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Corporeal education in Australia: 1870 - 1910

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Reading the through the keys texts on the history of education in Australia one would easily be persuaded to the absence of any form of formal physical education in schools. Drills and even the cadet movement receive scarcely a mention in key texts covering the period such as Barcan’s various histories of education in NSW and Australia (Barcan 1980, 1988), in Smith and Spaull’s (1925) History of Education in NSW and Theobold and Selleck’s (1990) collection Family School and State in Australian History. In one sense these point to what has always been obvious to physical educators, that academic and vocational concerns preoccupy those involved in educational reform and those documenting it. The absence of such references, however, ignores the place that corporeal education had in managing children in schools, the preoccupations with military preparedness and cadet training that were a feature of the period covered in this chapter, and the regular references to drill and health in departmental communications such as the Inspectors’ Reports in the various State Education Gazettes. It also ignores the close relationship between State Departments of Public Instruction and the voluntary teacher led sporting organizations that organised sport for thousands of children in government funded elementary schools and lobbied successfully for compulsory swimming lessons in these schools. On the other hand, the place of sport and games in elite private schools, particularly boys’ schools warrants considerable mention in the histories of these schools, and there is a substantial literature on the place of games in building particular kinds of citizens for the British Empire and the developing nations of the Empire (e.g. Mangan.

David’s Kirk’s Schooling Bodies (Kirk 1998) provides one of the most comprehensive sources of information on physical education and sport in Australian schools for this period. He, in turn, has drawn on a number of doctoral theses on the history of physical education in Australian and various states. Other secondary material for this chapter has come from articles in Sporting Traditions, the Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History, from biographies of key players in physical education at the time such as Gustav Techow, H. C. Bjelke-Petersen, R. E. Roth and from various histories of schools and school sporting organizations. Primary sources include material from the New South Wales Education Gazette, and letters sourced from the NSW Department of Education and Training archives.

The social and cultural context of schooling in Australia 1870-1910

Like many countries in Europe, North and South America, the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century in Australia were years of radical structural and ideological shifts, characterised by what different writers have described variously as the forces of nationalism, the crisis of capitalism and democracy (liberalism etc), all of which influenced relationship between church and state, family relations and relationships between the state and families. Australia had only relatively recently been colonised by the British (the first settlement at Sydney was in 1788). The Indigenous peoples of Australia were driven from the coast
as towns were established in the most fertile and accessible areas and for most their way of life profoundly disrupted. The first European settlements were on the Eastern coast in an area which came to be known as New South Wales. As Barcan points out, ‘The vast majority of the Europeans in NSW were unwilling settlers, transported convicts, mainly of lower class origin, with a morality in almost complete conflict with that of the leadership in Church and State’ (Barcan 1980: 8). He could also add that they together with the officers that accompanied them and the first free settlers were also largely men.

As Miller and Davey (1990: 7) also point out,

… in spite of their many distinctive features the history of the colonies is inseparably tied to that of Europe. Australia not only inherited the white immigrants’ taste for money, brick houses, and straight roads, but systems of familial, social and economic relations. These links continued to develop as relatives, colonial officials and businessmen migrated to Australia and back, trade flourished, and the Colonial office scrutinised Australian legislation.

They argue that to understand Australian life, including schooling and I would add forms of corporeal education, we need to take into account British and wider European influences. The first colonists from Britain, colonial governors and educators were from Britain or educated in Britain, and until 1940s Australian States were using British syllabi for physical education. The colonists also brought with them a sports ethos that was already well established in England and marked by social class. The philosophies and practices of corporeal education were influenced by Swedish and German gymnastics and their interpretation by educators and practioners from Europe and Britain who migrated to Australia.

Between 1825 and 1859, the states of Tasmania, Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland all separated from New South Wales and set up their own education systems and legislation. Although the structural, legislative and ideological trends were very similar, each state because of its own settler heritages (e.g. some free some convict), the differential power of Church and so on, introduced changes at different times and with different degrees of struggle. Federation of the states in 1901 did not mean a national system of education, each state was and continues to be responsible for its own state education system, for curriculum and for the training and registration of teachers. However, between 1880 and 1905 there was a raft of legislation including the various Public Instruction Acts to ‘encourage’ children into education and to improve educational provision. These Acts laid the basis for secular and compulsory system of Education in each State. Different States introduced legislation to abolish fees for elementary schooling at different times in late 1880s. Since Federation attempts by future federal governments to introduce a uniform system of schooling have consistently been met with strong resistance by the States.

