physical and social skills, was a major influence in conducting this study. This was combined with a belief in the value of studying student perceptions of their PE experiences. An interpretive case study design was employed to examine and compare student and teacher perceptions before, during and after implementation of the SEPEP curriculum model, in a regional Western Australian Primary School. Three of Choi's (1992) curriculum dimensions, perceptual, operational and to a lesser extent, textual dimensions, were used as a framework for the study within the school/community context.

Students from the three year seven classes at Connell Primary School were surveyed prior to and following SEPEP implementation, regarding their thoughts about school PE. Diaries, interviews and observation of PE sessions were used to collect additional data from the subjects under focus, who comprised the volleyball teacher, Ms Jenson and six students in one of the volleyball teams.

Past studies of the SEPEP curriculum model have indicated that it has the potential to respond to many concerns about the teaching of PE. At Connell Primary School, these concerns included that a number of students did not enjoy PE classes, did not believe that they learned anything and were recipients of poorly taught PE lessons which appeared to lack worthwhile student outcomes. A summary of the main findings of the study follows, within the textual, operational and perceptual dimensions of the



SEPEP curriculum.

### Summary of findings within Choi's curriculum dimensions

#### 1. Textual dimension: The SEPEP manual and introductory workshop

The SEPEP model, which involves a student-centred approach to teaching PE, includes features of community sport, which are often not part of school PE programs, such as seasons, team affiliation, record-keeping, formal competition and festivity. A SEPEP approach satisfies key principles and values in the Health and Physical Education Learning Area (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998) which are frequently neglected in traditional PE teaching.

The study's focus teacher, Ms Jenson rarely did any planning for her Friday sport sessions prior to the study, despite the availability of various physical education resources such as texts and local development officers. Prior to the implementation of the program, Ms Jenson and Mr Irvine attended a SEPEP workshop run by the researcher. The teachers also had access to the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995). They claimed that the SEPEP workshop and manual were extremely beneficial and well used in their implementation of SEPEP. The year seven teachers employed many of the suggestions made in the manual and at the SEPEP workshop.

Other recommendations were not implemented. For example, none of the teachers made use of community sports players or development officers as suggested at the SEPEP workshop. In the absence of a suitable local volleyball "expert" and in response to Ms Jenson's request and my observation of the students' lack of knowledge of basic

volleyball skills, I took a skills session with the volleyball group in week seven.

Other notable aspects of SEPEP which were not included at Connell Primary were integration of SEPEP with other learning areas and the forging of school/community links. It must be remembered that this was the first time these teachers had tried using SEPEP and one would not expect them to implement all the workshop's and manual's suggestions in their initial season. Previous research has indicated that there are levels of implementation, with more key characteristics being implemented in the second and third SEPEP seasons (Alexander et al., 1997)

## 2. Operational dimension: What happened when SEPEP was implemented at Connell Primary?

With implementation of SEPEP at Connell Primary School, Ms Jenson's approach to teaching PE underwent major changes. Prior to SEPEP, Ms Jenson rarely took her class out for physical activity sessions during the week. She never spent time planning for Friday sport sessions and often did little more than umpire a whole class game.

In their team-teaching approach to SEPEP implementation, the three year seven teachers at Connell Primary School, Ms Jenson, Mr Irvine and Mr Green, shared the organisational load and offered the students a choice of three sports, volleyball, soccer and basketball. Students who chose volleyball were considered to be less athletic, less popular, with fewer natural leaders, when compared to the other two classes.

The first two weeks of the SEPEP season were spent on organisation. By the end of the second week, the students became restless, had had enough of discussion and organisation and were keen to begin the activity sessions. For the remainder of the term, the three classes were timetabled for two half-hour training sessions and a one-hour games session each week. Finals were held in the last three sessions, with grand finals of all three sports held over a full school day as a culminating event.

Students in Ms Jenson's volleyball class appeared to be highly motivated and willing to participate in SEPEP, particularly at the beginning of the term. They were also more active and involved than previously. More effort was observed in games at the start of the season and during the finals, when winning was important (which was also noted by Carlson & Hastie, 1997). Interest and involvement in training sessions remained high during the season for most students. However, for some of the teams and individuals in the volleyball group, enthusiasm and participation wavered in a few of the SEPEP sessions. Some arguments occurred with team members during games and training and occasionally certain students would not be keen to participate or would disrupt activities.

