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TALKING POINT

Too much team sport at school?

A report published by researchers at Loughborough University claims that not enough attention has been given to health-related exercise in British secondary schools. *Pete Hayman* asks whether schools are focusing too heavily on team sports, and what effect this may be having on the lifestyles of young people.

LAURA WEBB researcher, School of Sport and Exercise Science, Loughborough University

School PE is an important tool for promoting health and physical activity among young people, but not all teachers are adequately prepared to encourage their pupils to make informed decisions about healthy, active lifestyles.

We surveyed 112 PE teachers in secondary schools across England and identified inconsistencies in the delivery of health-related exercise (HRE) which was introduced as a statutory component of the PE Curriculum in 1992.

While most teachers value HRE, many tend to focus heavily on team sports rather than more health-related, non-competitive activities which can also provide contexts for learning about health and physical activity.

We found that less than half of the teachers had undertaken any form of training or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in HRE which suggests many rely on their own personal philosophies and those of their school.

As schools up and down the country are given increasing responsibilities to provide opportunities for young people to improve their health and become more active, the lack of support, guidance and CPD that teachers seem to be accessing in this area is worrying.

There is a need to provide more teachers with more opportunities to undertake further training, and as such, allow for an increased emphasis in schools on the importance and scope of HRE.

SPOKESPERSON Department for Children, Schools and Families

We're frankly bemused by this research. Solo exercise like dance and athletics are in the top five most popular sports in schools and participation rates in PE and sport have soared

The fact is that young people thrive off competitive sport, particularly, team sports – 3 million children took part in the National School Sport Week in June and there were 1,500 elite teenagers at the UK School Games last week. We are also investing £30m specifically into promoting competitive sport through regional, borough and school leagues and inter-school fixtures.



Our responsibility is to ensure that, in every school, there is a world-class PE and sport programme

– Steve Grainger

STEVE GRAINGER chief executive, Youth Sports Trust

As Beijing closes and the London Olympiad commences, we begin the most exciting period ever seen in sport in our country. The Youth Sports Trust are committed to using the opportunity it gives us to build a world leading PE and School Sport system for all young people.

Massive progress has been made over the last six years. However there is still more to do, and this requires us to ensure that the PE and sport offer reflects the diverse nature of our 5-19-year-old population. This is not just about traditional sports and neither is it about health related exercise – it is about all of this.

Our responsibility is to ensure that in every school there is a world class PE and sport programme that offers more for those already involved in sport, fully includes those partly engaged and motivates those currently disengaged from sport to get involved.

This is not impossible – it simply requires us to put the young person at the heart of everything, recognise that they aren't all the same, offer a meaningful menu of opportunities that meets their needs and then work in partnership at local and national level to deliver it.

NICOLA ROGERS (22)

Where are you working, and what is your current position?

I work at Hampshire Football Association as Media Relations Officer.

What does your day-to-day role include?

I am responsible for promoting Hampshire FA in the local and county media. I write a lot of press releases to keep the community informed. These press releases are often used to update our website and fill our quarterly magazine, both of which are projects I am also responsible for. I also manage the Hampshire FA Coaches Association and I assist with the administration of coaching courses when required.

What attracted you to working in this particular sector?

I was studying at University I held a part time job at the local sports centre as a Fitness/Aerobics Instructor and it was being in a sporting environment that developed my interest in sport. My ultimate aim is to work in sports development but my current role is giving me vital experience.

How easy was it to find a job?

I started my job search towards the end of my degree and it took a good few months to find a job I was comfortable with. It is amazing how all of a sudden things clicked into place. In the end I found myself in full time employment within two months of taking my final exam.

How did you enter the industry?

What did you study before getting your first job?

I graduated from the University of Winchester in 2007 with a BA (Hons) in

Leisure Management. During my final year I completed a work placement with the events team at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. Once I had finished my degree, a part time job came up within the same events team. I then applied for a Women and Girls Football Development Officer vacancy at Hampshire Football Association but unfortunately I was unsuccessful. The panel was impressed with my interview, however, and were able to offer me a part time job as a Development Administrator. It was approximately five months before I was offered a full time position at Hampshire FA. As this job was of more interest to me personally, I took on my current role as Media Relations Officer.

How well do you think your course prepared you for a career in leisure?

I feel my degree was exactly what I needed to do to help me 'make my mind up' about what to do next. When I applied for University I contemplated choosing a Sports Studies degree, but at the time I wasn't 100 per cent sure it was sport in particular that I wanted a career in, and I felt that a leisure degree would open up more options. In terms of the degree preparing me, my work placement was extremely valuable as it gave me the practical experience

What advice would you have for school leavers looking to get into the industry?

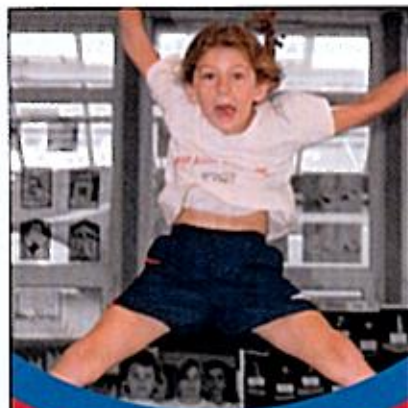
Best advice I could give would be to get involved in as many areas of leisure that interest you as possible. Even if you later decide it's not quite what you want, at least you have given yourself the opportunity to find that out.



before you pick a course, your degree could prove an expensive and, in many ways, an unprofitable route.

It is advisable to look for a course that has links with professional organisations, strong industry contacts and ideally offers work placements to ensure a strong balance of vocational and academic teaching.

For instance, Bournemouth University offers a range of BSc programmes including Sports Management, Sport Development and Coaching Sciences, as well as part-time foundation degrees for those people with two A levels or equivalent.



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