Any history of schooling in Australia, therefore, has to acknowledge the difference between the States. In this chapter, I will try to point to any divergences between States but it will by necessity focus on the Eastern states (primarily Victoria and NSW), because of the greater availability of material and because for the years covered in the chapter, these were the States where formal schooling was well established at least in the elementary years. These were also the States with the
greatest proportion of population and where liberalism, democracy (responsible
government and manhood suffrage in late 1850s) and secularism were crucial forces
impacting schooling and other forms of corporeal education.

With democracy came the need for voters who had at least the basic elements of
literacy and with an understanding of their duties and rights. Up until the 1860s,
schooling of children had primarily taken place in Church and privately run schools.
There was increasing recognition that the quality and amount of schooling varied
significantly for the increasing number of highly visible children. The period from
1850s to 1905 was marked by legislation to systematize and regulate schooling
through the introduction of secular, compulsory and more slowly free schooling, ‘to
resolve problems of distance, isolation, politics and poor standards in education’.
Through the 1880 the Public Instruction Act ‘authority for education [was] vested in a
parliamentary minister, only one system of education received State support, and
centralised State control was established’ (McCloughan, 1970: 6).

The first decade of the twentieth century has been characterized in the history of
education texts as a time of educational reform in all of the Australian states (Barcan
1988). The underpinning principle of these reforms was democratization and the idea
that ‘children of ability’ should have the opportunity to make their way from the
infant school to tertiary education. To this end schools were either abolished or
radically reduced and more secondary schools established. However, ‘Australia was
still a pioneering developing society and few parents sought more than the minimum
of formal education for their children before dispatching them on the task of making
their way in the world’ (Barcan 1988: 183). Six secondary government funded
schools were established in NSW in 1883, but by 1886 only four of these had
survived – two for female students and two for male students. It was not until 1916
that this number increased substantially (to 19 schools). At the same time the period
between 1880-1910 was characterised by the growth of Church and private schools
and colleges (Barcan 1980:175).

As was the case in many European countries and their colonies, at the time covered by
this chapter, population ideologies such as the eugenics movement influenced
Australia. Here they took their own form: they interacted with anxieties specific to the
concerns of a colony in a land very different from, and separated by vast distances,
from the British ‘homeland’ and in close proximity to the growing powers of China
and Japan. The population ideology of the time assumed that a large healthy and
‘racially pure’ population was necessary for rural and economic progress. At the turn
of the century this concern influenced policy and practice in all social institutions,
including schooling. In 1901 there was wide acceptance of legislation enacting the
White Australia Policy as the basis for population planning (which endured until
1975). This ignored the Aboriginal population who were excluded from citizenship
and population counts and restricted non-white immigration.

At same time, there was growing sense of national identity, fostered deliberatively by
the Prime Minister, such as Alfred Deakin around the turn of the century to promote
unity between the wide range of divergent interests emerging as more white
Australians were born in Australia and with the growth of independent property-
owning middle class (Kirk, 1998). These divergent interests tended to be on class
lines and resulted in a tension between those who identified with ‘home country’ (the
affluent middle class) and a republican desire for an independent nation state. These
divergent interests were reflected in schooling, with the elite independent Church and
private schools promoting forms of citizenship which responded to the needs of the
British Empire and to leadership within the colonies. The purpose of state funded
elementary schools on the other hand, was to produce healthy, literate and numerate
citizens who could contribute to the development of the new nation.

The prevailing educational philosophy, during this period was ‘faculty psychology’,
so that the subjects studied were not so important in themselves but for the mental
powers they developed, such as the power to reason. However by the end of the
nineteenth century another view, derived from J. F. Herbart was gaining ground. From
this perspective the ‘main objective of education was the development of character,
i.e. moral education; … the understanding of the content of the subjects was the
objective, not simply a mastery of the mental skills they conveyed’ (Barcan 1980:
172). This was to be a recurring theme in arguments for all forms of physical activity
from drill, through games to swimming to be included in the education of children
and young people.

