

## TGFU AND ITS GOVERNANCE: FROM CONCEPTION TO SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

TGFU Y SU GOBERNANZA: DESDE LA CONCEPCIÓN HASTA EL GRUPO DE INTERÉS ESPECIAL

Joy **BUTLER** (University of British Columbia — Canada)<sup>1</sup>

Alan **OVENS** (University of Auckland — New Zealand)<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) has emerged over the past thirty years as one of the leading instructional models for sports coaches and physical education teachers. From its initial beginning as a set of theoretical and practical initiatives on how to teach games, TGfU has evolved to become one of the most readily identifiable pedagogical movements within the sports and physical education field. In this paper we aim to document and study this development in a way that acknowledges the complexity and collectivity involved. At one level, it is easy to see that there is a broad mix of people who value this model and want to work in a collaborative way to promote, research and advance it. At another level, however, the problem becomes one of resisting the urge to simply tell the history without acknowledging the methodological issues involved. As historians would remind us, it is important that we never take history as fixed and linear. Instead, we must interrogate the popular construction of history and seek alternative perspectives in order to escape the confines of biography and experience. By reflecting on the dominant narratives, as well as a few counter narratives, we have a means to engage with and understand how key pedagogical initiatives, like TGfU, are supported and sustained in educational contexts.

### RESUMEN

El modelo Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) se ha convertido en los últimos treinta años en uno de los modelos de instrucción más relevantes para entrenadores deportivos y profesores de Educación Física. Desde su comienzo como un conjunto de iniciativas teóricas y prácticas sobre cómo enseñar juegos deportivos, el modelo TGFU ha evolucionado hasta convertirse en uno de los movimientos pedagógicos más fácilmente identificables dentro del deporte y la Educación Física. En este artículo

<sup>1</sup> E-mail: [joy.butler@ubc.ca](mailto:joy.butler@ubc.ca)

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: [a.ovens@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:a.ovens@auckland.ac.nz)

pretendemos documentar y estudiar este desarrollo en una forma que contemple la complejidad y la colectividad involucrada. A cierto nivel, es fácil ver que hay una amplia mezcla de gente que valora este modelo y desea trabajar de forma colaborativa para su promoción, investigación y desarrollo. En otro nivel, sin embargo, el problema reside en evitar la tentación de simplemente contar la historia sin reconocer los aspectos metodológicos implicados. Como los historiadores nos recordarían, es importante que nunca interpretemos la historia como fija y lineal. En cambio, debemos cuestionar la construcción popular de la historia y buscar perspectivas alternativas para escapar de los límites de la biografía y la experiencia. Al reflexionar sobre las narrativas dominantes, también sobre unas pocas narrativas particulares, tenemos la intención de abordar y comprender cómo iniciativas pedagógicas, como el TGfU, son apoyadas y mantenidas en contextos educativos.

**KEYWORDS.** Teaching Games for Understanding; governance; networks; complexity theory; AIESEP; decision making processes; Special Interest Group.

**PALABRAS CLAVE.** Enseñanza Comprensiva del Deporte; gobernanza; redes; teoría compleja; AIESEP; procesos de toma de decisiones; Grupo de Interés Especial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Our focus in this paper is both substantive and synthetic. By substantive, we mean our aim is to document the history of the TGfU movement, from conception/inception to establishment and institutionalization. We note that little attention has been paid in the research literature to how transnational communities or networks like TGfU self-organize into different configurations as social entities (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Ball, 2012). In this sense, we believe it is important to detail how TGfU moved from an idea to special interest group. By synthetic, we mean our approach is to build from the available evidence and recognize complex forms rather than to adopt an analytic approach that involves reduction and breaking things apart. To do this, we have assembled evidence from a range of sources with the aim of weaving together these disparate elements to narrate a history (rather than tell *the* history). In this way, we hope to provide a record that enables teachers, coaches and scholars an appreciation of the TGfU model and the social network central to its popularity.

We begin by sketching out the conceptual terrain upon which our discussion moves and introduce some of the key ideas that we draw upon and deploy later.

