University of Melbourne
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
2008 Dean's Lecture Series

Inaugural Fritz Duras Lecture
9th September, 2008

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From Dr Fritz Duras to the cult of the body and the 'obesity crisis':
Observations the evolution of Human Movement Studies as an academic field.

This is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to deliver this inaugural Fritz Duras lecture at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. As an alumni of this institution there is a special significance for me to be able to return to my alma mater after some 40 years.

I should say that preparing this lecture has been a challenge because of the diverse nature of the audience. You include academic faculty of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, interested public, members of the Fritz Duras family, members of my own family (they are curious to know what it is that I do) and physical education colleagues from my past. Accordingly I have pitched for a middle ground that I trust will not patronize, offend or bore you. The extent to which it avoids these possibilities is your call.

In the 70 years since Dr Fritz Duras was appointed as the first director of the fledgling Department of Physical Education at the University of Melbourne, Physical Education as a field of study has morphed into Human Movement Studies, and during that time the social landscape of Australia has changed beyond recognition.

In this lecture I will first provide an overview of the beginnings of Physical Education at this university and the role of Dr Duras in that history. I will then sketch the development of HMS as an academic field in Australia connecting with my own experiences within it. Finally I will discuss some of the changed social context that has given rise to the current nature of HMS and its response to the contemporary obesity 'crisis' and ponder on what Dr Duras might have thought of these developments.

First a point about terminology. The term human movement studies (HMS), while popular in Australia, is not the universal descriptor for the field that was once called Physical Education. It is variously known as Sport and Exercise science in the UK, Sportwissenschaft in Germany, Human Kinetics in Canada and Kinesiology in the USA. Debates over the most appropriate descriptor for the field are still alive and well.

Let's begin with a little history.

In 1935, Professor G.S.Browne, Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University of Melbourne, acting as chair of a committee for the National Council of Women, wrote to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) regarding the possibility of establishing a course in physical education for the training of teachers. He sought assistance from ACER to investigate the resources available to establish a school of physical education, if possible attached to the School of Education at the University of Melbourne or to Melbourne Teachers' College. Browne wrote that "we need many more teachers of Physical Education if our full programme of Health work is to be carried out.
in the schools" (cited in Kentish, 1983, p.4). This is an early reference to the longstanding connection of physical education and health.

Browne's committee suggested that Lieutenant-Colonel Alan Ramsay, a teacher at University High and Master of method at the School of Education who had an interest in PE, assisted by Miss Meg Johnson, a teacher at Emily McPherson College and graduate in PE from Bedford College in the UK, could conduct the investigation over a period of 2-3 months.

Incidentally, this was the same Alan Ramsay who, 22 years later in 1957, as Director of Education, signed my Junior swimming certificate that testified that I had passed the test for juniors in swimming, diving, floating and method of resuscitation. But I digress…back to the story.

ACER agreed to fund the investigation and the subsequent report recommended a one-year course for those already teaching, with a 2 or 3 year course for PE specialists. The report also recommended that an expert in physical training should have general control of the course under the administrative responsibility of the School of Education (Kentish, 1983). The search for an expert in physical training began, and in 1937 Dr Fritz Duras was appointed as Director of Training and became the first Director of Physical Education in an Australian university.

The circumstances of his appointment are worth relating. Fritz Duras, a German medical doctor with Jewish heritage, had been Director of the Institute of Sports Medicine at the University of Frienberg. In 1933, Aryan law sought to make it illegal for those of Jewish blood to practice their professions and pressure was put on Duras to resign. In 1936, having left his position at Freiberg and residing in the UK to learn English, Dr Duras was interviewed by the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Professor Priestly who was in Cambridge at that time. Priestly wrote to the acting VC Professor Bailey and his letter gives an insight into what was a very different recruitment focus in 1937. Here is an extract of that letter:

"Dr Fritz Duras of whom you will have heard from Browne and the Faculty of Education, has just left me after spending a night here at Clare College. He dined in Hall, bathed with me before breakfast, breakfasted with me, and I have spent several hours in conversation with him. I am quite satisfied that he is a good man, thoroughly well-trained, likely to be useful to us both on the physical training side and on the physiological side, and one who will assimilate relatively easily. His knowledge of English is not perfect, but considering he spoke no English five months ago it is little short of marvellous. He will lecture in English from the time of his arrival with facility" (cited in Kentish, 1983, p 26-27).