Corporeal education 1870-1910: drill and gymnastics

As has been demonstrated elsewhere, the form that corporeal education took in
schools and in society more general was closely aligned with the broader social and
political climate and with the ideas about children, citizenship and education that were
in play. As has been argued above in the decades leading up to the end of the
nineteenth and in the first decade of the twentieth century, Australia was increasingly
constituting itself as independent nation, a developing democratic state and building
economy with a growing middle class. Kirk uses Foucault’s notion of ‘biopower’ to
argue that in the process of forging ‘an economically productive nation and a national
identity’,

Physical training, medical inspection and sports, as part of the institution of
schooling were deeply implicated …. demonstrating intricate and detailed
attention to working on the bodies of children, to their correct deportment and
to their productive development. (Kirk, 1998:16).

In Schooling Bodies, he develops this argument examining drill, the cadet movement,
medical inspections and sport in government and private schools. In the following
sections rather than repeat his arguments, I will attempt to draw attention to how
forms of physical activity brought from Britain and Europe flourished but also took
on characteristics particular to the colonial geographical and social environment and
how physical activity and particularly some sports such as swimming provided
opportunities to both address and challenge contemporary normative ideas. At same
time, I recognise that physical activity, in the form of drill was introduced into
government schools with the intention to manage the large numbers of children in
schools and to produce citizens able to contribute to the developing Australian nation.
In addition physical training and specifically military drill were promoted to produce
a male citizenry capable of defending for some the ‘home country’ and for others the
threat to Australia from their Asian neighbours.
As Kirk and others point out, elementary schooling was organized to manage children meticulously, both in and out of classrooms. Photographs and descriptions of the time show large numbers of children in rows, monitored by roving teachers and assistants. Outside of the classroom faced with the need to introduce order into the schools, schools turned to the already well-established and demonstrably effective practices used by the military for controlling large numbers of soldiers. Military practices represented a ready-made technology of power well suited to the manipulation of potentially unruly bodies in space and in time, and they offered schools a stock of physical activities and scripts containing words of command and advice on how these activities should be implemented. (Kirk, 1998: 30)

This meticulous attention to the body however was not necessarily successful in its attempts at disciplining children. Certainly until the centralisation and regulation of schooling by the state in 1880s, and even after, in country schools, schooling was much more haphazard. Indeed it would seem as Kirk points out that in the elementary schools which educated most of the population it was a constant battle to bring children’s bodies into line, particularly with the increasing numbers of children coming into schools.

As was the case in Britain, one's 'station in life' was to prove the decisive factor in the amount and kind of education made available during the nineteenth century (Crawford, 1981; Kyle, 1986). In turn, the kind of school one attended determined the nature and purpose of physical education/physical training in the curriculum. The sex of students was to be a more decisive factor in differentiating between physical education practices in the twentieth century. For the purposes of school based exercises in the texts of the time, the elementary pupil/the child was for the most part ‘androgynous’ (Kirk & Twigg, 1995). However as Kirk points out the ‘the persistence of the notion of the androgynous child in the physical training texts of this period is clearly inconsistent with prevailing practices of physical culture with and beyond education systems.’ (Kirk, 2000: 58). For working class boys and girls, like their British counterparts, physical education (or rather training) generally meant drill -marching, together with exercises based on the Swedish system – ‘to mould behaviour of undisciplined boys, to inculcate habits of sharp obedience, smartness, order and cleanliness’ (Crawford, 1981: p.38). For the boys, however, included rifle drill as a means to train a future fighting force. Extracurricular activities were even further differentiated, with few opportunities for working class girls to participate in games and sports. This is discussed further below in relation to the voluntary schools sports associations.

For middle and upper middle class males, physical education consisted primarily of organised games, intended to develop those positive masculine virtues of courage and loyalty that were perceived to fit them for their station in life. For the daughters of the wealthy, games and callisthenics (also called physical culture) were promoted for their contribution to health but games increasingly became important sources of pleasure for the girls and were promoted by schools for their values in developing school spirit and appropriate womanly virtues.
During the period, the Aboriginal children who attended state elementary schools, and these would have been few, would have participated in the same forms of physical training as their non-Aboriginal peers. Aboriginal schools. On some of the missions, sports, such as cricket, were encouraged for their ‘civilising influence’. At Poonindie in South Australia, for example, the success of young Aboriginal men cricket was taken as evidence of their success of their ‘education in the way of the whites’ (Bishop of Adelaide, quoted in Daly 1994: 62). As the example of Poonindie also shows this approbation did not extend to granting the young men land, nor did their success mitigate local race relations. As was the case in Australia more widely, the success of Aboriginal men at cricket, a game that that defined Englishness, often had negative consequences for the Aboriginal players (see Whimpress & Daly 1994).