The other teachers involved in the study, who in contrast to Ms Jenson were male, more experienced in teaching PE and "sporty," gave their students much more direction and assistance than Ms Jenson, particularly in the initial SEPEP practical sessions. Ms Jenson admitted that she gave her students too much responsibility for the new PE program too soon, rather than gradually taking a less teacher-directed approach as the season progressed, as recommended (Alexander et al., 1995). As a result, students

were given little skill instruction and assistance with coaching. Ms Jenson's lack of confidence and expertise in PE teaching would have contributed to this. Had her students received improved guidance, their skill progress and enjoyment of training sessions could have been enhanced.

### 3. Perceptual dimension: Student and teacher perceptions of SEPEP implementation

#### Prior to SEPEP

Data relating to student perceptions indicated problems with the way PE operated at Connell Primary School prior to SEPEP implementation. These findings supported those of other studies such as Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) and Carlson (1995b). Two thirds of the year seven students at the school indicated that they liked school sport for reasons such as having fun and a break from the classroom. However 37% of students were not positive about school sport, which is more than the 20% reported in Carlson's (1995b) study. Many of these students did not enjoy the sessions, were unhappy with aspects of how it was run and did not believe they learned anything. Teacher-based factors were prominent influences on student attitudes.

Volleyball, taken by Ms Jenson, was the most liked sport, reinforcing the view that students may enjoy PE classes in spite of the way they are taught (Kirk, 1991). Ms Jenson's encouraging, enthusiastic approach was viewed positively by the students, although it meant that she was frequently, "exhausted and voiceless" by the end of the lesson. At the same time "physical miseducation" (Tinning, 1987; Tinning et al., 1993) was evident in her classes. Ms Jenson was aware that, despite being a highly regarded classroom teacher, teaching sport/PE was something she did not do well.

### During the SEPEP season

Perceptions of SEPEP by students in the focus volleyball team and by Ms Jenson were generally positive during the season. The students enjoyed having more regular PE sessions, the increased involvement due to the smaller teams and taking on roles. They thought they were learning more and perceived improvement in their volleyball skills. Both students and teachers found the initial organisation sessions useful but too lengthy.

At times during the SEPEP season, students in the focus team, the Crazy Critters, were dissatisfied with aspects of the program. The team was unhappy with their initial lack of success in the games. The girls and Ms Jenson commented on Danny's poor attitude at times, despite his obvious sporting ability. Feelings of dissatisfaction with the coach, Hayley, also emerged from her team mates later in the season.

Danny, the only boy in the focus team, expressed a range of thoughts about SEPEP at different stages of the season. Initially he was not happy, describing feelings of isolation as well as annoyance with the girls in his team. He also did not like his role. Later in the season, his feelings varied from liking this new form of PE, his role and team mates, to frustration with the team not doing well and the girls not training properly. Danny appeared motivated by and was a much more enthusiastic participant in the finals matches. It would be interesting to find out whether his final thoughts about SEPEP in the final questionnaire would have been so positive if the team had not been so successful in the finals.

The wavering in attitudes of the students is considered by some (including Ms Jenson) to be expected as part of the ups and downs of a normal sporting season (Alexander et al., 1995). Ms Jenson liked the student-centred nature of SEPEP. She was pleased to see some of the less able, less confident students in the volleyball group being given the opportunity to take on leadership roles. She admitted that she could have given these students more guidance in their first season of SEPEP.

#### After SEPEP implementation

There were many changes in both student and teacher thoughts about PE after a season of SEPEP. More students were favourably inclined towards PE. More reported having fun and enjoying aspects of PE related to the SEPEP format. These included learning about the sport, team affiliation, greater involvement in both the physical activity and organisation/decision making, experiencing success and taking on roles. Having a break from the classroom remained the best thing about PE. Students described more learning outcomes for themselves than previously. The teacher was less of an influence on student attitudes than prior to SEPEP.

