This is the published version of a chapter published in *Researching Embodied Sport: Exploring Movement Cultures*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Lundvall, S., Schantz, P. (2016)  
200 years of physical education teacher education: An overview of movement practices  
In: Ian Wellard (ed.), *Researching Embodied Sport: Exploring Movement Cultures*  
(pp. 30-46). Oxon, England: Routledge  
Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:  
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:gih:diva-4165
4 200 years of physical education
teacher education

An overview of movement practices

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**Introduction**

In research about physical education teacher education (PETE) or physical education in normal schools (PE) the question of which bodily movement practices were to be developed and practised has not always been paid attention to. Instead, focus has often been placed on the consequences of or risks with educational discourses, the assessment of abilities, as well as the influence of gender on teaching and learning (see e.g. Evans, 2013; Evans and Penney, 2008; Macdonald and Hay, 2010; Redelius *et al.*, 2009; Gard and Wright, 2006). The aim of this text is therefore to analyse how bodily movement cultures have changed, remained, faded or disappeared. This can provide knowledge about how the body has been considered and experienced in the context of PETE and PE.

PE has, since it was established at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had an ongoing battle concerning how to gain the greatest and longest benefits for mind and body (Pfister, 2003). These conflicts and tensions have been noted between physical cultures and nations representing different points of view about the legitimate agenda of PE, but conflicts have also been noted within nations and educational institutions (Kirk, 2010; Vertinsky, 2010; Schantz, 2009; Morgan, 2006; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003; Pfister, 2003; Schantz and Nilsson, 1990; Korsgaard, 1989). To illuminate these issues of tensions between physical cultures, a macro level overview has been used to illustrate changes in values and practices within the oldest still PETE program in the world, namely the one at the former Royal Gymnastic Central Institute (GCI), now named the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, GIH, in Stockholm, Sweden. Apart from studies based on empirical data from this PETE institution, the overview also makes use of international literature on physical culture and health. In the concluding part of this chapter, the present-day situation is discussed, in terms of tensions and disagreements on the embodiment of a physical active body, content issues and future challenges for PETE and school PE.

**A model of bodily movement practices**

A model is used to illustrate the multiplicity of different forms of deliberate bodily movement practices with distinctly different meaning making principles (logic of
practices) (Schantz and Nilsson, 1990; Lundvall and Schantz, 2013) (Figure 4.1). It also pays attention to the construction of gender. Different principles for bodily movement practices are oriented in the model spatially in relation to the described rationality underpinning each practice. Sport activities, based on the logic of competition and measurement, are placed in the traditionally male-dominated domain. Aesthetic and expressive forms of physical activities, such as artistic forms of dance, are placed in the traditionally female-dominated domain. Ling gymnastics, fitness gymnastics, play, outdoor life and everyday physical activities are placed in a traditionally gender neutral position. None of these latter forms of movement practices are underpinned by measurement/competition or driven by aesthetics and expressiveness. The enhancement of different physical qualities through physical training can support the conducting of all movement practices in the model, and are therefore placed at the bottom of the model, with arrows signalling their possible supportive nature to all other movement practices.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.1** Model illustrating the multiplicity of different forms of deliberate bodily movement practices with distinctly different meaning making principles (logic of practices) as well as gender in a traditional context (source: modified from Schantz and Nilsson, 1990).

**Note**
The years indicated at the beginning and end of the periods should be read as approximate indications of time.
By marking the relative time devoted to different movement practices during distinctly different temporal phases, a flow of continuity and discontinuity emerges. It demonstrates what forms of bodily movement practices were sought for and given a value, and the possible consequences of the documented continuity and discontinuity will be discussed.