The forms of gymnastics prominent in Sweden and German and Britain, during the late nineteenth century, had evolved in local contexts of nationalism and a concern of the healthy development of citizens. Swedish gymnastics was particularly suitable for the economical mass systematic training of bodies. The early physical educators (both women and men) – that is, those who wrote the textbooks and manuals of instruction in physical training and education and were influential in the teacher training colleges – often came from Europe and trained in the Ling system of gymnastics and/or, for the men, the German Turnverein.

While today their exercise prescriptions and modes of teaching would be perceived as closely resembling the military drill being taught in schools, these writers and practitioners differentiated drill from gymnastics (rational exercising) and espoused a philosophy of physical education that emphasised health and individual development/achievement and, for some, the idea that physical activity, particularly for children should be pleasurable. This philosophy seems to have been in constant tension with state expectations (via various Departments of Defence and Departments of Public Instruction) that the place of physical training in schools was to enable the management and control of the large numbers of ‘unruly’ children in elementary schools, and for boys their preparation as soldiers. Such concerns outweighed potential educational purposes when decisions were made about what should happen in schools and teacher training.

In Victoria, several hundred teachers and pupil teachers were trained at the National Gymnasium in Melbourne in gymnastics and military drill, under the guidance of Gustav Techow, a former officer in the Prussian army. Techow, like other physical educators of his time was influenced by Ling’s Swedish gymnastics and drew a clear distinction between drill and gymnastics. Techow was in a constant battle with the Vic Education Department to provide ‘a more liberal and meaningful interpretation of physical education in the elementary school system’ (Crawford, 1992). His position is evident in his Manual of Gymnastics:

   The subject of physical education, long consigned to neglect, is beginning at last to obtain a share of that attention which its importance demands. It has become a recognised fact, that the body can be educated as well as the mind; that the one is capable of improvement by culture as the other.
   (quoted in Crawford, 1992: 170)

As was the case with other systems of exercise at the time his manual also insisted on
‘strict discipline’, ‘proper performance’ and ‘correct starting positions’. However, he also emphasized grading exercises for children’s ages, making progression within activities, and added the reminder that ‘joy and cheerfulness’ should be part of lessons in the gymnasium. Techow argued for a place for playground games and even suggested that the teacher should join in with the physical activities of the children.

In Tasmania, Hans Christian Bjelke-Petersen and his siblings developed their ‘system of physical culture’ ‘carefully based on physiological principles’ (Cunneen & McLeod 1979). Bjelke-Petersen was initially employed by the Tasmanian Department of Education to train teachers in a system to replace military drill in state schools. He later moved to NSW where in 1911, he was appointed director of a Commonwealth scheme of physical training under the Department of Defence and was accredited honorary lieutenant-colonel. His task was to organize a system for Australian school children and to arrange the training of expert instructors for cadet forces and schoolteachers. … Terminating his services in 1914, the department praised his work as having ‘a lasting and beneficial effect on the manhood of Australia’.

His scheme, for both boys and girls, stressed the importance of breathing exercises, deportment drills, physical culture games, and rest between exercises; he argued that 'National Physical Culture would give to the coming generation increased ability to do work with body and brain, and therefore greater prosperity, better health, and … greater happiness'. (Cunneen & McLeod 1979)

For most of this period, then, despite more ‘liberal’ versions of physical training, for children in government schools, physical activity within school hours took the form of military or other forms of drill, although in Inspectors reports (see below) drill was differentiated from physical culture. Physical culture seemed to be particularly associated with mass displays to commemorate major events in Australia’s history or visits from national and international dignitaries. The various reports from Superintendents of Drill stress the importance teachers being able to control large numbers of children, the forming and assembling of large classes and attention to detail, for as Reddish points out ‘unless the execution of Swedish drill is practically perfect the movements serve no useful purpose’ (Reddish 1916: 204)

The following quote from Lt-Col Paul’s report as Superintendent of Drill and Officer Commanding Cadets in the NSW Education Gazette illustrates the manner and type of activity valued and expected in government elementary schools.

