Physical Education - From the margins to the mainstream : A strategy for development¹

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1 Paper to be presented at the International Conference for the 20th Anniversary of the Japanese Society of Sport Education, 17-19 November 2000, Osaka, Japan.

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本稿では、体育が不安定な状態におかれていること、すなわち、教育政策並びに学校のカリキュラムの周辺に放置されている今日のイギリスの体育の状況を紹介していく。また、政策や教育とは無関係にイニシアチブを握っている人々から体育がより一層、対処が必要な最優先事項と認められ、教育の内部からというよりはむしろ、外部から道具や指針、教材並びに「専門的知識」が提供される方法を明らかにした。

体育のナショナルカリキュラムの最終改訂版は、体育の教育的価値とその地位向上に対して何ら貢献しなかったといえる。それは、スポーツエリートのための教授、学習へと一層傾斜した過程であったといえる。しかし、体育が、少数者達のものに留まるものではなく、より多くの人たちの教育的要求や関心に応えていくべきだというのがあれば、より幅広い概念である「身体的教養を備えた人物」を位置づけていく政策やカリキュラムが必要になるし、このような広がりやを踏まえて、その一層の発展を促すカリキュラムの枠組みが必要になる。諸外国や他教科に見られる動きは、そのような動きを伝える重要な役割を果たしている。体育、スポーツに関わる「多様な通路(multiple pathways)」を求める主張の枠組みは、イングランドの体育の再定義を促すものだと指摘されている。また、体育がそのように再定義されることにより、すべての子どものためのカリキュラム内に体育がしっかりと位置付くことになる。

This presentation has two quite distinct halves, reflecting my concern to engage not only in critique of contemporary physical education in England, but

also potential reconstruction. In the first part of my talk I will therefore focus on the current context of physical education in England and specifically, ad-

dress how physical education is currently positioned and defined in curricula. I will argue that the position is marginal and precarious, and that a key factor underpinning this position is the extent to which discourses of elite performance in sport continue to dominate thinking and practice in the subject. Countering the dominance of these discourses, and specifically, promoting a broader conceptualisation of 'the physically educated person' and of 'excellence' in the context of physical education, is the central focus in the second part of the paper, in which I seek to address ways in which physical education may be repositioned as a subject that is in the mainstream rather than at the margins of education. This paper reflects ongoing work that is attempting to actively inform future policy development in England. I would like to acknowledge the support of two individuals in this endeavour and specifically the part that they have played in the development of the ideas presented today; Tim Chandler from Kent State University in the USA, and Professor Ian Thomson from Stirling University in Scotland.

Physical Education in the National Curriculum for Physical Education.

As many of you may be aware, a National Curriculum for Physical Education in England and Wales was introduced following the Education Reform Act of 1988. That curriculum was revised in 1995 and has just undergone a further revision. Physical education remains a compulsory element of the curriculum for all pupils in England throughout the 5-16 curriculum. In many respects, it could be regarded as having a secure position and secure future in school curricula. But does it? In considering this question I draw attention firstly, to some characteristics of the physical education curriculum as defined in the National Curriculum and secondly, to developments that relate to the wider context of pro-

vision of physical education and school sport.

Amidst so much talk of change, reform and revision to curricula it is perhaps understandable that important continuities are often overlooked. In relation to the current position of physical education in England, I believe that the continuities may be more important than the changes that we have witnessed in the past decade. These relate to the way in which physical education is structured in official texts and in curricula in schools; and what is recognised and valued as learning - and as excellence in learning - in physical education.

Throughout the development of the National Curriculum for Physical Education in Englandⁱ, categories of activity have remained the dominant and arguably defining feature of the physical education curriculum. To all intents and purposes physical education has remained a subject seemingly comprised - and therefore surely fundamentally 'about' a collection of quite distinct activities that have come to hold an apparently unchallengeable position in the curriculum. Teachers have been required to fulfil programmes of studyⁱⁱ outlined for the various areas of activity (- of Games Activities; Gymnastic Activities; Athletic Activities; Outdoor and Adventurous Activities; Dance Activities; and Swimming Activities and water safety), and on many occasions it is the uniqueness of each of the areas, rather than any points of commonality that have been stressed (see for example, QCA, 1999; see also Penney & Chandler, 2000). Relatively little attention seems to have been directed towards the coherency of the physical education curriculum and of teaching and learning in the subject. Progression in learning seems, invariably, to be conceptualised within the boundaries of a particular area of activity - or even specific sport.

Notably, the latest revision of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) was required

ⁱ Although many of developments for the National Curriculum have previously been associated with 'England and Wales', the latest revision of the National Curriculum featured the development of quite distinct texts for the two countries. Reference specifically to 'England' reflects this.