The distinction of five phases of different bodily movement practices in the Swedish PETE is based on a doctoral thesis where annual reports, steering documents and the relative amount of time devoted to different movement practices during different time periods were examined (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003). These data have also helped to identify the contextual factors of importance for understanding the changes described. In summary, the five phases are: (i) the establishment and development of Ling gymnastics (1813–1900), (ii) the introduction of sport and outdoor life, as well as the rise of a separate female PETE culture (1900–1960), (iii) the end of Ling gymnastics, the fall of a female movement culture, and the orientation towards fitness gymnastics (1960–1980), (iv) sport developing into the dominant physical culture (1980–2000), and finally, (v) the introduction of everyday life physical activities (2000–) (see Figures 4.1–4.6).

Contexts of emergence, continuity and discontinuity of bodily movement practices

The emergence of PETE in Sweden

The early 1800s was a time open for new concepts about the training of the body. This process that was connected to the Enlightenment and the growing importance of rational thinking and acting, as well as the faith in scientific thinking, made it possible for new concepts and ideals to develop, including a specific body exercise culture of PE (Pfister, 2003). The institutional setting for Swedish gymnastics came about when Per Henrik Ling was given permission to establish the Royal GCI (today GIH) in 1813. This was also the starting point for the emergence of PETE in Sweden. Ling wanted to provide a system on a theoretical basis and resting on philanthropic ideas, ‘the philosophy of nature’, inspired by Rousseau and GutsMuths, where the intellect could be developed through the senses and action. The other basis for his system was that it aimed at resting on the ‘laws of the human body’ and on knowledge gained from studies of the human body. His thinking resulted in certain ideas about the practising of movements and schooling of the body, tightly linked to Lings’ ethical and aesthetic ideals, and to perspectives of health regarded as a wholeness, expressed through balance and symmetry. Sport was not a part of Ling’s system of physical exercise in PETE (Lindroth, 2004, 1993/1994; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003; Ljunggren, 2000; Ling, 1840).

Ling aimed at developing a gymnastic system with four subdisciplines: military, pedagogical, medical and aesthetic gymnastics. Hence, Swedish gymnastics came to be seen not only as a system for the purpose of educating the
whole body, but also as a cure for the sick. Aesthetic gymnastics, which was defined as a means ‘whereby one expresses the inner self: thoughts and emotions’ (Ling, 1840, p. 50), was subjected to only minor developmental attempts in terms of how gestures could be used to show an idea or a feeling (Hartelius, 1863; Nyblaeus, 1882). This chapter focuses on pedagogical gymnastics, which was defined as the means ‘whereby one learns to master one’s own body’ (Ling, 1840, p. 52). The gymnastics should reflect health, beauty and good posture onto the individuals executing them, and make the body ‘fit for use’. Competition was, as stated above, not the aim or the medium of this specific movement practice, and was not included in the praxeology.

From early on, Ling stated that women should be included in this bodily exercise, in a feminine type of gymnastics. However, this type of gymnastics was never developed by Ling himself, but later through the work of his son, Hjalmar Ling, who gave examples of simple forms of gymnastics for female students (Lindroth, 2004; Carli, 2004; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003). Throughout the first hundred years at GCI, the teacher training of male and female students, both in theory and practice, was focused around gymnastics as the bodily movement form for schooling and disciplining the body, as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

**Tensions and conflicts around the Ling gymnastics system**

In the early 1900s, the scientific basis of the Ling gymnastic system was strongly questioned. This critique was primarily based on scientific studies of a specific movement that was claimed by the Ling gymnasts to enlarge the vital capacity and thereby improve the oxygen uptake (Lindhård, 1926; Schantz, 2009; Söderberg, 1996). In spite of this tension created by the accusation of a non-scientific bodily movement practice, the Ling gymnastics system kept its position as the main body exercise system until approximately the middle of the twentieth century in comprehensive schools in Sweden (Lundquist Wanneberg, 2004) as well as in other countries (Kirk, 2010). One explanation for this long survival in Sweden was both its strong institutionalisation, and existing views of body, health and physical culture; a strong health and hygiene discourse aiming at defeating, e.g. infectious diseases and crooked bodily positions, and the strengthening of character through education (Bonde, 2006; Palmblad and Ericsson, 1995). This health and hygiene discourse, and the tight relation between pedagogical and physiotherapeutic gymnastics, gave legitimacy to Swedish gymnastics. Furthermore, this type of bodily exercise also encompassed PE for girls, which, over the years, led to a strong female PETE culture. From a societal perspective, this suited the task of PE very well. The alternatives for bodily exercise and the schooling of girls’ bodies were few in number at that time (Carli, 2004; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003). Thus, in this respect, sports could not compete with Ling gymnastics.
Figure 4.2 The bodily movement practice in PETE during 1813–1900.