Two hundred and seventy-one Schools or Departments in the Metropolitan or Sub-Metropolitan Districts have been visited in during the year, and the drill as well as the free and calisthenic exercises inspected. I found the work was generally good, and in a number of cases very good indeed. … Increased interest is being taken in the subject of Physical Culture. … In my reports to the Inspectors I have expressed satisfaction at the results obtained as shown by the well set up boys and girls formed up for drill, the smartness and precision of movement, the alertness, erect carriage and bearing of the pupils, as well as the thoroughness with which the exercises were performed and the ready response given to orders.
Except when unsuitable weather conditions prevail, the ten or fifteen minutes of daily practice of selected physical exercises and deep breathing has almost universally been adopted. When this is not done, fifteen or twenty minutes drill three times a week is given.

A weekly drill lesson of half an hour duration also is generally arranged for each class separately by its own teacher. This cannot be dispensed with if good results are to be obtained, for the time devoted to the daily morning rehearsal by the combined classes is only sufficient to carry out a practice of the exercises, a knowledge of which has been already been acquired, and unless the pupils thoroughly understand the details of an exercise and the points to be observed in a movement when drilling together, the good effect is lost. (Paul, 1908: 409-410)

In 1908 a Mr Plumptre, addressing the Cobar Teachers Association and drawing on the philosophy of Comenius, argued for the educative value of play and, in particular, the value of games and sports for bodily development and for providing a ‘wide scope for the individuality of the participants’. He was, however, ahead of his time. Whereas games were vigorously pursued by teachers and students in state schools as extracurricular activities - indeed the founding of the voluntary and autonomous New South Wales Public Schools Amateur Athletic Association in 1885 attests to that - school reports in the 1910s and 1920s were still concerned with the quality of performance in drill and marching.

The Cadet Force

For the period covered in this chapter, physical training in schools consisted of military drill (marching and class drill for children under 12 and girls over 12 and marching, squad drill and rifle shooting for boys 12-14). As indicated above this was primarily to instil discipline and for the effects it would have on children’s ‘movement, carriage and deportment, … in the expectation that this would carry over into other aspects of the children’s conduct in school’ (Kirk, 1998: 35). However, when the last British troops left the colony in 1870, an interest in compulsory military training for defense in schools gained ground. Whereas in Britain, there was increased resistance to military style training in schools, based on the argument from teachers, Lingian gymnasts and social reformers that ‘many of the movements were anatomically unsound and actually harmful to growing children’ (Kirk 1998: 36), in Australia the arguments for compulsory military training in schools gained further momentum following federation.

The voluntary cadet forces already in place in NSW, Victoria and Queensland were used as precedents for a proposal that compulsory military training be placed under the control of the Commonwealth Defence Dept to establish ‘a more efficient defence force than could be provided by the individual colonies’ and to assist in enforcing the White Australian policy enacted in the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901. The 1903 Defence Act enabled the Governor General ‘to establish and maintain a compulsory cadet scheme at both junior and senior levels’ (Kirk, 1998: 37). This met with considerable resistance from state education departments because of their concern that ‘army personnel could have control over aspects of work in the schools and act without their authority’ (p.37).
The tension between the two departments, after much debate, was finally resolved by the delegates from both departments at a Commonwealth Conference in 1909. Rather than determine who would provide military training per se, the focus was on a ‘uniform system of physical training of school boys’ which would meet the fitness requirements of the cadets but would be ‘extended to all children attending schools in the Commonwealth’ (Report from the conference quoted in Kirk 1998: 39). Provision of training would be at the expense of the Defense Department and teachers would be trained by Defense Department instructors. Service personnel were appointed as Superintendents of Drill to monitor the effectiveness of physical training in schools.