Ms Jenson found that with a SEPEP approach, teaching PE was less stressful, more rewarding and more enjoyable. In addition, she relished the advantages of a team teaching approach. Many of Ms Jenson's perceptions of SEPEP, such as those related to student enjoyment and learning outcomes, coincided with those of the students. Like the students, she preferred SEPEP to the previous, multi-activity, teacher-directed approach. Ms Jenson was aware of the gender issues arising from having only one boy in the team and of the problems some teams had experienced with performance of roles such as coaching.

Three main differences were found when comparing student and teacher perceptions. Ms Jenson's positive thoughts about grand final day were not reiterated by a number of the students. Student perceptions of her role were often inaccurate. Finally, Ms Jenson was unaware of the extent of student dissatisfaction with training sessions.

### Discussion and recommendations

This study supports the view that SEPEP can change student attitudes towards PE. Many of the positive views of SEPEP espoused by the subjects of this study concur with previous findings (Alexander et al., 1995; Carlson & Hastie, 1997; Grant, 1992; Hastie, 1996; Hastie, 1998). Curnow and Macdonald (1995) questioned whether upper primary students were mature enough to run SEPEP. According to this study, the SEPEP model appears compatible with upper primary school children, eleven to twelve years of age, although the findings also indicate that improvements could be made to the implementation at Connell Primary School.

In Locke's (1992) view, "a little early success rarely substitutes for continuing investments" (p 368). It is well known that in order to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, educators need to continually evaluate their teaching programs and work at improving future outcomes. Since the novelty of the program may have contributed to the positive perceptions of SEPEP, student and teacher thoughts after a number of SEPEP seasons would be worth investigating. Issues such as gender equity, clarification of the teacher's role, guidance with skills and student roles, enhancing learning outcomes by use of strategies such as integration and development of school-community links could be attended to in future SEPEP seasons.

The study's findings supported those of Hastie (1995) and Grant (1992) in that SEPEP offered low-skilled (often female) students positive PE experiences. The volleyball class at Connell Primary comprised mainly female students, who were considered generally less athletic and less popular than their peers, who had chosen to play basketball and soccer. The makeup of the volleyball group meant that comparison with higher skilled students, which can cause alienation of low-skilled students in PE classes (Carlson, 1995a; Portman, 1995) was less of an issue for these students. The motivational climate promoted by Ms Jenson supported fairplay, effort and improvement, rather than focusing on ability, which can alienate low skilled students (Wigfield & Harold, 1992). Feelings of isolation in this study were from male students who were not considered low-skilled, but were unhappy with being the only boys in their volleyball teams, which in turn negatively affected their own and their team mates' participation and attitude.

In this study, many students regarded PE as not much more than a break from working in the classroom and some did not think they learned anything, both before and after SEPEP implementation. This is not surprising considering the focus teacher, Ms Jenson's previous approach to teaching PE and the effects of her lack of knowledge and expertise, which were evident during the SEPEP volleyball season. Nevertheless, after SEPEP implementation, a number of the recorded changes in perceptions of PE appeared to indicate that, for at least some students, PE had become more "real" (Carlson, 1998).

In conclusion, recommendations regarding the implementation of SEPEP are



outlined below. These suggestions apply to the context of the current study. They arose from discussions with Ms Jenson and students in the Crazy Critters team and from recommendations in the literature.

### 1. Greater initial teacher direction in SEPEP.

A more teacher-directed approach is advised for the initial SEPEP sessions, before the students begin to assume ownership for the program. Particularly for those new to the SEPEP format and with primary aged students, guidance is needed for students on, for example, how to perform their roles and introduction to knowledge and skills of the sport they are playing. This supports recommendations in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995). In future SEPEP seasons, Ms Jenson wanted to “take more control, rather than be quite so democratic” in the first few weeks of the program (Teacher interview, 19/6/98).

### 2. Encouragement of school/community links

Teachers can enhance the effectiveness of SEPEP by making use of appropriate members of the community, such as sports development personnel, particularly if they are unfamiliar with the sport they are teaching. Such assistance should be employed early in the season to assist students with coaching, skill development and game modifications. In addition, this can encourage school/community links, as recommended in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995).

