

AN INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS ON TERMINOLOGY

GAME-BASED VS GAME-CENTRED

The publication of the 1982 Spring Bulletin of Physical Education, edited by Len Almond, was a purposeful assembly of articles that presented a non-traditional approach to the teaching of games that firmly brought the concept of teaching *through* the game to the attention of academics, teachers and coaches. One of the landmark articles was by David Bunker and Rod Thorpe (1982), who introduced *The Curriculum Model* with their ideas for Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) which arose from concerns around the ineffectiveness of the traditional skill-based teaching approach.

Comparison with traditional 'skills and drills'

Inherent within the traditional method for teaching games is the belief that pupils need skills prior to playing a game, hence this can be described

as a *skill-based* or a *technique-based* approach. Conversely, the TGfU approach employs a variety of modified games that the teacher uses to present an evolving series of challenges and problem-solving scenarios which encourage an understanding of tactical skills that can be applied across a range of sports. From beginners upwards, the introduction of simplified/modified games provides a rich contextual learning environment for skills to be developed within the gameplay.

Although the teaching of skills is still important within a game-based approach, they become secondary to the understanding of the game's tactical problems. Inherent within gameplay are a multitude of characteristics: the time in the game, dynamic interactive positioning of teammates and opponents, a sense of pressure or urgency from the score, challenges, etc. The transfer of skills from isolated practice into real game situations can be limited, as drill practices fail to provide the same immersive experience for players.



From beginners upwards, the introduction of simplified/modified games provides a rich contextual learning environment for skills to be developed within the gameplay.





Progression of TGfU

In the subsequent 40 years since the publication of *The Curriculum Model* (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), the concepts of the game-based approach have spread globally, the body of academic literature has grown and a number of second-generation iterations have been created appropriate to the varying cultures across the world (Gambles *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, an international TGfU community of like-minded individuals has formed that recognise the many advantages of this approach (Gambles *et al.*, 2022).

However, one outcome of this has been the proliferation of inconsistent terminology leading to difficulties for individuals in identifying articles and resources and hindering the development processes of our field.

Some of the many terms used have included game/s-based, game/s-centred/centered, learner-centred/centered, tactical games, TGfU, Tactical Games Model (TGM), Game Sense etc., with the two dominant phrases being game-based approach (GBA) and game-centred/centered approach (GCA). The use of different spellings, singular and plural forms, the inclusion or otherwise of a hyphen and the usage of generic phrases to specific models have highlighted the need for agreement upon a sole term to describe this type of pedagogy.

Background to the consensus statement

The Association Internationale des Ecoles Superieures d'Education Physique (AIESEP) TGfU Special Interest Group (TGfU SIG), through its International Advisory Board (IAB), attempted to address the terminological inconsistency after

discussions arose at the TGfU SIG World Symposium for Developing Future Game-Centered Approach, convened in September 2020.

This concern was part of a broader objective pursued by the TGfU SIG since its creation, that of seeking means and initiatives that would serve to unite the academic community that shares a similar vision in the teaching of games. To address this ambitious and long-term goal it was proposed to start with something concrete and achievable in the medium term. In the aforementioned World Symposium, the paradox that had led to the appearance of the term GCA, popularised by Oslin and Mitchell (2006), was analysed. Whilst on the one hand it was possible to gather analogous approaches under the same term of GCA, conversely, it was sensed obsolete when that goal had not yet been fully achieved, since doubts about the adequacy of the term had strongly promoted an alternative contender: GBA. Thus, the initial debate created on these two terms laid the foundations for the subsequent statement, with the first decision being to opt for 'based' instead of 'centred/centered', and so the selection of the term GBA was favoured. This decision was argued as 'based' more clearly defines, for an international audience, a methodology that uses the game as a fundamental teaching and learning tool to achieve TGfU or other similar approaches' aims. In this way it also leaves the possibility of describing such pedagogy as student-centred, which would be difficult to understand if centred is already in the denomination.