## 2. TGfU AND NETWORK GOVERNANCE

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One of the key issues facing contemporary scholars is how to conceptualize social movements like TGfU. The development of the Internet and mobile technologies has enabled new forms of social organization to emerge that are difficult to imagine using older analytic labels and methods. Movements like TGfU represent evolving and decentralized social networks made up of individuals who form a virtual community but are not members of the same formal institution or even country (Howard, 2002). A

variety of terms have become popular in conceptualizing such social collectivity, including epistemic communities, communities of practice, knowledge networks, discourse communities, affinity groups, and social semiotic spaces. We note that any of these terms could be used to analyze the social grouping around TGfU; however, for the purposes of this paper we believe the notion of network has the most generative power. In particular, we use the concept of network governance (Ball & Junemann, 2012) as a lens to examine the evolution of the TGfU movement, with a particular focus on the interactions between actors and groups and their influence on the process of network formation (Sorenson and Torfing, 2005).

Network governance combines two useful but slippery concepts. The first, networks, refers to social groupings that are composed of actors (nodes) linked through an interdependent pattern of relationships. Networks can exist among dispersed and local combinations of friends, family, acquaintances and colleagues. The value of modeling these connections as a network is that the concept can accommodate the informal, self-organising and fluid nature of social connectivity and the way that such entities frequently have shifting memberships and ambiguous relationships, accountabilities and boundaries (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In this way, the concept of networks proves a powerful way to think of TGfU as an evolving network of ideas, resources and people facilitated by a growing range of publications, websites, conferences and workshops.

The second concept, governance, draws attention to the way authority and decision making is exercised within a network with respect to governing the ongoing creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms core to sustaining the network. It is frequently contrasted with the notion of government, which is seen as a hierarchical form of governing within a given political system. When combined, the notion of network governance draws attention to the dense fabric of ties, expertise, reputation, and legitimation that work as governing mechanisms to network activity and how such patterns of relations become institutionalized and stabilized through the work of various nodal actors.

The forms of network governance can be mapped along two different dimensions. The first relates to brokerage, or how governance is structurally facilitated. On this dimension, brokerage can range from being decentralized and shared by all the participants in a network to being highly centralized through a single, lead organization. The second relates to control, or where control of the network is located and extends from. On this dimension, networks can be participant governed or externally governed. The advantage of thinking of governance in this way is that we can better understand the institutionalization of power relations and the different network governance configurations that have and are emerging.

Using network governance in this way, we suggest the history of TGfU can be conceptualized as a network that has evolved through different configurations. The transition from one configuration to another is marked by significant moments that have brought about a critical change within the network.

### 3. A CONCEPT BORN FROM CONCERN

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The genesis of the Teaching Games for Understanding can be traced back to social and educational transformations occurring as early as the 1950s and 1960s. While sport had always been popular, it was around this time that there was a rapid growth in the sport sciences and a corresponding focus on how to improve sports performance through the systematization of coaching and training (Tinning, 2010). Kirk (2010) identifies this as a period of time when physical education went through a significant paradigm shift from being broadly oriented around gymnastics to being broadly oriented around the teaching of sports techniques. This paradigm shift saw an increased attention given to sport and was dominated by what Tinning (2010) calls the 'Demonstration, Explanation and Practice' approach to teaching, or what Rovegno (1995) identified as a molecular approach to teaching and learning. In essence, it was believed that a complex activity like a game or sport was best learnt by breaking it down and mastering its individual constituent parts. It was an approach supported by the scientific and educational research at the time and has become a normalized and deeply sedimented practice that continues to be hegemonic (Kirk, 2010).

As this molecular approach became popular, focused as it was on mastering the technical aspects of performance, there was a corresponding growing level of concern about this way of teaching and coaching. Amongst these were concerns that a growing number of children were achieving little success, players had poor decision making skills, there was an overdependence on the teacher or coach to make tactical decisions, that techniques were taught out of context, there was poor transference of learning to games, players had a poor ability to adapt and create in game situations, lessons provided limited opportunities to play, and there was little focus on individual learning of children (Werner, Thorpe & Bunker, 1996). Some may argue that this list continues to be the concerns TGfU seeks to address in contemporary settings, but at the time they were concerns held by a loose confederation of coaches, teachers and school advisors with a core group concentrated at Loughborough University.

It was in Loughborough University that the people key to the TGfU model came into contact and struck up a useful and productive collaboration (Werner & Almond, 1990). Len Almond, who was newly appointed to Loughborough University in the 1970s, recalls a pivotal moment when he had the opportunity to watch Rod Thorpe teach net games to a group of postgraduate students and was fascinated by his approach (Video interview, 2012). This led to a series of meetings along with others like David Bunker, who had been developing their own approach through their work with students, teachers, advisors and colleagues. Through these meetings, the key principles of what would become Teaching Games for Understanding were debated, distilled, and refined.