### 3. Early introduction of physical activity sessions in SEPEP

In order to maintain initial student and teacher motivation and allow for greater

activity time, organization sessions at the beginning of the SEPEP program should not run for too long. At Connell Primary School, the first two weeks of SEPEP were devoted to organisation. Both students and teachers believed that physical activity sessions should have begun earlier in the term. Although the teachers and many of the students could see benefits in attending to organisational matters, some of the sessions could have been condensed and/or included later. Ms Jenson claimed that in future, where possible, she would "tell them the rules as we go" (Interview, 3/8/98). Future SEPEP seasons with the same teachers and students would also require reduced organisational time.

#### 4. Avoiding isolation of students

Students will have less cause to feel isolated if they are placed in teams with more than one member of the opposite sex. In the case of the Crazy Critters volleyball team, Danny, was unhappy about being the only boy in the team. This was combined with feelings of annoyance at not receiving his first choice of sport. As a result, his behaviour was disruptive and his enjoyment and skill progress were hampered.

#### 5. Integration of SEPEP with other learning areas

The advantages of integration of different learning areas are emphasised in the recently released Curriculum Framework document (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). With a team-teaching approach to SEPEP, similar to that used at Connell Primary, there are fewer opportunities for integration of physical education with other learning areas, compared with when teachers implement the program with their own classes. Nevertheless, with a team approach, it is still possible to employ some of

the integration suggestions mentioned in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995) to increase the meaning, relevance, interest and learning outcomes of the PE program for the students. Ultimately, SEPEP may help convince students that PE is a valuable and “real” subject (Carlson, 1998).

#### 6. Learning from other teachers

Teachers can benefit from discussion of SEPEP implementation with their peers. Ms Jenson valued the professional relationships formed as a result of the team teaching approach used to implement SEPEP at Connell Primary. She was able to tap in on the PE teaching experience and expertise of Mr Irvine and Mr Green. In turn, Ms Jenson was able to contribute to the program in other ways. Ms Jenson also found the input from other teachers at the SEPEP workshop particularly useful. Continued consultation with these teachers or with others with experience in using SEPEP can be beneficial.

#### 7. Attending to student thoughts and feelings in PE classes.

Finally, this study reaffirms the importance of paying attention to student thoughts and feelings in PE classes (Gibbons & Bresnan, 1991; Graham, 1995b; Sanders, 1996). Methods such as diaries, questioning and discussion can give the teacher valuable information about the outcomes of their PE teaching programs, as well as enhancing students' self-awareness. In turn, student approach tendencies towards physical activity can be better assessed and attended to.

## Conclusion

Results of this study suggest that SEPEP can change both student and teacher attitudes towards PE and that this model is well suited to upper primary classes. In contrast to the school studied by Carlson and Hastie (1997), prior to SEPEP implementation, many students at Connell Primary did not enjoy their PE classes and perceived little or no learning in PE. However after a season of SEPEP, students were much more positive and also noted more learning outcomes of the program, such as skills, teamwork and cooperation. It would be of interest to investigate if student attitudes remained as positive after a number of seasons of the program.

The focus teacher in this study is typical of many primary school generalist teachers who, whilst competent in the classroom, lack confidence, training and expertise in teaching PE. It is heartening that Ms Jenson claimed to enjoy teaching PE more with a SEPEP approach, finding it less taxing, yet more rewarding in terms of student outcomes. Her background meant that she would have benefited from additional assistance with the implementation. Further study of SEPEP implementation by generalist primary school teachers with limited PE backgrounds would be worthwhile. Also it would be interesting to investigate alterations or additions to the initial implementation of SEPEP. For example, school/community links and integration with other learning areas could be incorporated, as suggested in the SEPEP manual (Alexander et al., 1995). Curriculum innovations that extend student learning in PE, such as that described by Hickey (1995a), could supplement the program.

This study supports the notion that researchers and physical educators can

benefit from studying student perceptions. In order to promote a PE that is responsive to needs, interests and abilities of students, teachers are encouraged to use student thoughts to contribute to their evaluation/reflection process.