The Carnegie Foundation agreed to fund the appointment for 2 years and, with the first intake of students in 1937, so began the contested presence of physical education at the University of Melbourne.
Press clippings of the time reveal something of the interest in Dr Duras's appointment and soon after his arrival in Australia he was invited to deliver the 5th Charles Mackay lecture at the Institute of Anatomy. His topic 'Physical Education and its relation to preventive medicine' revealed that he was an early advocate of what current health promotion experts would call upstream intervention.

Importantly, Dr Duras was not interested in reproducing the German physical culture ideology of the 1930s that was characterised by what he called the "spectacle of thousands and thousands of young Germans marching out in fours to do mass exercises on a hot Sunday afternoon". Rather, he was interested in teaching an initially small class of some 20 teachers about a conception of physical culture based on "the anatomy of bodily exercise".

Promoted to Associate Professor in 1954, Dr Duras became the first physical educator to attain this rank in Australia, the same year in which Sir Frank Beaurepaire donated the sum of £200,000 for a Centre for Physical Education. The Beaurepaire Centre for Physical Education was opened in 1956 and Dr Duras enjoyed the new facility as Director until his retirement in 1963.

The Diploma in PE provided a steady stream of teachers for Victorian schools over a 30 year period, however, in 1966 the Third Report of the Australian Universities Commission, placed a specific time frame on the phasing-out of all sub-graduate courses in Australian universities. In the early 1970s the Diploma was phased out, and the responsibility for the training of PE teachers shifted to the newly developing College of Advanced Education (CAE) sector.

Before the 1970s there was no opportunity to study for a degree in physical education within Victoria. While some motivated Diploma graduates went on to complete Arts, Science or Commerce degrees in Victorian universities, a small number travelled overseas to further their studies in physical education, and some pursued the limited opportunities to study physical education within Education or Arts degrees at the universities of Sydney, Queensland and Western Australia.

It is important to note that both Dr Fritz Duras, and his successor Dr Bert Willee, made repeated attempts to establish a degree in physical education at the University of Melbourne. All attempts were unsuccessful. It seemed that although there was strong support from certain academics in the faculties of education, medicine and science, the professoriate (a body with considerably more power in the university then than now) hung tightly to its prejudiced and increasingly anachronistic views regarding the limited value and academic merit of physical education.

There was however a brief period of optimism when, after much debate and lobbying, in 1978 the university did establish a Department of Human Movement Studies within the
Faculty of Science under the leadership of Dr Willee. The department offered a 3 year Bachelor of Human Performance degree but this initiative was short-lived and the department was closed in 1983 two years after Willee's retirement.

Although the vision for the science of physical education articulated by Dr Duras in 1937 was lost at the University of Melbourne, by the 1980s the development of HMS as an academic field was taken up by other tertiary institutions with considerable enthusiasm. A dimension of Dr Duras's legacy does, however, live on at the University of Melbourne but you have to dig deep within the university website to find it. Physical education is part of the teacher education program within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education and its teaching staff are located in the academic cluster of Education, Equity and Social Change.

My recollections:

Although I was never a student of Dr Duras, the program of study that I took in my Diploma in Physical Education in the years 1965-66 was very similar to the one introduced by Duras 30 years before. Significantly, the content and standard of that program was markedly different from that of contemporary HMS degree programs that do not have the preparation of PE teachers as their primary focus.

There were a number of features of the Diploma in Physical Education that are worth highlighting:

- It was specifically to train PE teachers.
- It was designed to train PE teachers for the world of schooling of the 1940s & 50s and so by the 1960s much of the program's relevance was being challenged by changing educational philosophies.
- There was considerable time devoted to practical activities designed to teach what we would recognise today as subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge.
- The low academic status of physical education was a constant issue. This was, in part, a manifestation of mind-body dualism, and a general trivialising of physical activity as play - therefore non-serious.