This group was no outlier in the sense that no one else was also working in similar ways. As Thorpe and Bunker (1996) observed, the idea of working from understanding (why) to skills (how) was not new. Likewise, Werner & Almond (1990) identify and discuss a range of other models that were also developing and being promoted at the time for

the teaching of games. However, according to Kirk (2010), what was fundamentally different was the way this group challenged the molecular approach to teaching oriented around practicing technique prior to and isolated from game play. Instead, they promoted participation in games modified to suit the level and experience of the players and developed this in a way that made its organization and application coherent. Their emphasis was on players developing a tactical awareness, which would then provide the need for subsequent skill development. The model they developed provided a basis that could be used to plan overall programmes, units of work and individual lessons (Thorpe and Bunker, 1996).

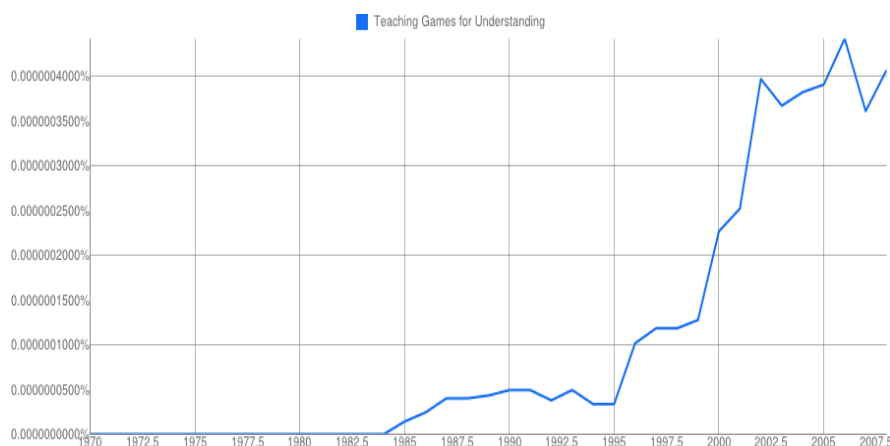
#### 4. EXPANSION AND PROLIFERATION

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The publication of the model in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* in 1982 (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982) was a key historical moment in the evolution of the TGfU network. Prior to this, the network was centralized at Loughborough University and sustained through the workshops and discussions the Loughborough team had with students and teachers. Publication provided the means for both normalizing the principles involved and generating immense interest from pedagogy researchers and sports organizations (Kirk, 2010). In effect, the article enabled TGfU to become a concept around which a broad range of people could cluster in order to use it as the basis of their own teaching and research. From a governance perspective, we can see that publication of the model also acted as a catalyst to reconfigure the network since as the network of people identifying with the model grew, its governance essentially became decentralized with control exercised through a common language and concepts provided by the model.

One way of analyzing the development of the network at this time is by looking at how often its terminology has been used in the published literature. Google provides a way of doing this through their n-gram viewer. This facility allows anyone to find with what frequency a word or phrase is used in their collection of over 5 million books (which equates to roughly 4 percent of all books that have ever been published). **Figure 1** depicts the frequency of use for the term “Teaching games for Understanding” and it plots an interesting shape. As expected, the term was not in use much before 1982 and initially has a modest rise in usage. In 1995 there was a sudden increase and then a leveling off around through the 2000s. While it is debatable what this may reveal about the evolution of the model, it does indicate that in the 1990s the model became something of a movement that attracted a range of scholars and supporters.

(**Figure 3** presents, some pages later, a similar result when the number of article publications are plotted over time.)