A taskforce of members from the TGfU SIG IAB was established comprising Dr David Gutierrez (IAB chair), Dr Kanae Haneishi (USA representative), Dr Aspasia Dania (Greece representative), Dr Cláudio Farias (Portugal representative), Dr

Stefan König (Germany representative) and Dr Sanmuga Nathan (Malaysia representative) to develop a consensus statement which was applicable for a global community.

The subsequent development of the statement not only led to the description of the justification for this choice, but to the agreement of those key concepts that defined a GBA and, therefore, that should serve as an evaluation to decide if an approach or methodology could be considered as such. The statement received final approval from the TGfU SIG Executive Board and the remaining IAB members prior to being released in September 2021.

Game-based consensus statement

"In order to promote terminological consistency among researchers and practitioners, the TGfU SIG suggests the use of Game-Based Approach (GBA) to refer to the learner-centered teaching and coaching practice in which the modified games set the base and framework for developing thoughtful, creative, intelligent, and skillful players.

The TGfU SIG also encourages the use of Game-Based Approaches (GBAs) to refer to several well-established approaches that follow a GBA like TGfU, Game Sense, Play Practice, Tactical Games Model, Ballschool, Invasion Games Competence Model and other similar proposals." (TGfU SIG, 2021)



Key terms

The developmental process of the consensus statement invited the taskforce members to give consideration to a number of fundamental principles that underpin this pedagogy and introduced some key terms such as thoughtful, creative, intelligent and skilful players. In this decision process, in accordance with the framework of learner-centred pedagogy, not only procedural descriptors were included, but also attitudinal ones, especially represented by 'thoughtful players'.

The inclusion of these terms in the consensus statement gives prominence to the underpinning pedagogical aims of GBAs that extends beyond reproduction of isolated techniques to engendering meta-cognition in the holistic development of pupils/students/athletes.

Conclusion

The publishing of a consensus statement by the AIESEP TGfU SIG has established the use of the term 'game-based approach' and specified the objectives of this pedagogy. The AIESEP TGfU SIG aims to maintain terminological consistency by encouraging the application of the consensus statement at all levels, and to advocate for a GBA pedagogy in physical education teaching and coaching environments. We would like practitioners to utilise and advocate for the phrase 'game-based approach' in future work and practice.

The AIESEP TGfU SIG welcomes and encourages practitioners to engage with our key debates to help meet the demands of the evolving physical education landscape.

If you would like further information and to join our community, please contact us on tgfu.info@gmail.com, check out our website www.tgfu.info and follow us on Twitter @TGfUInfo

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to the members of the AIESEP TGfU SIG Executive Board and IAB for their work and support in developing and promoting the Game-Based Consensus Statement. ■

REFERENCES

- Bunker, D. and Thorpe R. 1982. A model for the teaching of games in secondary schools. *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 28(1), pp.5-8.
- Gambles, E., Griffin, L., Pill, S., Gutierrez, D., Ovens, A. and Koekoek, J. 2022. Celebrating 40 years of Teaching Games for Understanding. *Physical Education Matters*, 17(1), pp. 18-20.
- Oslin, J. and Mitchell, S. 2006. Game-Centred Approaches to Teaching Physical Education. In D. Kirk, D. MacDonald, and M. O'Sullivan (eds.) *The Handbook of Physical Education*. London: Sage, pp. 627-651.
- Teaching Games for Understanding Special Interest Group (TGfU SIG). 2021. *Game-Based Consensus Statement*. <http://www.tgfu.info/game-based-consensus-statement.html>

Ellen-Alyssa Gambles [afPE member] and **David Gutierrez**

Ellen-Alyssa F. Gambles is Academic Tutor in Exercise, Sport and Rehabilitative Therapies at the **University of Sunderland**, UK.

David Gutierrez is Professor in the Faculty of Education at the **University of Castilla-la Mancha**, Spain.