

Week 5 Figurational Sociology Drama

Caledonia Public Primary School (fictitious name) is in Moss Vale in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. It is a private fee-paying school that opened in 1982 (the beginning of the Physical Education (PE)/Health and Physical Education (HPE) faculty figuration that is the focus of this 'play'). The students tend to be of Western European background and come from the surrounding towns and properties including Sutton Forrest, Bowral and Mittagong. The population of the school is 345 students – K to Year 6. This scene illustrates how the HPE faculty figuration as it exists now, came to be (its sociogenesis).

Head Teacher: Percival (migrated from England 10 years ago and values the Games Ethic that emanated from English private schools from the late 19th century).

In 1982, the following staff comprised the PE Faculty as it was known then:

David (Executive Teacher/Head of Faculty)

Barbara (PE classroom teacher with 20 years' experience and who is also the school netball coach and coaches the school team).

Steve (PE classroom teacher with 5 years' experience and has played cricket at state level).

Peter (PE classroom teacher new to the school – started yesterday - and has played rugby union at national level).

All of the teachers have similar values and beliefs about the central place of Western sport in PE (social habitus).

Scene 1 1983 Week 1 Day 1

PE Faculty Meeting

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David: Good Afternoon everyone and welcome to Term 1 Week 1. I hope that you have all had a great break!! I had a great break. I went to see Simple Minds in Glasgow. It's a city in Scotland. They were awesome. I'd like to especially welcome Peter who started with us yesterday. Okay, I realise that everyone is already flat chat getting their lessons set up for the kids starting next week. That said, I am also conscious that the swimming carnival is just over 5 weeks away (swimming carnivals are a tradition in Australian schools and can be considered privileged content – in other words the content that is valued the most). I need you all to help by taking on some responsibilities to make sure that the carnival will run smoothly (mutual orientation of the individuals in the figuration and an example of their inter-dependency). I need someone to organise the program and race order. It's pretty

straightforward and basically what we have done in previous years (example of how content in the curriculum replicates itself and tends not to change).

Barbara: I'm happy to do that.

David: Okay. Thanks. I also need someone to organise the buses to take the kids to and from school. Who'd like to do that?

Peter: I can do that. I'm keen to get my hands dirty and get right into it.

David: Excellent! Okay, I need someone to look after resources like the bunting, loud hailer, arrange ribbons and trophies and organise the catering. Regarding the latter, the English Faculty are doing that, but I need someone to liaise with them. Steve?

Steve: Yes, no worries. I did it last year.

David: Okay, thanks. That's really it from me. Unless anyone else has anything? I'm keen then for you just to make the best use of time and get your lessons ready for the kids starting next week (everyone starts to move off to their work areas).

Barbara: Can I please have a chat with you David?

David: Sure, no problem.

Barbara: Peter seems really nice. I was chatting to him earlier. He was telling me that he is a rugby player and he also mentioned that he doesn't know much about dance. I thought that you agreed that we would get a new teacher who could teach dance and gymnastics (marginalized content within the PE curriculum, along with games and physical activities from other cultures).

David: Yes, that was my understanding, but Percival (the head teacher) knew Peter and that he was looking for a job and so he got it (the influence of social power within the wider school figuration).

Barbara: That's really disappointing. That means that it will fall back on me again to teach dance and gymnastics. As the only female in the Faculty it's crap that I am seen as 'the expert' when I know as much about it as any of you (another example of social power – this time associated with gender).

Jump nearly 40 years on to Scene 2 2019 Term 1 Week 1 Day 1

HPE Faculty Meeting (example of how the figuration has changed to include Health – was added in the mid-1990s) despite some teachers struggling to adapt to see themselves as teachers of Health as well as PE (example of how their individual habitus is aligned to PE rather than Health).

Sarah (Executive Teacher with 15 years HPE experience and who is a dance and gymnastics expert)

Bob (HPE classroom teacher with 18 years' experience and who loves cricket and is a renowned local batsman).

Jasper (HPE classroom teacher with 6 years' experience who has played volleyball at a National level).

Shade (new HPE graduate that has just joined the school after graduating at UC).

Charlotte (HPE classroom teacher with 12 years' experience and who played football for the Matildas at the last Olympics) (example of how the Australian sports figuration has changed over time to include women's football at all levels).

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Sarah: Hi everyone and welcome on board for 2019. The first thing that I would like to mention is that over the summer the school has decided to rip out the gymnastics wall bars and ropes. I'm really disappointed (none of Sarah's HPE staff seem that bothered showing that they have a habitus that does not value gymnastics. Also, ripping out the wall bars and ropes is an example of a change in the PE figuration towards greater concerns for safety. At one time most primary schools in Western countries had climbing apparatus, ropes etc. These wooden frames/structures have been removed from schools on mass – including at the UC Games Hall as you will see next week).