Note
Ling gymnastics was developed and established during this period, as is indicated by the one and only grey field, which signifies teaching time allocation to this specific bodily movement practice. It represented the content in both the male and female PETE (female PETE was established from 1864) (cf. Drakenberg et al., 1913).

From gymnastics to sports – the sportification of PETE in Sweden

During the first half of the 1900s, sport with its logic of competition, as part of the bodily movement culture at GCI, was introduced and expanded gradually to, initially, obtain an equal part of the PETE training practice as compared to Ling gymnastics. When, during the 1950s–1960s, Ling gymnastics rapidly lost its dominant position, that role was overtaken by sport (cf. Figure 4.3). From the mid-1960s the studying hours for courses in sport disciplines started to outnumber those for gymnastics (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003).

To comprehend these changes in physical practices in the PETE field, it is important to understand how sport as a physical culture spread during late 1800s and 1900s both in Sweden and globally. A vast amount of literature has described how the rise of organised sports took off in such an emphatic way as it did. Undoubtedly, there is, as Pfister notes, ‘a connection between the rise of sport and the adoption of values, standards and structures of industrialisation – including
rationality, technological progress, the abstract organisation of time and an economy aimed at accumulation of capital' (Pfister, 2003, p. 71). Linked to these societal processes was also the reformation of the public school systems, which required a system for the changing ideals of manliness, where the idealisation of fair play together with the appreciation of individual achievement and to take on a competitive nature represented values sought for (Mangan, 1981a, 1981b). The average man was superior to the average women, where women were seen as weaker and lacking potential (Pfister, 2003; Wright, 1996). Sport represented a rationalised body culture, which valued a disciplined lifestyle, ceding a control of the body, with the body as a machine-metaphor present (Shilling, 2008). Darwinism also played an important role in the forming of sports ideology (Sandblad, 1985).

In Sweden, the breakthrough for the establishment of the sports movement came when the first sports organisation became state financed (1913) and a part of the society’s social and moral programme (cf. Lindroth, 2004). As the support grew during the first decades of the 1900s, sport was taken on by PETE as well as in PE in schools. The underlying principles of Ling gymnastics became thereby less exclusive, of less value, and were less sought after. Representatives from Ling gymnastics were surprised that sport, which earlier had been for the upper classes, suddenly was supposed to be available to the wider masses (Lindroth, 2004).

The spread of sport in Sweden after the Second World War was also accompanied by the influences of a new type of physical training, circuit training, originally emerging from military needs. These influences brought in new principles concerning how the training of the body was to be planned and performed (Morgan and Adamson, 1961). Effective and rational training in short periods of time, and possible to execute in small spaces, was in many ways revolutionary compared to the more complicated exercise programme in gymnastics. The emergence of exercise science (cf. Åstrand and Rodahl, 1970), not least with regard to aerobic conditioning, gave sport and fitness training further legitimacy at GCI (Schantz, 2009). At first the principles for training represented by ‘circuit training’ were implemented as part of male gymnastic training at the institute.