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## APPENDICES

	page no
A Student Questionnaires	202
B Teacher Questionnaires	209
C Field Notes Extract	215
D Class Discussion - Sample Extract	217
E Student Interview – Sample Extract	220
F Teacher Interview – Sample Extract	223
G Ethics Approval	226
H Letter to Parents	228
I Connell Primary School Performance Indicators	231

## APPENDIX A      STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

PHYSICAL EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE I  
YEAR SEVEN STUDENTS

1. What are you doing now in physical education classes (Friday sport?)

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---

2. (a) How do you feel about doing Friday sport?  
(Circle the one that suits you).



Really like a lot



Like



Unsure



Dislike



Really don't like

- (b) Give your reasons for feeling like this.

---

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3. What other physical education activities are you doing with your classroom teacher (eg in fitness, other games)?

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4. How do you feel about the other physical education you are doing with your classroom teacher? (Circle the one that suits you).



Really like a lot



Like



Unsure



Dislike



Really don't like

- (b) Give your reasons for feeling like this.

---

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5. (a) What do you think is the best thing about school physical education?

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- (b) What is your least favourite thing about school physical education?

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6. What sorts of things do you learn in your physical education classes?

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7. Do you talk about what you do in physical education with the teacher when you are in the classroom?

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8. (a) What organised sports do you play after school or on the weekends?  
(Include any physical activities, such as gymnastics, dance, karate, etc.).

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- (b) What do you think is the best thing about community sport?

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(c) What is your least favourite thing about community sport?

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9. What are some of the other things you usually do after school?

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10. (a) Do you think you are good at sport?

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(b) Why?

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11. Do you have any further comments about things you like or dislike about school physical education?

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE 2  
YEAR SEVEN STUDENTS

1. What are you doing now in physical education classes (Friday sport)?

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- 2.(a) How do you feel about doing Friday sport? (Circle the one that suits you).



Really like a lot



Like



Unsure



Dislike



Really don't like

- (b) Give your reasons for feeling like this.

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3. (a) How do you feel about the training sessions you have been doing during the week? (Circle the one that suits you).



Really like a lot



Like



Unsure



Dislike



Really don't like

- (b) Give your reasons for feeling like this.

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4. (a) How do you feel about the other roles you had to do? Eg, coach/umpire. (Circle the one that suits you).



Really like a lot



Like



Unsure



Dislike



Really don't like

- (b) Give your reasons for feeling like this.

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5. (a) What do you think is the best thing about school physical education?

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- (b) What is your least favourite thing about school physical education?

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6. What sorts of things do you learn in your sport education classes?

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7. Do you talk about what you do in physical education with the teacher when you are in the classroom?

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8. (a) Do you think you are good at sport?

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- (b) Why?

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9. Do you have any further comments about things you like or dislike about school physical education or about the new sport education programme?

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## APPENDIX B

## TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE I  
YEAR SEVEN TEACHERS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Briefly outline your teaching background (experience, years taught, etc).

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2. What is your background with regard to physical education teaching?

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3. Outline any involvement that you have had with sport, both in the community and at school, in your life thus far (for example, as a player, spectator, parent, coach).

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4. How do you feel about teaching physical education to your class?

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5. What activities do you like / dislike teaching in physical education? (Categories could include gym/dance, fitness, sport, games, outdoor education).

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6. How is physical education currently organised for your class (ie time allocation, types of activities taught, fitness, etc.)? Please attach any supporting documentation.

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7. Describe how a "typical" physical education session is run with your class.

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8. What are your thoughts about the students' responses, behaviour and learning outcomes that do or do not occur in your physical education sessions?

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**PHYSICAL EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE 2  
YEAR SEVEN TEACHERS**

1. What sport did you teach in term 2, 1998?

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2. Why did you choose to teach this sport?

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3. Please note down your thoughts/opinions about the following aspects of your Sport Education sessions:

(a) Learning outcomes (students):

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(b) Student responses in game sessions:

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(c) Student responses/behaviour in training sessions:

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(d) How students responded to their roles (coach, manager, etc):

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(e) Your role as the teacher in sport education:

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(f) Length of the "season":

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(g) Assessment:

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4. What do you think the students thought about Sport Education?