**Figure 1:** Frequency of the phrase 'Teaching Games for Understanding' in published literature from 1970-2008 (downloaded from Google, 2012)

The period between the 1980s and 2000s is interesting not so much for the ability of TGfU to change PE practice in schools, laudable as that might be, but in the degree to which the model became theorized, replicated, and legitimized. Since its first appearance, TGfU has been researched using information processing and schema theory, situated learning, ecological psychology, dynamical systems theory, constructivism(s) and, more latterly, complexity theory. In addition, there have been many interpretations and iterations of the original model as well as the promotion of models based on very similar ideas such as Tactical Games (Griffin et al., 1997; Mitchell et al., 2003, 2006, 2013), Games Sense (Thorpe, 1996; Light, 2013), Play Practice (Lauder, 2001; Lauder and Piltz, 2013), Invasion Games Competency model (Tallir et al., 2003, 2005; Mesquita et al., 2012), Tactical decision learning model, (Grehaigine and Godbout 1997, 1998; Grehaigine et al., 2005, 2012), Games Concept Approach (Rossi et al., 2006) and the Clinic-Game Day approach (Alexander and Penny, 2005). For readers interested in exploring more about the theoretical basis and diversity of these variations, we suggest these three helpful resources. The first, by Oslin and Mitchell (2006), covers the period from 1982 until 2006; the second, by Harvey and Jarrett (2013), covers the period from 2006 and the third, by Stolz and Pill (2013), provides an excellent overview to anyone who is interested in learning more about the literature and research of TGfU and its major interpretations.

The growing interest in TGfU led to the concern that there needed to be better coordination and communication between those involved. The problem was how to initiate this and do so with a sense of authority that would carry some weight. Joy Butler, recognizing the need to garner support from the field's senior scholars, advocated that the best way forward was to convene a conference and in 2001 she, along with Linda Griffin (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Ben Lombardo (University of Rhode Island) and Rich Nastasi (Endicott College, MA) ran the first TGfU conference at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, US. As advocates for TGfU, the conference organizers were excited by the enthusiastic response to the conference call and saw

an opportunity to harness the excitement of 150+ delegates from twenty-one different countries. Accordingly, they convened a town meeting (August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001), which was attended by 70 delegates (almost half of those in attendance). Butler argued that if TGfU was to become a global initiative focused upon broadening the scope and changing the ethos of physical education and coaching, it must be anchored in sound research through a community of inquiry focused on the exploration of ideas. She proposed that an international committee be established – a proposal that was unanimously endorsed by those in attendance. At this moment, the TGfU Task Force was born.

## 5. INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND CONSOLIDATION

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The proposal for a Task Force represents another transitional moment in the reconfiguration of the TGfU network governance. There was a recognition that there needed to be a coordinated approach to leadership of the network and a way of coordinating the diversity of activity occurring around the model. There was also a belief that any centralization of governance needed a sense of legitimacy through some external control in the form of a partnership that would help sustain international interest and ensure the maintenance of quality research. AIESEP (Association Internationale des Ecoles Superieures d'Education Physique or International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education) was seen as a likely partner in establishing the conditions and networks necessary to theorize and research TGfU. AIESEP was, and is, a well-established and respected international organization immersed in teacher education in Higher Education. The AIESEP president Ron Feingold was present at the 2001 conference and endorsed the proposed application for a TGfU task force.

The first official meeting of the task force (October, 2002 – **figure 2,**) set out to establish a mission statement and list a number of objectives. This proved to be a lengthy, but necessary, process. One of the substantial outcomes of the meeting was to establish a TGfU seminar conference series, to be held every two years. The task force also approved Richard Light's (at that time at the University of Melbourne) proposal to host the second international TGfU Conference in 2003. Whenever possible, the task force met at these conferences since most, if not all, members were likely to be in attendance.

By the 2006 AIESEP World Congress in Finland, the TGfU Task force decided that the movement had become large enough to propose yet another change to its configuration. In effect, the proposal was to become a special interest group of AIESEP (which would be their first), and be governed by an executive committee established through the membership for the exclusive purpose of coordinating and sustaining the network. The policies and procedures, including election processes that had been inaugurated at the initial meeting in Finland (July 2006) were developed and strengthened. The transition of Task Force to SIG was ratified at the TGfU conference in Vancouver in 2008.