Alongside the sportification process, the female branch of Ling gymnastics challenged its traditional practice from the beginning of the 1900s, being influenced by both an elaborated theory of body and rhythm, and the concept of effort saving (Laine, 1989). During this time there was what Vertinsky calls, ‘the transatlantic traffic’, an exchange of thoughts and methods aiming at creating space for forms of expressive movement such as dance and aesthetic gymnastics in PE (Vertinsky, 2009). Their ideological underpinnings and gendered forms are not well documented. But ideas can be traced from Delsartes and Dalcroze, and prominent figures in dance like Duncan, Laban and others (Vertinsky, 2009; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003).

In Sweden, these influences, involving a break with stiff traditional floor-standing gymnastics, met opposition and resistance (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003; Forsman and Möberg, 1990), although it could be modified to be in line
with Ling's intentions concerning the aesthetic branch of his system. However, it was not possible to stop this development and change of logic towards aesthetics in the field of PETE (see Figure 4.3). Another process demonstrating elasticity in the application of the principles of Ling during the early 1900s was the development of PE and children's gymnastics towards a more natural and child-centred way of moving, away from drill and command. Pioneers among female PETE sought to find a new pedagogy, with a dynamic and freedom that encouraged an aesthetic attention to the body (Falk, 1903, 1913).

The nature of the female aesthetics gymnastics that developed came to embody values of emotions, expressiveness and how to put one's soul into the movements, in order to liberate the body and provide space for self-education (Carli, 2004; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2002; Laine, 1989). The performing of movements was characterised by sensitivity, adaptability, body awareness and expression. There was a focus on the educational value of skill development and performance, the value of practising in the context of movement. This was part of enabling women to learn about and enjoy their physicality (Vertinsky, 2010). This type of body schooling, based on what we today would call a subjective experiencing of the body (body-as-subject), provided cultural, physical and symbolic capital, which did not challenge the existing ideals of the female body at that time. For the early pioneers of female PETE culture, health and stamina formed part of the culture, and there seem not to have been any problems with combining aesthetics with these virtues (Vertinsky, 2010; Fletcher, 1984). The modern woman prototype sought for was a woman who was athletic yet graceful, strong but not overly muscled, a figure of both past and present (Vertinsky, 2010, 2009). The interest for aesthetics and performance in which the body's presence was central led to certain forms of body techniques and practices. The pedagogy used underpinned how the body was supposed to be contemplated and experienced. These forms of movement practising supported the meaning making of how an efficient and healthful mode of physical training could be executed (for girls and women). It was not dance as art, but rather was called aesthetical, or rhythmical gymnastics. During the years from 1940s to 1970s this practising of aesthetical gymnastics was given space in the time allotment of the female PETE programme at GCI/GIH in Sweden. This is well illustrated in film recordings from the time. Both the above mentioned processes must be acknowledged as mechanisms for the understanding of the long survival of Swedish gymnastics in the female PETE programmes and in school PE. A corresponding development of male Ling gymnastics at the institution was not the case (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003).

The popularity and success of the spread of the practising sport can be considered easy to understand yet, at the same time, complex. In regard to the former principles for the education of body and mind, it is interesting how sport, with its meaning making principles of competition and specialisation of skills, the training of the body as an object with little room for contingency (Shilling, 2008) could fit in so easily and replace the old virtues of the educating of the body, seeing health as wholeness, without the dualism of body and soul. The introduction of outdoor life in PETE during the period of 1900–1960 (Figure 4.2) can be understood in
relation to the organisational phase of outdoor life in the late 1800s and beginning of the 1900s. It reflects a need for new identities due both to the great demographic changes with the strong urbanisation processes during this time period, but also to the concomitant nationalism and strong surge for new national identities. In this identification process, love for nature as well as skiing came out as strong components of the identity profile for Swedes (cf. Sandell and Sörlin, 2008).