There were many experiences from that program that stick in my memory:

- The embarrassment of doing minor games on the outside netball courts in full view of the 'real' uni students
- The regimented physical demands of personal gymnastics with Dr Willee
- Countless showers…we were not allowed to wear a tracksuit around campus as Dr Willee considered that it was unprofessional.
- Being on a teaching practicum at a well know private school in Punt Rd and watching some of the most miseducative physical education lessons its possible to imagine.
- Having to prepare lesson plans in which every word we spoke was scripted in advance.
All in all the two year Diploma in Physical Education was an intense experience and one that, in today's university calendar would be spread over 3 years. Lectures were from 9-5 each day and also Saturday morning. Very few students had part-time jobs because most were on teaching scholarships from the education department. Notwithstanding the inspiration of Brian Nettleton's humanistic approach to physical education, under the Directorship of Dr Bert Willee there was a strong militaristic discourse that pervaded the program. It was no coincidence that when, along with some of my fellow classmates, I began National Service in 1969 and found the Army routines very familiar.

After National Service, and inspired by my Melbourne Teachers College mentor Bob Croft, I travelled to Perth to upgrade my Diploma and a collection of Arts subjects to a degree in education. I returned to Victoria to take up a lecturing position at Geelong Teachers College in 1973. It was soon obvious that postgraduate qualifications were necessary to secure ongoing employment in the Teachers College sector so I returned to the University of Melbourne to complete a masters degree in education.

Serendipitously, my supervisor was Professor Brian Start who had originally trained as a PE teacher in the UK before becoming an academic educational psychologist and the John Smyth Professor of Education in this faculty. My thesis examined the nature and status of physical education in Geelong Primary schools and, I am sad to report that 30 years on, and notwithstanding numerous inquiries and initiatives, quality PE experiences for most primary school children are still the exception rather than common-place.

In the 1970s the tertiary education scene was changing and multiple opportunities became available to pursue a degree in the developing field of human movement studies. The Universities of Western Australia and Queensland both had degree programs which, although at that time still called Physical Education, were in fact proto-HMS degrees and not specifically for the training of PE teachers. Non-university colleges and institutes such as Victoria College, Rusden, and Preston and Footscray Institutes of Technology also began programs in human movement studies. Postgraduate opportunities eventually followed and the academic credibility of the field gradually improved.

Important in the development of HMS across the 1980s and 90s was the rise of interest in sport science and the science of elite sport performance in particular. The development of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and later state-based sports institutes and academies together with the increasing use of sports science in professional sports contexts enhanced the growing credibility of HMS. It is now possible to pursue a degree program of human movement studies in almost all Australia universities.

So what of the field of HMS today?

As an example of how the field has developed over the past 30 years I will present a brief overview of the School of Human Movement Studies at the University of Queensland. This is not meant to be an advertisement for UQ but is meant to be illustrative only.
At UQ, the School of HMS began as a Department of PE in the School of Education. Now located in the Faculty of Health Science, it has its own purpose-built facility incorporating laboratories, offices, teaching spaces and the old PE gym. The School of HMS has some

- 464 (18 international) undergraduate BHMS students
- 200 (34 international) postgraduate coursework students
- 87 (13 international) research higher degree students (MPhil or PhD)
- 1751 (139 international) students enrolled in HMS elective through other programs
- 46 teaching and research staff (including 12 research only staff)
- 13 support staff

Undergraduate programs offered include:
- Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Exercise Science)
- Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Education)
- Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Exercise Science)/B. Bus Man
- Bachelor of Arts (Sports Studies)

Postgraduate coursework programs include:
- Exercise science
- Ergonomics
- Human Movement Science
- Sports Coaching
- Sport & Exercise Psychology
- Sports Medicine

HMS Graduates now find employment in a wide variety of settings including
- Education system (schools and universities);
- Sports institutes and academies
- Sports clubs
- Health system
- Public service sector
- State and local government
- NGOs (eg., National Heart Foundation)
- Fitness industry

In terms of research, the School of HMS graduates over 15 PhD/MPhil students each year and has a very diverse research agenda. Here is a sample of some of the funded research:

Davies, P., Macdonald, D., Coyne, E., & Abbott, R. (2005–2008), Queensland Health—Survey of body mass index, nutrition and physical activity behaviours of Queensland school children,


imaging follow-up study.