**Figure 2.** Inaugural meeting for the TGfU Task force at October 2002 AIESEP World Congress in La Coruña, Spain.

**Front Row:** Michael Damody (Ireland), Doune McDonald, John Halbert (Ireland) David Kirk (UK), Joy Butler (US)

**Second Row:** Natalie Wallian (France), Jean-Francis Greghaigne (France), Robert Martin (US), John Cheffers (US),

**Third Row:** Keh Nvit Chin (Taiwan), Raymond Liu (HK), Ming Chow (HK) Stephen Tan (Singapore), Minna Blomqvist (Finland), Lauri Laakso (Finland)

**Fourth Row:** Luis Miguel García-López (Spain), Richard Light (AU), Richard Nastasi (US).

**Fifth Row:** Mary O'Sullivan (Ireland), Darryl Siedentop (US), Deborah Tannehill (US)

The TGfU Special Interest Group (SIG) initially provided for members to vote an Executive committee to provide centralized leadership. As the work of the SIG began to take hold, attendance at the seminar conferences grew, and the body of TGfU literature expanded. In 2010 the SIG acknowledged this burgeoning interest and began to actively seek out teachers, coaches, and academics who were engaged in new TGfU projects and initiatives. As educators from across the globe were invited to contribute ideas to the broad discussion, the momentum behind recognizing this group more formally began to grow. This became formalized on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010, when the TGfU Executive approved the request to form an International Advisory Board (IAB) as part of the TGfU Special Interest Group. Their decision was ratified at the SIG General Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at AIESEP Congress, La Coruna, Spain.

The current role of the IAB is to disseminate TGfU SIG policies to critical organizations within member's country, while at the same time informing the SIG of pertinent information regarding progress of TGfU in each member's country. Applications to join the International Advisory Board must be approved by the Executive before a member



is voted onto the board for a four-year term. The TGfU International Advisory Board currently represents seventeen countries over six continents. Member profiles can be obtained on the TGfU website under the IAB tab. These members have been in place since 2012. It is the hope of the Executive and IAB that the national professional organizations will be involved in nominating and selecting future members to the IAB. This will ensure a more democratic process in selecting members to the board.

## 6. EXPLORING THE WORK IN 'NETWORK'

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Mapping the institutionalisation of the network is one thing, but it is also important to see how such reconfigurations affect what outcomes the network can achieve. The initial mission statement, revised slightly with the formation of the TGfU Special Interest Group, provides a sound indication of how the network conceptualised its purpose. It states,

The mission of the AIESEP TGfU Task Force (as of 2006 Special Interest Group) is to establish a globally representative group of institutions and individuals committed to the promotion and dissemination of scholarly inquiry around ways of knowing, learning and teaching through games centered approaches. One of our major goals is to broaden international cooperation and understanding among teachers, coaches, researchers, students and institutions of the world through best practice, critical educational and research collaborations and exchanges. This group will allow us to address global challenges such as language, terminology, practical interpretations, philosophical and theoretical differences, and the dissemination of information through national and international organizations.

While this statement outlines the broad aspirations for the Special Interest Group, a series of objectives were also developed around which the strategic actions of the group could focus. These were (see **table I**, next page),

1. Disseminate scholarly information, proceedings and resources
2. Promote international dialogue around theory, research and pedagogy.
3. Establish teaching / coaching programs
4. Create international networks for collaborative research, eg. Projects.
5. Review/ reflect upon philosophy, theory & research.
6. Explore and secure funding resources

**Table I.** Task Force/Special Interest Group objectives, action plans and results (tentative)

	Objectives	Action Plan	Results	(SIG) Future plan
1	Disseminate scholarly information, proceedings and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a website</li> <li>▪ Establish registry of interest members</li> <li>▪ Publish form and online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tgfuinfo.weebly.com</li> <li>▪ Development of Special Interest Group membership est. 2008 – AIESEP</li> <li>▪ Set of 5 books published &amp; 2 on line proceedings</li> <li>▪ Impact of conferences on publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updates on website</li> <li>▪ Discussion groups</li> <li>▪ Post resources</li> <li>▪ Different levels of membership</li> <li>▪ Encourage conference organizers to publish proceedings (on-line or book form)</li> </ul>
2	Promote international dialogue around theory, research and pedagogy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organize regular conference and 1-day seminars.</li> <li>▪ Discussion time for built into each day of conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seminar conferences (every 4 years – starting 2008): 2001 US, 2003 AU, 2005 HK, 2008 CAN, 2012 UK, 2016 GER.</li> <li>▪ AIESEP Congress 1-day seminar / workshops (every 4 years – starting 2006) 2006 FIN, 2010 Spain, 2014 NZ.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blogs to be established on website.</li> <li>▪ Develop other social media communications.</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ Support German 2016 conference team.</li> <li>▪ Invite applications for 2020 conference.</li> </ul>
3	Establish teaching / coaching programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop links to national organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial discussions in CAN and US</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding through grants - Connect liaison members with liaison to the national professional bodies</li> </ul>
4	Create international networks for collaborative research, ed. Projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Form International Advisory Board to the TGfU Executive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IAB approved in 2010, members representing 17 countries and 6 continents elected in 2012.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Video clips project</li> <li>▪ TGfU monograph</li> <li>▪ Botswana teacher ed.</li> </ul>
5	Review/ reflect upon philosophy, theory & research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create 'town-hall' meetings at conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Numerous articles published</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TGfU SIG mission statement, goals and action plan being revised.</li> </ul>
6	Explore and secure funding resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Memberships fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monies collected to fund website construction &amp; development</li> </ul>	