**Sport and schooling**

As Mangan (1981) and others (Goldlust 1987) have pointed out the elite private schools in the UK and later in Australia, used sport to produce young men who had the characteristics of courage, loyalty and patriotism to take up positions of responsibility in the governance of Commonwealth countries and later in business, the professions and government. The British colonists brought the games and sports and the values and meanings associated with these to the Australian colonies. In particular the English Public Games ethic profoundly influenced where and how games were played and for what purpose in both government and elite independent schools (Kirk and Twigg, 1995: 3). Most of the secondary schools before 1916 were funded by the Church or privately run and sought to emulate the English public schools. Sport and games, as a symbol of social elitism served to distance the schools and their pupils from those who attended government schools. The formation of the Athletic Association of the Great Public Schools (AAGPS and later shortened to GPS) in NSW in 1892, a deliberately exclusive association, institutionalized the games ethics in Australian elite independent schools, ‘consolidating the value system in which games playing was embedded’ (p.7). A similar organization, the Associated Public Schools (APS), was formed in Victoria.

In 1890s games and sports were taken up in the private girls’ schools. As was the case in Britain, the introduction of games and sports into these schools was understandably met with considerable ambivalence. Physical activity, in the form of calisthenics or physical culture, was valued because it contributed to the health of young women and served to compensate for the demands of academic work. Sport and games on the other hand, were associated with masculine pursuits and if played too vigorously could be damaging to young women’s health. By the end of the early twentieth century, however, games were serving similar purposes for girls’ private schools, as for their male peers. The argument for their inclusion was based on those same attributes of *esprit de corps*, morality and character building for which they were valued in the boys’ schools (Scraton, 1992). They also contributed to a corporate identity for the schools, particularly the Registration Act of 1908 brought them into competition with the newly established government secondary schools (Kirk and Twigg, 1995:10).

Sports were also supported by the feminists of the time as contributing to women’s advancement in society.

Many feminists and their sympathisers promoted [strenuous] sports as part of a broader movement towards an extended social role for females, which also
included proposals for greater female participation in higher education and professional employment. One such advocate was Argus columnist ‘Old Boy’ who praised ladies’ cricket for its contribution to the ‘emancipation of woman’. Specifically, as another correspondent to the same newspaper wrote, outdoor games such as this emancipated girls by freeing them from the isolation of their homes where only physically sedate activities could be undertaken. (Traikovski, 2001: 13)

Kirk and Twigg (1995: 9) point out that by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century ‘the diffusion of [the] games ethics through the elite non-government schools led … to the wide acceptance of the values surrounding competitive team games by the Australian middle classes’.

For the majority of girls and boys in government schools, however, there were few opportunities to participate in organized games or sports: there was no provision within the curriculum - any games and sport were ‘extracurricular’; there were few teachers with the capacity to teach, since it was not part of most teachers’ experience and not part of their teacher training; and perhaps most important, few facilities and spaces to play (Kirk 1998: 103). On the other hand, particularly in the metropolitan areas there were many teachers who were interested in sport and formed school teams and school sports clubs. These teachers, first in NSW and later Victoria, formed the NSW Public Schools Amateur Athletics Association (PSAAA) in 1889 and the Victorian State Schools Amateur Athletics Association (VSSAAA) in 1904, as voluntary associations to run competitions and to promote sport and physical activity in schools. From their beginnings these associations had a close relationship with and support from the various state Departments of Public Instruction, and in NSW, the office of President was held by a Departmental officer. It was not until 1911 in NSW that time allocated for sports in school day, with the beginning of the ‘sports afternoon’.

Initially the focus for the Associations was on providing an organization for interschool matches for the few sports played by boys – cricket and the various codes of football. Interstate games were very popular spectator events and used by the professional clubs as recruiting grounds. As Kirk (1998: 102) points out although the VSAAA ‘was avowedly an organization for amateur sports, representatives of the professional Victorian Football League were in attendance at the first meeting and the VFL gave its ‘hearty support’ to the enterprise’. Sub-committees were formed to organise sporting competitions: the earliest were football (rugby), cricket, tennis and rifle drill competitions between schools. During this period the only competitions for girls seem to be swimming competitions, organized by the Ladies’ Teachers Club, the first in 1907. In 1909 there were over 700 entries (from female teachers, trainee teachers and students).