All this is a very long way from the modest beginnings started by Dr Duras at the University of Melbourne in 1937.

I want now to shift gears and attempt to ‘connect some dots’ (Klein, 2000) that represent a number of contemporary discourses that have had a significant influence on HMS as a developing academic and professional field. These include the discourses of neo-liberalism, risk society, and the new public health, and their derivatives, the cult of the body and the obesity ‘crisis’. This overview will, of necessity, be somewhat cursory, but my hope is that you will get some sense of the complex and interconnected social world in which contemporary conceptions of HMS are constructed and operationalised.

Let me consider each discourse in turn

**Neo-liberalism**

Neo-liberalism is a political philosophy that has been increasingly influential in most Western democracies since the 1980s. Neo-liberal initiatives are characterized by free market policies, deregulation, encouragement of private enterprise and consumer choice, small(er) government, the outsourcing of Government services to private providers, and reward for personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative. The discourses of neo-liberalism are those of competition, human capital, individual responsibility and, although in themselves not necessarily bad, collectively they can be dangerous. You would recognise them in the worst of Thacherism in the UK, Reaganomics in the USA, Rogernomics in NZ, and economic rationalism in Australia.

Education in most Western democracies has been significantly influenced by neo-liberal ideals. As education researcher Alan Luke (2002:1) laments, there is “now [an] internationally rampant vision of schooling, teaching and learning based solely on systemic efficiency and the measurable technical production of human capital”. In the logic of neo-liberalism schools and universities are seen as providing educational services
to clients, and there is ample evidence that the marketisation of education has proceeded apace since the mid 1980s in countries such as USA, Canada, the UK, New Zealand and Australia (Marginson.1993). Education is increasingly treated as if it were just another widget!

In Australia at the present time our educational system is charged with the task of educating for a ‘clever country’ in which future citizens are multi-skilled, competent with information technology, literate and numerate in order that they play a productive part in a globalised economy. In addition, citizens of our ‘clever country’ should also be healthy citizens who are self-regulating, informed, and capable of constructing their own healthy lifestyle and minimising risky behaviours. In a neo-liberal context healthy citizens are seen as more productive in their working life and they do not become a burden on the state as they age. Within the school system, it is the subject of HPE that has the major responsibility for educating the future healthy citizen.

**Risk Society**

These neo-liberal orientations to the notion of the healthy citizen are also heavily influenced by the discourses of what Ulrich Beck termed *Risk Society*. In Beck's view, although modern society has overcome some of the risks that were of nature's origin, in the process of applying science and technology we have created new risks and uncertainties. For example, the environmental consequences of pollution, the volatility of the stock market, and the side effects of drugs are all manufactured risks that create considerable uncertainty. Modern societies are increasingly organised in response to such manufactured risks. The attempt is to minimise risk and to bring about some certainty of outcome.

In terms of health we continually strive for certainty but must live with uncertainty - we simply can't eliminate all risk from living. Pursuing a healthy lifestyle is a game of risk management. Increasingly, whole traditions of eating, drinking, and living in general have been put under the spotlight of science and claimed to be risky. We can't even be certain that Mum's Sunday roast is healthy.

The discourses regarding what's safe and what's risky in relation to diet, alcohol intake, sexual practices, and levels of physical activity are a constant part of our contemporary lives. As a response to this uncertainty, and encouraged by the HMS profession, increasing numbers of individuals seek control over their body through exercise and diet regimes. Most learn that control is illusory.

But it's not just that certainty is illusory, the actual quest for certainty can be highly problematic. Sociologist John Law (1994) is forthright in condemning the holy grail of certainty as a feature of modernity that leads to 'hideous purity’ (Law, 1994) of the kind that saw Dr Duras forced to leave Germany in the 1930s.

The problem for HMS is that the lure of certainty resides in the very scientific discourse that forms the dominant way of knowing within the field and thus influences what HMS professionals think, advocate and practice. I will return to this issue later.
The New Public Health.
Influenced by the discourses of risk society and neo-liberalism, the focus of contemporary public health has shifted from hygiene and disease control to the social and personal factors of risk that have arisen from changing lifestyles (Petersen and Lupton (1996). This 'new public health', is underpinned by the science of epidemiology in which population data are used to determine risks associated with various lifestyle practices.