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to reflect on how these objectives have been achieved, it is possible to focus on two areas in particular. Firstly, with respect to the promotion and dissemination of scholarly inquiry around ways of knowing, learning and teaching through games centered approaches, the ongoing conferences, seminars and workshops have proven to be effective. There have been five TGfU conferences to date. The first three conferences were offered every two years, but then at the 2006 AIESEP task force meeting it was agreed that these should be every four years with a

one-day seminar before each AIESEP world congress. Since the AIESEP congresses are also offered every four years, but fall between the four-year cycle of the TGfU seminar conferences, this arrangement ensures that an international TGfU event takes place every two years. **Table II** lists the events, their location, theme, director and number of participants.

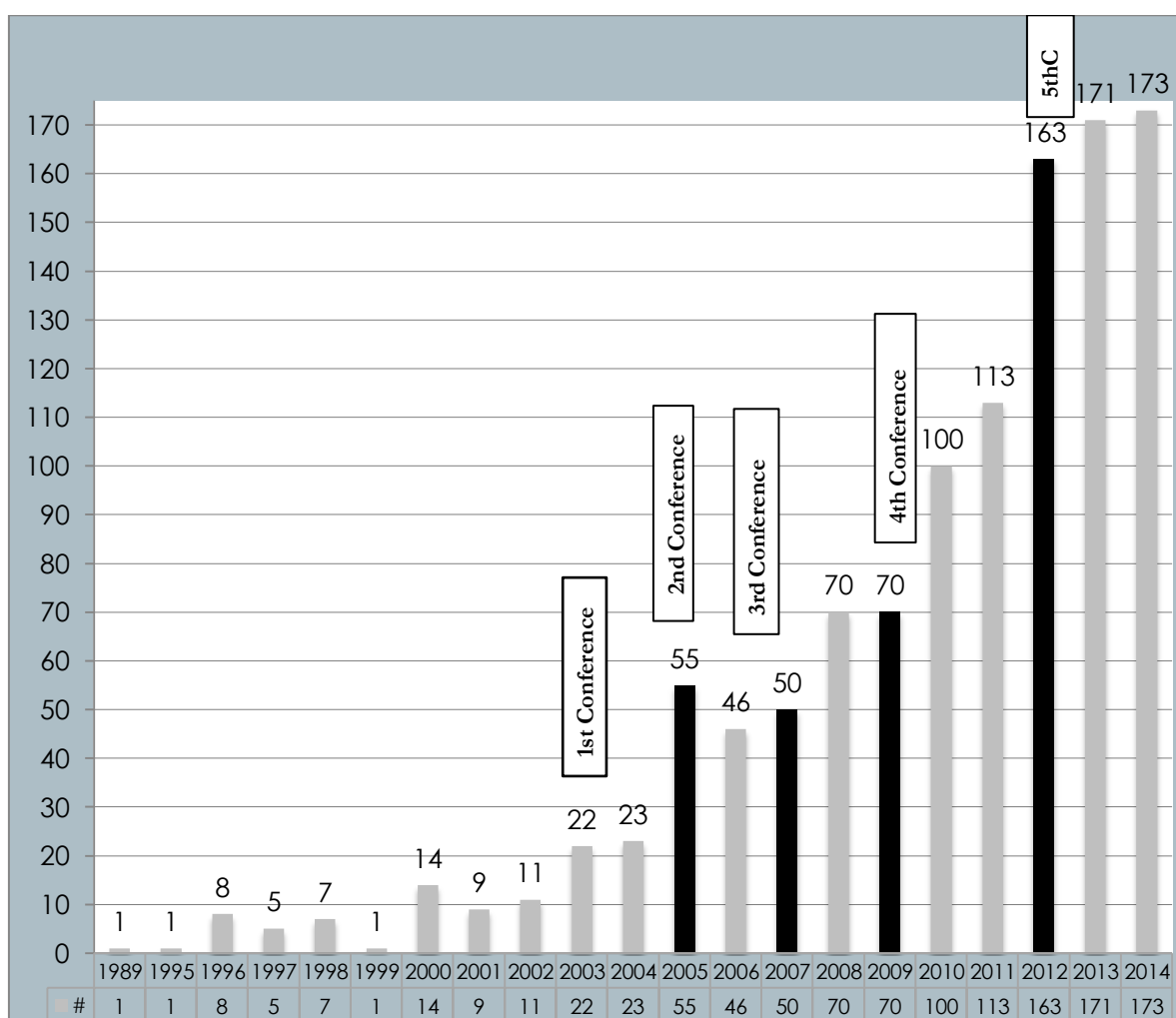
**Table II.** History of TGfU Seminar conferences and One-day Symposia