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APPENDIX C      FIELD NOTES – SAMPLE EXTRACT



**Thursday 14 May**  
**Observation of a volley ball training session**

The coaches have all been given a sheet with some drills written on them. Ms Jenson is not here at the moment. They have another male teacher in who seems to know quite a bit about the program. He is giving them an introductory chat about what they should be doing in the session - training, rather than just playing games, and the children have been divided into their teams and are getting organised for the session.

The students in my team have been given an extra person; I am not sure whether that is just for today. Students did a lap of the court, and now they are doing some stretches. I am focusing on Danny today mainly. He is the only boy in the group of six. He started warming up without the girls, started doing stretches on his own. He seems a little bit lost in a group of girls.

They are doing a little activity called 'clock', where they are throwing or doing little serves, more like handball, running in and out. Danny has quite a bit of input in telling everyone how to do the activity.

Next activity: Danny is giving a few suggestions, like 'put the ball up higher'. They are trying to keep the ball up in a circle. Students using volleys and scooped up hits - not digs.

Third activity: Another handball activity, which is handballing across at each other across the circle. Handball, by the way, is not a volleyball skill! Now they are moving across to the net.

Students are now doing a serve and catch over the net. Danny disappeared for a while, I think it was to get a drink. Danny has just suggested another activity. He goes off, gets a ball, but there is no activity, just a bit of moving around. Now they are playing piggy in the middle. Again this is not related to volleyball - perhaps they don't know that. All involved and seem to be enjoying the activity.

The session ended, students had a drink, packed up, and went to their classrooms. I will now interview Danny.



**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May**  
**Class discussion on volleyball team sizes**

Ms Jenson: My original thought was that we would have five teams and five players. That is when I had 25 people. How that was going to work, as Mr Robertson said, two teams would be playing each other at any one time, and the left over team, called the duty team, and from that team I would get 2 umpires, 2 scorers and first aid officer. So they would umpire these teams that were playing. The problem that we have now is that we have 30 students. Here is what I want you guys to help me work out. We have got 30 students .... I just want you to talk about that with the people around you. I'll give you a few options. Think about how many you need in a team, think about how many teams we can have. I'll give you one minute to talk about it in your groups.

The students are asked for their ideas.

Female: 5 teams of six.

Ms Jenson: Any other ideas? Yes, Scott, six teams of five.

Male: 2 teams of 15. (clapping).

Ms Jenson: Jessie is saying if we have an even number of teams, Jessie is saying that we won't have any one left over to do the umpiring or scoring, so that poses a questions. Do you understand that? If we play with 4 teams, 6 teams or 2 teams they can each be playing each other but there is no one left to umpire or score.

Talking over each other.

Male: 3 teams of 10, and then you could have two teams playing each other and one team doing the scoring.

Ms Jenson: Okay, three is an option. Any other options?

Male: I've got a question about ... with two teams of fifteen, there wouldn't be much contest.

Ms Jenson: Can we wipe off the two teams of 15 then?

Yes.

Ms Jenson: What about three groups of ten? Let me tell you what my reservations are about three groups of ten. One would be that we really could use .. is to be getting fitter and participating more in a sport. Now if you are one of ten, it is much easier for you to slip back. It is much easier for you to do that if there are 10 people and the team isn't so reliant on them. They are not getting fit that way either, so I think having 10 in a team is a bit of a problem.

Male: Having five teams of five, which is twenty five, that leaves five for umpiring.

Ms Jenson: No, it doesn't but it's a good thought. If we have five teams, four of them playing, and one team is already doing the scoring ....

Male: ... does that mean that five people would never get a game?

Class continues discussing team sizes.

Now move in to the duty each player will have. It has been decided to have five teams of six.

Ms Jenson: I want you to think about who is going to make the decisions around this.

Female: inaudible.

Ms Jenson: Jess has suggested that we need three good players and three not so good players might go in one team. Kirsten and Jason perhaps you both need to leave. You are both being silly. But who makes the decision about how good they are, and which teams they go in?

Male: The people you pick to help you.

Ms Jenson: So do you think we need a volleyball Sports Board, perhaps three students and me on a Sports Board and we decide which students to in to which teams. Do you think that is the fairest way?