**From two gender related PETE cultures to one – a merging with consequences**

During the 1970s, political striving for equal rights and employment in Sweden led to a questioning of the organisation of gender-separated PETE programmes for male and female students. Suddenly old ideals stood beside new ones. The process of integration of the male and female PETE cultures, as well as the sportification process of bodily movement practices, led to a new gender order, and a loss of not only the female gymnastics culture, but also to a marginalisation of the female PE pedagogical culture (Carli, 2004; Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003; Schantz and Nilsson, 1990) (cf. Figures 4.3 and 4.4). For corresponding changes in other countries, see Kirk (2010), Wright (1996) and O’Sullivan et al. (2002). Furthermore, the time allotted to courses in gymnastics decreased substantially after the coeducation reform of 1977 (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2003). The long tradition of female PETE culture, together with school PE steering documents prevented a total termination (Mattsson and Lundvall, 2013). Courses in dance, music and movement remained, although as a very minor part of the coeducational PETE study programme, but were aimed more and more at fitness gymnastics, such as workouts and aerobics (Figure 4.4). Former practices, with their underlying principles of aesthetics faded and became simplified.

In GCI/GIH, the proportion of practical courses decreased, from being the major part of the study programmes during the early 1900s to becoming more peripheral; from 80 per cent of the total study time in the 1920s, to 70 per cent of the courses during the 1960s, to less than 15 per cent some 90 years later (Meckbach and Lundvall, 2013; Tolgfor, 1979). A parallel academisation process of PETE took place in general, and globally, after the 1970s (see e.g. Tinning, 2010; Kirk, 2010; Kirk et al., 1997).

**Everyday life physical activity as bodily movement practice – disagreements in modern times**

Coming into the late twentieth century, new and other practices of bodily movement, less constructed, were demanded. Recommended amounts and levels of physical activity were distributed in 1996 by the CDC in the United States (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). This way of thinking about children’s and young peoples’ needs for physical activity bore in some ways a resemblance to former medical arguments for the prevention of disease and for the curing of the sick that had started nearly 200 years earlier.
Everyday life physical activity as a way of thinking gradually became established in society around the beginning of the twenty-first century, originally taken on by stakeholders in public health, actors outside the field of PETE and academic disciplines related to sports (Ainsworth, 2005; McKenzie et al., 1998; Morgan, 2000). What this thinking signalled was a new way in which the body should be taught to move, and was less about ability or the embodiment of movement qualities (Figure 4.5).

Children and adolescents were in need of learning how to become and stay physically active in everyday life (McKenna and Riddoch, 2003; Smith and Biddle, 2008; Trost, 2006). Changes in society had led to a focus on physical inactivity among the population. This scenario developed in spite of the fact that there had never before been so many opportunities for participation in organised sports. An outspoken fear of what physically inactive lifestyles could lead to
among young people (including reports of obesity crises) was strongly communicated (WHO, 2002). Once again, the question of how physical exercise could contribute to the health of a nation’s citizens came up on the agenda.

The desired legitimatising of educational values and logic of practices behind this new way of thinking have so far not been clearly communicated. Given that PE often is thought of as one site in which the body has been made and remade, the emphasis on everyday life physical activity has caused criticism and the rationale behind it has been questioned. Educational sociologists point to the fact that school PE cannot only be driven by a medical risk discourse, or a pathogenic and/or normative way of thinking of physical activity and health (Gard and Wright, 2006, 2001). PE and the practising of movements are much more; it is about how the body is contemplated and experienced, both together with others and alone (Larsson, 2012; Wellard, 2007; Gard, 2008, 2003, 2006). It is about physical self-esteem, body awareness and abilities, personal and social development, questions of democracy, as well as critical aspects of health and health communication (Wellard, 2012; Macdonald and Hay, 2010; Siedentop, 2009;
Evans, 2013, 2004; Evans et al., 2004). This can perhaps explain to some extent why PETE educators have shown a cautious attitude towards how the thinking about everyday life physical activity has been exposed, and how it has been attempted to be implemented. It is too early to describe with any certainty how, and with what, the construction of knowledge around everyday life physical activity will be represented in terms of new or renewed bodily movement practices in the area of PETE, both in general and globally. Hence, it is possible to state that learning sports as the dominant bodily movement practice in PETE programmes and school PE has been challenged.