Date	Location	Theme	Director and Participants
2001	<b>Seminar Conference 1</b> Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, USA. Sponsored by Plymouth State University	Teaching Games for Understanding in Physical Education and Sport	Joy Butler (150 attendees, 17 countries)
2003	<b>Seminar Conference 2</b> Melbourne, AU. Sponsored by Melbourne University.	Teaching Sport and Physical Education for understanding	Richard Light (250 attendees, 21 countries)
2005	<b>Seminar Conference 3</b> Hong Kong. Sponsored by the Hong Kong Institute of Education	A Global Perspective of Physical Education and Sports	Raymond Liu (90 attendees, 15 countries)
2006	<b>One-day symposia</b> Jyvaskyla, Finland. Sponsored by AIESEP	The Role of Physical Education and Sport in Promoting Physical Activity and Health	Joy Butler and Richard Light
2008	<b>Seminar Conference 4</b> Vancouver, BC. Canada. Sponsored by University of British Columbia	Understanding Games: Enhancing Learning in Teaching and Coaching	Joy Butler (355 attendees, 26 countries, 5 continents).
2010	<b>One-day symposia</b> La Coruna, Spain. Sponsored by AIESEP	Exploring Personal and Social Responsibility in TGfU: From the Gymnasium to the Stadium	James Mandigo and Stephen Harvey
2012	<b>Seminar Conference 5</b> Loughborough, Leicester, UK. Sponsored by University of Loughborough	Celebrating 30 years of TGfU	Mary Healy and Lorraine Cale
2014	<b>One-day symposia</b> Auckland, New Zealand. Sponsored by AIESEP	Creating smart players through games centered learning	Dennis Slade
2016	<b>Seminar Conference 6</b> Cologne, Germany. Sponsored by German Sport University	TBA	Daniel Memmert

The effect of these conferences and one-day symposia has been to enable the sharing of ideas and expertise between coaches and teachers within regions, nationally, and internationally. In such contexts, the philosophical and sociological interpretations of TGfU can influence and be influenced by the input of participants from a broad international base. For example, the idea of having 'TGfU town hall meetings' was

conceived by Butler in 2001, initially to explore the direction of the TGfU movement and determine interest in further TGfU conferences. The first town hall meeting was attended by almost 70 people, almost half of all the conference delegates. Subsequent town hall meetings were designed to offer further discussion opportunities at the end the day's presentation. At the Vancouver conference, two observers were organized for each day to report back their findings and initiate discussion. The organizers chose observers with little experience of TGfU, and some with extensive expertise. The observers also reflected the areas of focus for each day: coaching, research and teaching.

The conferences and symposia have also provided a fertile means for supporting and stimulating research activity around TGfU. A Google Scholar search completed in December 2014 revealed a total of 1,310 articles under the search term Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (rather than just TGfU which captures chemistry papers). This number was reduced to 1,113 when unrelated articles and citations were removed. Nevertheless, it represents the pattern of publishing for the field (see **figure 3**).



**Figure 3.** TGfU Seminar Conferences impact on scholarly output – articles

**Table III** provides further support for the notion that the TGfU conference series have had impact on the rate of publications. The averages found in column four more accurately depict the articles output to compensate for the two-year versus four-year clustering. There has been an upward trend since the first conference 2001 to the end of 2014. Prior to the first conference we saw 37 articles over 11 years, with 14 appearing in 2000, a year prior to the conference. Substantial increases can be seen since the 2012 conference yielding a three-total of 507 articles, an average of 169 per year. In addition to the five books and one conference proceedings book that were directly linked to the TGfU conferences there were 11 other published books.