Yes.

Ms Jenson: Do I get to decide? Or do I say to your guys go and make five groups of six.

Male: Does that mean that all five boys or all girls can just go into a group?

Ms Jenson: Okay, let's have a vote on that about how we decide who is going to work out the teams. Go and make five groups of six. Do you think I should decide on my own in the comfort of my own lounge room? Do you think the Sports Board should decide? Okay, the Sports Board is the way we will go.

(End of Extract)



**Thursday, 25 June**  
**Interview with Lisa**

Joan: What did you think about the way you did sport this term? How was it different?

Lisa: Well, our teachers didn't just order us around, we had to figure out what to do by ourselves and how to play the actual game.

J: So the kids were more involved were they?

L: Yes.

J: Did you like it better than the other way of doing sport?

L: Yes, it was better.

J: Why did you think it was better?

L: Because we could do all the training things that we wanted to do, all the topics, and learn how to get the ball up in the air our own way, if we did it a teacher's way it probably wouldn't be as good for us.

J: Were there any bad things about the way that you did sport, anything that you didn't like?

L: Not really. You would rather be with friends.

J: So you can see that it is probably the best way to do it, but if you had a choice, you would be with your friends?

L: Yes.

J: That's fair enough. What did you think about the training sessions in general?

L: They were a bit boring, I'd rather play games all the time, because that is more challenging. And there's not many training things to do, because we don't know many things, we just tapped the ball over the net.

J: So do you think you could have had more help, the coaches could have had more training ideas?

L: That would have been easier.

J: What did you think about your team, how they go on, and everything, I know you had your ups and downs, so be honest, because no one else will hear this.

L: Well at the start we won the first game which was pretty good and then all the rest of the games we lost and in that time, we didn't like our coach, because all the

people in my team thought she was bossy and she wouldn't let us have ideas and try them out. So we wanted to change the coach.

J: Did you speak to anyone about it, did you speak to Miss Jenson about it?

L: No. Just amongst ourselves. But it turned out all right.

J: You ended up winning. Why do you think you came from the bottom to the top?

L: Well I guess we learnt how to work things out. We were sick of losing so we really wanted to try harder.

J: That was everybody in the team?

L: Yes. Mary and then Natalie and me too. Because I told them, hit the ball up more and hit it harder, and they ended up getting it.

J: Were they the ones that weren't the best in the team at the start?

L: Yes.

J: And they improved?

L: They improved heaps.

J: What about you? Do you think you got any better at playing the game?

L: Yes, I haven't really played volleyball much, so the first couple of times I played it properly, and I think I'm really good at it.

J: That's good. So are you interested in playing it in the future maybe?

L: Yes, but I don't like serving. At the start of the season I was really, really good at serving, but I'm just not good at it any more for some reason.

J: It might be something you are just going through. What did you do besides being a player, you were captain weren't you?

L: Yes, I was captain. I didn't have to do much except choose heads or tails or which end.

J: Would you have liked to have done something that involved a bit more?

L: Not really. The team was good how it was. All I really needed to do was play the game.

(End of extract)





**Friday 19 June**  
**Interview with Ms Jenson**

Joan: What do you do during the games sessions, what do you see as your role?

Ms Jenson: To enthuse them, to encourage them if they are doing the right thing. Sometimes when I see them, like someone was carrying a minute ago, and I said to them, you can't do it like that, you have to hold your hand up, so just quickly at the sidelines, I give them a bit of guidance. And also help with the rules if the ball hits the net on the way over when it is a serve, that's out straight away. And also, the people who are weaker at serving could come in a few steps, and James said, but what if kids are obviously good servers, like Sam coming half way, what does he do about that? So I just said, if you know someone like Sam can serve well, then they have to go back.

Joan: What about the training sessions, what is your role in the training sessions?