The 'new public health' encourages us to make prudent decisions regarding those lifestyle practices that impact on our health. But making 'good' choices is not as easy as it might seem, for although there is considerable information available to us to assist us to make informed decisions, we are constantly bombarded with messages from various vested interests to consume on the one hand and abstain on the other. We are then expected to constantly self-monitor to see how we measure up.

Significantly the emergence of the new public health has resulted in the creation of a new sub-discipline of HMS that focuses specifically on health-related physical activity. Underpinning this development is the belief that the relationship between physical activity and health should be the cornerstone of contemporary public health.

However, while the benefits of physical activity are a central message of the 'new public health', precisely how much activity is required to offset the risk of disease is currently uncertain and no exact prescription has yet been provided. The only agreement that has been reached among the experts is that physical activity should be promoted as part of a 'new public health' agenda.

Public awareness of the health benefits of physical activity was facilitated in Australia, during the 1970s and 80s, as part of a 'new health consciousness' in which the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle were linked to increased rates of Coronary Heart Disease (CHD). CHD became known as a hypokinetic disease and we saw the rise of jogging (James Fix) and aerobics (Jane Fonda) as lifestyle practices with a preventative health orientation. In Australian school PE there was advocacy for health related fitness (HRF) and in the early 1980s new school curriculum materials were developed as a particular response to the new health consciousness.

The obesity 'crisis'
However, in this first decade of the 21st century, the public health issue that galvanises HMS is no longer CHD. It is the obesity 'crisis'.

It is hard to avoid being confronted with messages about the so-called obesity 'crisis' or 'epidemic' if you live a life of even moderate consciousness. Media pronouncements, advertisements, magazine features, government policies etc are all manifestations of risk discourses central to this burgeoning concern.

To date, those in the field of HMS who express some caution regarding the claims made in support of the obesity 'crisis' argument have been treated with derision or at least marginalised by exercise scientists and health promotion experts. While not denying the
serious health issues associated with the morbidly obese, and the increased numbers of individuals who might be categorised as such, there are some serious arguments that need to be considered before jumping on the obesity 'crisis' bandwagon.

For example, in translating scientific research into public policy and health promotion, the ‘new public health’ involves prescriptions about how we should live our lives. As a manifestation of neo-liberalism, this slippage from empirical evidence into a moralising discourse places the blame solely on individuals for their poor lifestyle choices.

*Cult of the body*

Significantly, health concerns over obesity easily slip into equating body shape to health. As Petersen (1997) argues physical appearance has become a signifier of worthiness and

“… the body has become a crucial means by which the individual can express publicly such virtues as self-control, self-discipline and will power”.

The 'cult of the body' also works to reinforce unhealthy body practices such as repetitive dieting, bulimia and anorexia-nervosa and excessive exercising. Unfortunately, too often, HMS is complicit in creating and maintaining its place as central to the images, if not the reality, of healthy lifestyles constructed around certain body management practices that reinforce the cult of the body.

This cult of the body is clearly fed by risk discourses. Of course there is resistance to these discourses by some individuals, and while acknowledging that some young people have positive and healthful attitudes to their bodies, many still reach adulthood oppressed by the tyranny of the cult of the body. Anxiety regarding our bodies, what we put in them, what we should do with them, what they look like, and what they ‘should’ look like, continues to be widespread and some social analysts claim that this is a significant factor in much of today's postmodern neuroticism.

*The place of schools*

In the midst of our cultural obsession with bodies, and with risk management, the education system, and school HPE in particular, has been now called upon to provide an antidote to the obesity 'epidemic'. By foregrounding its role in preparing children for a lifetime of physical activity school PE has been targeted as a front-line site for the 'war on obesity'.

Of course thinking about the role of PE as contributing to a healthier citizenry is certainly not new. At the beginning of the 20th century we saw the early forms of PE (mainly drill and mass exercises) used specifically with the intention of ‘making’ docile and healthy children. And certainly the health benefits of physical activity were central to the values that underpinned Dr Duras's conception of PE.