The major annual event for the PSAAA and the VSAAA was the Annual Sports Carnival, which was also clearly a showcase for government schools. In NSW, the Annual Sports Carnival, crowds of 40,000-50,000 people would gather to witness up to 12,000 children participating in front of such dignitaries as the Governor General, the State Governor, the State Premier and the Minister for Public Instruction’ (Collins, Aitken et al. 1991: 8). Events offered included ‘sprinting, walking, sack races, 440 yard obstacle run, drill events, tennis, bicycle races, and numerous displays’ (p.8).
This was a major spectator event, with gate charges and alcohol on sale. The principal event was the Drill Competition and other military types of events, such as ‘Volley Firing in two ranks’ and ‘Cadet and Band Race in full uniform’. All schools in Metropolitan area were closed so that children could attend the sports day, and as country schools began to hold their own regional sports day, they also applied for permission.

The organizations and the sports day were primarily for boys and men. The members (of the PSAAA) at the 1896 sports carnival, for example, were ‘pleased to receive a donation of 18 gallons of beer’ (Collins, Aitken et al. 1991:10) Tennis was initially the only event for girls until 1896, until a 75 yards hoop race introduced for girls under 12 years. The girls participated in displays such as maypole (p.10), and in 1899, skipping races, fancy skipping and hoop races; in 1904, dancing (Scottish and Irish) was included.

The voluntary status of PSAAA meant that it was often struggling to make ends meet. The NSW Department of Public Instruction provided on and off support. The voluntary nature of the association was seen by some such as Mr Dawson, the Under Secretary of Department of Public Instruction, in 1909, as fitting with the true spirit of amateur sport, and responsible for the success of the association. In the following quote the influence of the public schools games ethic is evident. It would seem that although the Department was reluctant to support the PSAAA financially, at least for some the promotion of games in government schools served an important ‘educational’ function.

Education was not confined to the school rooms and school books, the sports fields developed schools of morality of a most powerful character. Organised games brought out not only the good qualities but the bad qualities that needed repression. The boy learned how to control himself, to play the game. Virtue was fostered in the playground and it was universally admitted that the physically fit man was likely to be the best citizen. (Collins, Aitken et al. 1991: 30)

**Swimming**

The place of swimming as a form of corporeal education deserves a special mention in this chapter. In many ways the approach to swimming mirrors that to other sports, for example, land-based ‘swimming drill’ rates a mention in the reports of Superintendents of Drill as valuable exercise. Swimming, however, also provided a context for greater freedom of movement for women, a space for women to excel and a form of physical activity that was taught across all social classes, although access to water and to swimming pools was certainly not equally distributed.

As the colonists settled in coastal towns and cities and on large inland rivers swimming increased in popularity in nineteenth century. Public baths were established on Port Phillip Bay in Melbourne and along the beaches and harbour in Sydney. However, swimming ability was poor and there were numerous deaths from drowning. Teaching of swimming was taken up as issue of concern by government and voluntary organizations. ‘The desire of educational agencies and social reformers to increase the provision of swimming teaching … was bound up with the continuing
wider social concerns of the physical and moral health of urban youth, from all social classes’ (Winterton & Parker 2009: 2108). After persistent lobbying from the PSAAA and the Victorian Amateur Swimming Association instruction in swimming was included in the curriculum in NSW in 1897 and Victorian schools in 1889. The argument made by VASA was that swimming should be included for its ‘moral and physical influence as outdoor exercise on children’ together with ‘inestimable value [to the community] … in saving of life’ (p. 2113).

Although both NSW and Victorian authorities authorized the inclusion of swimming lessons in schools, ‘the variability in the provision for and especially the standard of swimming instruction became a pressing concern’ (p. 2111). In 1906 on the basis of a proposal to the Department of Public Instruction from the PSAAA, a professional swimming instructor, Miss Kilminster was appointed ‘to foster swimming among lady teachers. [She] led the rapid development of swimming and lifesaving’ with over 2000 children learning to swim in the season following her appointment (Collins, Aitken et al., 1991: 22).