**Table III.** Articles and books publication organized by years between conferences

TGfU / GCA Publications		Articles	x/year	Books*	x/year
1989-2000	Up to 1 <sup>st</sup> conference	37/11yrs	3.36	1/11yrs	.09
2001-2002	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> conference	20/2yrs	10.00	0/2yrs	0
2003-2004	2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> conference	45/2yrs	22.50	3/2yrs	1.5
2005-2007	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> conference	151/3yrs	50.33	4/3yrs	1.3
2008-2011	4 <sup>th</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> conference	353/4yrs	88.25	4/4yrs	1
2012-2014	5 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> conference	507/3yr	169.00	5/3yrs	1.6
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1052</b>		<b>17</b>	

\* includes the 6 conference books

Secondly, with respect to creating a community capable of connecting to a broadly distributed membership, the development of a website has been essential. The first website, [www.tgfu.org](http://www.tgfu.org) was developed initially by Task Force member Bob Martin and hosted on a site linked to a US University. Unfortunately, the Executive lost the rights to that particular URL. The second rendition of the website was professionally managed and easily navigable site. Executive members Tim Hopper and Stephen Harvey took on the time consuming task of finding website designers who would oversee maintenance. Though the site looked excellent, it proved difficult to update and edit. The third website built on the excellent work established in the second, but moved it to a site that gives complete access and control to the Executive. Kelly Parry, who joined the team in 2012, completed this work.

The website provides an accessible hub to the network for members and a web presence for anyone interested in TGfU. An ever-increasing range of digital tools available on the Internet means there is an expanding range of ways for people to access information and resources. For example, in 2014 the SIG ran several global discussions using the twitter platform. It also assembled its own YouTube channel of useful videos. In addition, the provision to join the SIG was added to the website and this enables an easy means for joining the SIG.

## 7. CONCLUSION – FINAL THOUGHTS

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TGfU has become a significant movement in physical education and gained global momentum as a viable approach. Over three decades after the Bunker and Thorpe article (1982) outlined a model for the teaching of games in secondary schools, teachers and coaches are now embracing the notion that the TGfU philosophical underpinnings align more closely with humanistic, child-centered, and constructivist ideals. Motor development research tells us that there is a 'sensitive time' or 'window of opportunity' for learning new skills and concepts quickly and efficiently. Perhaps there is a similar time period in which a profession can effectively respond to new curricular approaches. It takes time, including time for reflection, to examine the merits and demerits of a 'new' approach and, by necessity, for a comparison of the new and old assumptions and ideas. As teachers begin to understand that the approach offers cross-curricular connection, sound pedagogical logic, and efficient integration with the mission and goals of schools that focus upon democracy, perhaps that time has come.

As our discussion has outlined, the network that comprises the broad array of people who have an affinity for the Teaching Games for Understanding model has undertaken a range of different governance configurations from its initial emergence as set of practical initiatives for teaching games to a Special Interest Group. It has become a common part of teachers' repertoires and may well have served its purpose - to improve games teaching and learning. TGfU has provided many of us with a catalyst for discussing the nature of good teaching/coaching and learning, particularly in its capacity to challenge the orthodox molecular approaches to teaching. It has allowed a broad community of teachers and coaches to consider the values and beliefs that underpin such approaches, and their place in both physical and general education.

Looking forward, we suggest the network will continue to reconfigure its governance in response to key events and the educational environment. For example, while AIESEP has offered important opportunities to capitalize upon growing international interest in TGfU, there continues to be a need to connect with a broader range of practicing teachers as well as researchers and academic institutions in different national settings.

To this end, the IAB provides a mechanism for connecting with professional and national organizations involved with Physical Education and Coaching and this will influence the nature and shape of future developments. Another example is the growing challenge to the name "Teaching Games for Understanding." The desire to have a more inclusive term will combine the efforts of researchers and practitioners across the globe. If this possibility gains momentum and support from members, it will reach its conclusion in July 2016 at the TGfU Conference in Cologne, Germany, when the SIG next meets collectively to decide on any major changes required to its composition. Regardless of what the outcome may be, it will add to the ongoing history of the TGfU network.

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