What is new is the neo-liberal inspired call for school PE to be held accountable for this aspiration. American researchers Sallis, McKenzie & colleagues go as far as to suggest that “Although it is not possible for school physical education to provide all the
recommended daily physical activity, physical education should be judged in part on how it contributes to national health objectives” (1997, p.1331).

Although there is no evidence of a direct relationship between school physical education and adult lifestyle practices, it is assumed that a sound physical education program will provide children with the experience of being physically active and this experience will be perpetuated in adulthood.

Neo-liberal orientations support the proposition that it is an individual responsibility to manage one’s own physical activity and eating practices. However, governments believe they also must be seen to act in regard to the health concerns of the obesity ‘crisis’. So the State intervenes and creates new school policies such as the Smart Moves initiative in Queensland that mandates the amount of physical activity that each child is supposed to receive each week within school.

In a neo-liberal accountability context, schools are asked to provide evidence of the impact of new initiatives such as Smart Moves. This invariably creates a problem of regarding the nature of evidence and how it should be communicated. In Hong Kong and Singapore, for example, accountability related to school PE is publicly demonstrated by school rankings on measures of fitness and Body Mass Index (BMI). Some of my HMS colleagues think such measures would be a good idea in Australia.

The fact that there is a spurious relationship between BMI, fitness and health is unacknowledged or ignored in the rush by governments to be seen to be doing something. But holding school PE accountable for producing healthy citizens by attempting to scientifically measure its impact on child obesity or future lifestyle practices will be doomed for failure simply because there are too many other variables which are beyond the control of schools or teachers.

There was a nice example recently of a Queensland School caught between competing discourses and school policies. Belgian Gardens State school in Townsville, as a response to a heightened concern over possible risks involved in the playground banned the performance of cartwheels in the school grounds. The press and the public were quick to point out the irony of this act in the context of the 2008: Year of Physical Activity celebration by the Queensland government that is all about encouraging more incidental and formal physical activity in schools.

If you need to be more disillusioned by Government initiatives into the realm of the new public health, then I recommend you watch the ABC’s first episode of Hollowmen that focused specifically on the obesity crisis. It is simultaneously humorous and depressing.

**The diminished influence of schooling**

Most of the new health oriented school curriculum initiatives rest on the assumption that schools still can, and do, have a major impact on young people's knowledge, values and attitudes. The problem is that schools now have considerable competition from other
cultural players with particular vested interests in capturing the hearts, minds and bodies of young people.

In the context of neo-liberalism the distinctions between education, entertainment and advertising have been blurred. Popular culture is increasingly seen as an arm of the corporate curriculum. As Steinberg & Kincheloe (1997: 3) observed, “education takes place in a variety of social sites including but not limited to schooling” and young people's identities are formed and knowledge is produced and legitimated in and through consumer culture. Moreover, corporate pedagogues have become postmodern society’s most successful teachers and the formal institution of schooling is consequently having less influence.

This has huge implications for the field of HMS and school PE and health.

To understand how HMS has become implicated in this complex arrangement it is necessary to know something about the contemporary training of HMS professionals.

The question of 'training'
In very fundamental ways, how HMS professionals, including teachers of HPE, think about their professional work is integrally related to the ways in which they think about their bodies. In contemporary programs of HMS students are schooled in certain ways of thinking about the body. They come to know the body in particular ways.

Most HMS programs privilege learning about the body through science and scientific knowledge of the body is considered the most important professional knowledge. Although the heavy emphasis on science is understandable given the history of physical education and its constant struggle for academic status, it does have its limitations. It tends to focus attention on measures of performance and ignores meaning. It provides only one way of knowing.

In 1565 the Italian Mattioli illustrated two ways of knowing a frog. He suggested that you could dissect the frog to find out how it works. You could also observe the frog in its natural habitat and find out how it is in nature. These two contrasting ways of knowing a frog are illustrative of how we can know our bodies, physical activity and health in and through HMS. The point is that although BOTH ways are legitimate and important, HMS privileges one way of knowing the frog.