By 1898 there were 81 boys and 21 girls swimming clubs in schools in NSW with a membership of 12,600 children. Swimming carnivals for boys began in 1897 and for girls in 1907. By the beginning of 1900 all NSW metropolitan schools had a swimming club and visited the baths once a week for swimming instruction. In Victoria the increasing numbers of children competing in swimming carnivals run by the VASA, led to the formation of the State Schools Swimming Committee (SSSC) which in turn led to the formation of the Victorian (VSAAA) in 1904. While separate carnivals were held in NSW for girls and female teachers, the inaugural combined Victorian State Schools carnival in 1899, included one race for girls. This prompted a response from the Education Department suggesting that in the future that the event should not be mixed. The SCCC with the assistance of the VASA argued for the worth of mixed swimming events. The Department capitulated and provided the following response (in keeping with the SSSC advice):

By direction of the Minister … the inclusion of such races in future demonstrations is left to the discretion of the committee. Should it be decided to include them then the Minister is of [the] opinion that they should be restricted to girls under 14 years of age and that they are suitably dressed and are placed under the supervision of experienced female teachers. (quoted in Winterton and Parker, 2009: 2120)

Where children could not be easily taken to pools, land drill was encouraged (Winterton and Parker 2009). This was to be executed in the same manner as military drill. Indeed the Departments of Public Instruction in NSW and Victoria allowed that swimming drill (which meant for the most parts movements in preparation for breaststroke) could replace class drill.

Doubly useful at this time of the year (January) is Swimming Drill for boys and girls. No better physical exercise is possible.

The correct motions for the arms and legs can best be taught on land, and it should be insisted that nothing short of the full and complete stroke and kick will be satisfactory (Reddish 1910: 4)

Concluding comments
As indicated above in Australia during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, corporeal education was very much divided on social class lines. During this period, children of the working class attended elementary schools that at best accommodated children up to 14 years of age. The children of the middle class, on the other hand, were more likely to continue their education in Church or privately funded secondary colleges that were modeled on British independent schools. The kinds of corporeal education available were similarly differentiated by social class and by the nature of the school attended.

Physical activity in the government funded elementary schools responded to a rhetoric of nation building, military preparedness and population ideologies which required schools to contribute to the production of health, disciplined citizens and for the boys preparedness to defend their country. The greater value placed on military drill over other forms of physical activity demonstrates the priorities of the time. Marching and drill persisted as the preferred form of physical training in schools into the 1930s and even later (I was practicing marching around the school oval in the late 1950s).

The British syllabus was still being used in Australian schools until the mid 1940s and the administrators of physical education continued to be service officers. Rhetorically the British syllabus rejected military drill in the 1933 version, and in 1934 the NSW Education Gazette, quoting George Neuman’s Prefatory memorandum to the Syllabus suggested that,

The place, scope and conception of physical education have broadened and it has gradually assumed a meaning entirely different from that implied by the old term, 'school drill'. It is now recognised that an efficient system of education should encourage the concurrent development of a healthy physique, keen intelligence and sound character. These qualities are in a high degree mutually interdependent, and it is beyond argument that without healthy conditions of the body the development of the mental and moral faculties is seriously retarded and in some cases prevented. In a word physical growth is essential to mental growth. (Education Gazette, Feb, 1934: p.18)

The examples of lessons that follow, however, are based on tables of formal exercises that must be performed correctly and systematically. These tables are graded for age and sex, with some allowance made for breaks between exercises when ‘for a few moments pupils carry out active movements of a recreative character’ (Education Gazette, 1934: p.18). The individual activities in the tables did allow for more enjoyable activities based in many cases on more 'natural' movements such as hopping, skipping and jumping and running. Rhythmic dancing was also encouraged for girls. Immediately following this article in the Gazette, there is an article describing the results of the Challenge Shield for Drill Competition, 1933.

The other side to the story of male dominance of corporeal education is the influence of women educators. Some of the women specialists educated in the British Colleges of Education, migrated to Australia and taught in private schools and colleges, bringing with them the ideas about girls’ promoted in those institutions. Although there is some evidence from the records of the NSW PSAAA of the activities of women
teacher training students and teacher educators in the government funded system, particularly in relation to swimming clubs and teaching swimming, there is little evidence at least in secondary sources of the contribution of women teachers and educators to physical training in state schools during this period.

It was not until the period following the First World War and even more so after the Second World War that the influence of women physical educators in the government system became more evident. It was in girls' schools that the first break with the military bias occurred. Female supervisors of physical training such as Ella Gormley in NSW and Rosalie Virtue in Victoria advocated for programmes based on the Dano-Swedish system of games, folk dance, rhythmical work, using music, plus formal exercises more suitable for girls (Young, 1962). With increasing numbers of single sex secondary schools in the twentieth century, the differentiation of girls’ and boys’ physical education and the establishment of a female tradition of physical education became possible.

References