Ms Jenson: Basically what I have been doing in the training sessions is letting them see how far they can go themselves, and I've tried to give them ideas, handed out sheets with skills on them, and talked to the coaches about the kind of things they can be doing with them, so I've guided them in that way, but then I've sort of let them go and see how it all works. When things haven't been working well, we have had a meeting, and we have talked about what is going on. But, guidance really. I worry about deliberately showing them skills and stuff, because I don't feel that I am good enough at them myself. The other thing I worry about is showing them a way that might hurt them. While I know it is probably easy enough to go to a book or something and find out which are the right skills, it's one of those things that you don't get time to do. And often the kids know pretty well themselves, because they have been doing things like that on the weekends.

Joan: You said before that volleyball, a lot of children don't know much about it, whereas basketball and soccer they do.

Ms Jenson: Yes, I guess I was talking more about the warm-up exercises, rather than the actual skills for volleyball.

Joan: How are the kids responding to their roles?

Ms Jenson: Some kids have really taken it on board and done a particularly good job, other kids have basically thought, oh well there's not much in this for me, and basically doing nothing. Particularly the recording officer in the teams, although I have told them what it is I want them to do, only one person has done a really good job, and that's Sarah, who has been taking care of the scoreboard.

Joan: What about the other roles, have they been reasonably well done?

Ms Jenson: I don't think anyone has really excelled in their role, but I think that comes down to the kind of kids that we've got in the volleyball group, they are not born leaders, they are not the sort of kids who are usually in their roles, they are not comfortable with them.

Joan: So your expectations would be a bit lower?

Ms Jenson: Yes, they are a bit lower.

Joan: Attitude of the kids?

Ms Jenson: The attitude of the kids has been really good. When we started they were really enthusiastic, they really wanted to get on with it. I think a real lull last week and probably a bit in the week before that as well, especially the boys have decided that this is a game for girls, and one by one each of them has really spat the dummy, without exception, all of them have done that. Jay has been appalling on some occasions, today he is excellent. Then the girls started doing their block, Sally and Kerry decided they weren't going to play, so that's a bit of a shame. This week they have all really been pumped up, with the semi-finals, they are playing very well.

(End of extract)



9 April 1998

**Committee for the Conduct of Ethical Research**

Dear Ms Strikwerda-Brown

**Re: Ethics Approval**

**Code:** 98-27

**Project Title:** *Student and Teacher perceptions of a season of sport education:  
A case study in a regional primary school*

This is to confirm that the executive approval given for the implementation of your research project has now been ratified by the full Committee.

Once again, with best wishes for success in your study.

Yours sincerely

**ROD CROTHERS**

**Executive Officer**

**Attachment : Conditions of Approval**



To Parent/Guardian

I am a staff member and student at Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus, undertaking research at Connell Primary School, mainly in Semester One, 1998.

Students will be observed during their physical education classes and selected students will be interviewed about their thoughts and opinions of the activities.

The interview will be audiotaped. I may need to ask further questions to clarify my interpretations at a later date.

Permission has been granted by the school principal and the class teacher, but your approval in writing is also required by the University. Please complete the consent form attached and return it to the class teacher as soon as possible.

Students who do not wish to participate in these interviews will not be disadvantaged within the physical education class.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Joan Strikwerda-Brown**

I, ..... give permission for my child,  
..... to participate in sport education  
interviews.

I am aware that results of the research may be published, provided interviewees and  
family

names are not disclosed.

Participant Signature: ..... Date:  
.....

Parent/Guardian Signature: ..... Date:  
.....

**APPENDIX I**

**CONNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

**INDICATORS**



## **CONNELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Performance Indicators**

The success of Connell Primary School in fulfilling its purpose will be indicated by the extent to which:

Students develop effective literacy skills.

Students develop effective mathematical skills.

Students develop an ability to find and use information.

Students develop an approach to learning which is both receptive and critical.

Students develop an understanding of their historical, social and cultural contexts.

Students develop an understanding of the natural world and of scientific principle.

Students develop an appreciation of, and confidence to participate in, the creative and practical arts.

Students develop a concern for, and an understanding of how to achieve, physical health and well-being.

Students develop respect for the rights of others.

Students develop personal qualities of self-acceptance, initiative and self-confidence.

Students develop a capacity to use technology.

Students develop an ability to communicate in a language other than English.

**An ability to work cooperatively with others.**

**The ability to apply problem solving skills.**