Jasper: That's not a bad thing as the kids kept banging into the apparatus during volleyball and it seemed to be always set up preventing the space being used for other things (shows that Jasper's habitus is clearly not aligned to gymnastics).

Sarah: I realise how labour intensive it can be putting up the equipment, but I think that it is a really important part of the curriculum. Talking of curriculum, the principal has asked that we include Aboriginal games in our teaching. She has been on some course. I think it was Stronger Smarter or something like that. Jasper, can you please look at how we go about incorporating some of these games? (Sarah exerting her social power in the figuration through virtue of her leadership position).

Jasper: I'd rather not thank you. I don't know anything about them. We were never taught that at uni (Jasper exerting his relative power in the figuration – accepting that Sarah has a higher amount of social power).

Sarah: No-one else knows about them either, so if you could take that on please that would be great. Okay, I need someone to plan Term 2. Anyone?

Charlotte: Yes I'll do it.

Sarah. That's great. Thanks. Jasper, can you work with Charlotte to make sure that we have Indigenous perspectives in Term 2? Okay I think that was all.

Scene 3 2019 Term 2 Week 1 Day 1

Sarah: Welcome back everyone. I hope that you have had a great couple of weeks off. How are things looking for the Term 2 program Charlotte?

Charlotte: Good. I was in most of last week finalizing the program.

Sarah: So does everyone know what they are teaching for Term 2? Jasper, what are we doing about the Indigenous perspectives?

Jasper: I managed to get this resource called Yulunga. It has games written in lesson plan format using the equipment that we already have in PE. There are some great games (sounds surprised). I actually thought that they would be crap, but some of the games are at least as good, if not better than what we do in PE. In fact, there is a game called Buroinjin that looks great that Shady boy told me about, that he learned at uni.

Shade: Yeah, it's a game that incorporates more fundamental movement skills than anything that we play in PE and in the ACT it is mentioned in the ACT Government PE and sport guidelines – the first time in the history of the ACT that there has been an Indigenous game included in these guidelines (example of the ACT figuration changing or modifying to include an Aboriginal game).

Bob: I don't think that we should play Buroinjin or any other Aboriginal game. We have no Indigenous kids at the school anyway. Also, what would we take out from what we do already to fit it in? The curriculum is jam packed as it is. If it was better than the games we already play then all well and good, but I don't see what we could take out to fit it in (example of established group behaviour where a game from another culture is seen as what 'outsider' people do. Outsiders also tend to be stigmatized).

Sarah: Maybe you're right. We're all so busy. It might be better to stick with what we know and what we are good at. Maybe we can do Buroinjin and other Indigenous games another time (this shows the strength of individual habitus and social habitus in deciding what to, and what not to teach. More than likely Indigenous games will not be taught within this faculty because there is an overall social habitus that they are not as good as the existing content).

Shade: We also learned about Ancient history at uni and how that it can be taught in one of the Achievement Standards.

Bob: Ancient history. Are you kidding me? It sounds like they have lost the plot in the 'Nation's Capital'! I think that we should definitely just stick to what we know and what the parents expect us to do. The kids and the parents want us to teach cricket, hockey, netball, AFL and all those sorts of things – quality PE that is good for all students and is what they

know and expect (established group thinking/behaviour and social habitus through the sharing of common beliefs about what PE is and what it is not). We know that works and the kids like it. Many are good at those sports and even if they are not, they still have fun (school children having fun is not the primary aim of PE. There needs to be educative purpose as a key idea in the *Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education* for the subject to have status and credibility). With respect Shade, the people at uni don't know what they are talking about. Most have been out of teaching in actual schools for decades. Forget what you learned at uni! We will teach you what actually works – the skills, progressions and games that the kids enjoy (this perspective shows the strength of habitus and social power. Habitus because broader aims of the *Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education* do not fit with this teacher's narrowly focused beliefs about what PE should be. Effectively they are describing "PE-as-Sport-Techniques" that has remained a mainstay of PE since the middle of the twentieth century. By reducing PE to "PE-as-Sport-Techniques" they are demonstrating social power by only choosing the parts of the curriculum that they value and feel comfortable about teaching).

Shade: Thanks. I'm looking forward to that because we never did any practical at uni. It was all theory (while there is perhaps some truth in Shade's criticism, what the teaching staff value is evidence-based approaches to teaching PE according to its contemporary broad aims underpinned by 'in' 'through' and 'about' PE. Unfortunately, a lot of teachers of PE are not prepared to change with the times and are too emotionally involved in their subject. They lack detachment from their subject to critically reflect on their own practice. In addition, teachers are time poor which is another reason why they don't tend to change their practice).

Scene 4 2019 Term 4 Week 8 Day 2

All the teachers are called to an all school meeting. The principal announces that the school will close this year due to steadily decreasing enrolment numbers. Effectively this is the end of the PE/HPE Faculty at the school (all figurations have a beginning, develop and change. In other words they are dynamic rather than static. The pending closure of the school demonstrates that all figurations come to an end with time).