In the typical HMS program the emphasis is on scientific intellectual knowing about the body and movement, and this has resulted in graduates who may not have had any connection with, nor seriously studied, aesthetic or philosophical dimensions of movement culture. Moreover, the emphasis on the intellectual has been accompanied by a gradual decrease in the importance given to experience in and of physical activity itself. In turn, this has resulted in the lamentable situation where some students can now graduate as HPE teachers without having developed familiarity with, and/or competence in, the movement subject matter they might be required to teach in schools.
My concern is that as HMS continues to privilege science as the way of knowing, humanistic, philosophical, aesthetic and experiential ways of knowing are marginalised or ignored and our graduates' understandings are depleted accordingly.

So what might Dr Duras think of this situation?

Although Dr Duras was an advocate of the 'anatomy of bodily exercise', I think he might have been bothered by the dominance of science and the marginalisation of other ways of knowing. My guess is that he would have shared C.P.Snow's (1959) anxieties regarding the tendency for increased specialisation to lead to communication difficulties between scientists and non-scientists.

You see, Dr Duras, like many physical education professionals of his time, was a Renaissance man who appreciated two cultures. He was both scientist and humanist. He received a classics education at the Humanistic Gymnasium in Bonn and his knowledge of medical science, the arts, languages and music was embedded in his approach to physical education as human service profession.

It seems to me that at this point in its evolution the field of HMS is in real need of more professionals like Dr Duras, professionals who know about the body, physical activity and health from both scientific and humanistic perspectives. Of course, we cannot turn the clock back to the educational context of early 20th century Europe. Our social context is different and, like it or not, Latin, Greek, philosophy, the arts and music do not rank high in the current neo-liberal educational agenda. In making this observation I hasten to add that am not taking a nostalgic or fundamentalist line and arguing for a return to a mythical golden age of education. Nor am I interested in science-bashing.

What I am suggesting is that HMS needs to do a better job in assisting its future professionals to work in the contemporary social world. This would necessitate that HMS be cautious of allowing science and technology to define its essence. Human movement is as much a social experience as a biological experience. It is as much emotion as it is sweat.

The contribution of HMS to the obesity 'crisis' provides a good example. The science of obesity allows us only a partial understanding of this contemporary phenomenon. The obesity 'crisis' is as much social, cultural, political and emotional as it is biological.

In my view university programs of HMS should help students understand the connections, between the social, cultural and political influences on their future work regarding the healthy active citizen.

In conclusion:

In terms of the main discourses operating as the social context for contemporary HMS we cannot ignore the fact that neo-liberal and risk discourses are now built in to our
educational systems. We cannot operate outside this context. We can, however, strive to shift the valued discourses of our field by teaching a more balanced curriculum.

In relation to school PE, the future unfortunately will not be found in trying to evoke arguments for the intrinsic value of movement as an educational activity. Instrumentalism is central to neo-liberalism and it is the instrumental purposes of PE that are now highlighted. However, while educating young people about the consequences of certain lifestyle practices and giving them skills to adequately make choices is a worthy focus for school HPE, holding it to account on the basis of its success in preventing young people from becoming obese is folly.

There is little doubt that researching, teaching and advocating particular healthy lifestyle practices will continue to be a central focus of HMS. The popular attention to, and interest in the body, physical activity and health creates many opportunities for HMS. But it also brings with it responsibilities.

In my view HMS has a responsibility, not just to teach, research and advocate for physical activity, but also to critique inappropriate body management practices, be they related to physical activity or weight control. The uncritical celebration and implicit endorsement of the discourse of the cult of the body is professionally irresponsible and morally problematic. HMS must adopt a self-critical reflective position with respect to its work and we should be prepared to do so publicly. Failure to do so will, in the long run, undermine the positive contributions the field can make to the human experience of physical activity and to the health of future populations.

In his closing address the delegates of the 1956 World Pre-Olympic Congress in Melbourne, Fritz Duras revealed something of his philosophy to education and life and in so doing provides a worthwhile compass bearing for our future thinking in human movement studies. I will close with his words:

One question is usually asked when a Congress such as ours comes to an end - 'What did we do?' Today, let me ask a different question, more searching and perhaps more important. 'What did we become?' Did we become more thoughtful? Did we become more aware of our problems, our tasks, our duties? Did we become more able to do justice to our profession? Did we become - and this perhaps is the deciding question - did we become more as human beings?


Thank you