**Researching an embodied physical culture**

In this chapter we have presented a model aimed at helping to clarify the multiplicity of the underlying principles and dimensions of bodily movement practices, which in turn has led to certain embodied physical cultures in a specific PETE-context in Sweden. The model has been used to illustrate the continuity
and discontinuity of bodily movement practices. Thereafter, the mechanisms and contextual backgrounds to these changes over time have been described. Although, national and cultural differences in how countries organise their PETE programmes and school PE exist, there are reasons to believe that the similarities of the development described outnumber the differences. The scheme of continuity and discontinuity stimulates to a discussion about what values have been gained, what has been lost, and what possible values have not been introduced as part of PETE.

It is apparent that the introduction of new physical activity logics in PETE has sometimes been dependent not only on the meaningfulness of a certain logic, but also on power relations. The introduction of sport is such an example. But we have also noted that there are examples of dramatic changes that have taken place without being intentionally desired or planned for. The very rapid decline of female aesthetical gymnastics in the beginning of the 1980s, as a result of coeducation being introduced, is such an example. Furthermore, Ling gymnastics faded after the Second World War, and with that, so too did the principles of
movement practices aiming at dimensions such as general body awareness, posture and the ability of motor control. Again, these consequences were not foreseen.

Another reflection is that such unforeseen consequences can be very difficult to handle in terms of compensatory pedagogical actions. Two examples have been shown; the aesthetical aspects of a body movement culture surrounding the female PETE, and the invisible educational movement content in relation to everyday life physical activities for children and adolescents. Therefore, it could be suggested that, before changing content in PETE, one should try to create different scenarios to try to counteract any decisions that may have unforeseen effects.

Along the path of gender related issues is also the fact that females taking up different forms of traditionally male dominated sports are positively appraised, whereas attempts in the opposite direction generally are few or absent, and do lack obvious support in the presently governing mental regimes within PETE. Dance, and movement cultures linked to dance, are, so to speak, placed in a box in terms of what one could, should or ought to do with one’s body in the frame of PETE or PE (Wellard, 2007; Gard, 2006).

The existence of a multiplicity of logic of movement practices in the field of physical activity point to distinct values of each of the underlying principles underlying these practices. Similarly, the interaction between different kinds of movement practices and the individual enlarges his/her points of reference related to body, movement and mind. With such a view being a rationale for different physical activities in PETE, one can ask which balances in time allocation are reasonable for attaining a goal of widening the personal experiences and securing ‘breadth’ as an educative value of its own. This has to take into account that most of the PE students of today have a strong personal experience in sports, whereas it is limited in relation to several other physical activity cultures (Brun Sundblad et al., 2010). They have, what Bourdieu would call, a strongly developed taste for sport, having a strong sport habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Engström, 2008).

Another dimension of reflection on the embodiment of PETE content deals with what forms of movement in PE in school may be important for the adult behavioural patterns of physical activity. There is not a lot of longitudinal research on those issues, but there are indications that early socialising into sport activities might not effectively foster a physically active lifestyles among adults. Instead, schooling into a broad movement repertoire, as well as experiences of outdoor life and active commuting appears to be more effective in this respect (Engström, 2008; Yang et al. 2014).

Recent knowledge highlights that in relation to the learning of physical activity and our relations to our bodies, we have to take into account the multiplicity and complexity of peoples’ lives. Context and social interaction play a central role. Children and adolescents are social actors that navigate in the landscape that surrounds a physical movement culture. More attention has to be given to how the ‘embodiment of a healthy citizen’ is constructed. Should the body as
construction be educated through a risk scenario or through the embodiment of a variety of movements, creating relations and acceptance for a continuously changing body throughout life? If so, then there are reasons to pay attention to how the body is contemplated and experienced and what underpinning rationales guide the selection of movement cultures and practices.

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