ⁱⁱ 'Programmes of Study' refer to the matters, skills and processes which must be taught to pupils in order for them to meet the objectives set out in the attainment target for physical education.

to address clarity in teaching and learning. The new NCPE therefore identified four aspects of skills, knowledge and understanding that were to be addressed throughout the physical education curriculum. These are :

- acquiring and developing skills;
- selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas;
- evaluating and improving performance; and
- knowledge and understanding of fitness and health; and

(DfEE/QCA, 1999a, p.6)

However, this new feature was embedded within the established activity framework and may do little to challenge the longstanding divisions in teaching and learning, and the tendency for both to focus upon skills, knowledge and understanding that is specific to particular activities, with development in learning directed towards excellence in those activities. This latter tendency has arguably been reinforced by the way in which 'excellence' has now been defined in the NCPE. One of the other new characteristics of the NCPE is an eight level framework to describe progression in learning and the following additional statement to identify "Exceptional performance" in the subject :

Pupils consistently use advanced skills, techniques and ideas with precision and fluency. Drawing on what they know of the principles of advanced strategies and tactics or composition, they consistently apply these principles with originality, proficiency and flair in their own and others' work. They evaluate their own and others' work, showing that they understand how skills, strategy and tactics or composition, and fitness relate to and affect the quality and originality of performance. They reach judgments independently about how their own and others' performance could be improved, prioritising aspects for further development. They consistently apply appropriate knowledge and understanding of health and fitness in all

aspects of their work.

(DfEE/QCA, 1999a, p.42)

With the strong boundaries between different areas of activity and with this arguably narrow vision of 'excellence' in learning, I view the new curriculum as having done little to counter tendencies both within and beyond the profession for physical education to be equated with sport, and for excellence in physical education to be equated with elite performance in sport. As I explain further below, I believe that this exclusive focus and orientation is neither desirable nor sustainable if physical education is to retain its place in the school curriculum.

Physical Education and Sport Development

That brings me to the points that I need to highlight about the wider context of development and provision of physical education in England. Space does not allow me to talk in detail about the many initiatives that are relevant here. In essence, since the publication of the government policy document 'Raising the Game' (DNH, 1995) a series of initiatives from sporting organisations - including award schemes for provision of sport in schools, programmes of coaching courses for teachers and most recently, the appointment of School Sport Co-ordinators to develop provision in primary schools - have sought to further the development of 'physical education and school sport'. The same organisations have provided invaluable resources for schools and the teachers within them at a time when funding for physical education from educational sources has been repeatedly lacking. The latest government strategy for sport 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 2000) clearly indicates that school sport and physical education have a key role to play in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's development plans. While this interest and likely investment in physical education will undoubtedly be critical in extending sporting experiences and opportunities for young people, with Ian Thomson, I have questioned whether it points to a secure and prosperous future

for physical education. The ever blurring boundaries between physical education and school sport, the strengthening association of physical education with sports development, and the continued resourcing of physical education by sport, could lead to 'physical education' being regarded as more appropriately located outside of, rather than within, school curricula - particularly when we note that there are few signs that the Department for Education and Employment has comparable interest in the subject.

In summary, therefore, while central to sports development, physical education seems to be positioned - and furthermore positioning itself - at the margins of education. In the remainder of this paper I want to discuss ways in which these tendencies may be countered and specifically how by adopting different - and notably broader conceptualisations of 'the physically educated person', physical education in England could perhaps regain a position in the mainstream of education.

From critique to reconstruction

I have already expressed the view that the statement for 'exceptional performance' in the National Curriculum for Physical Education is notably narrow in the range of skills, knowledge and understanding that it recognises. Claims about the learning that physical education does, or has the potential to facilitate certainly go well beyond this statement, emphasising the role that physical education plays in personal, social, and moral development, and in providing pupils with the skills, knowledge and interest to pursue healthy lifestyles (see for example, PEAUK, 1998). Certainly in England, these 'other' aspects of learning seem underplayed and lacking formal recognition in the National Curriculum framework, its associated requirements and desired outcomes. As some of the other presentations in this symposium highlight, curriculum developments in other countries provide visions of 'the physically educated person' that encompass a far broader range of skills, knowledge and understand-

ing than that expressed in the NCPE in England. With a broader range, they can also be regarded as potentially far more inclusive than the curriculum in England (see also Penney & Thomson, forthcoming).

A concern for physical education to be a subject that engages with the needs and interests of all, rather than only a minority of pupils, is central to my proposals for a new curriculum framework. As well as recognising the potential for international comparisons to inform and advance debates about these issues, I have also increasingly seen ways in which work in other subject communities may usefully inform our thinking. Physical Education is not the only subject with the potential to privilege discourses of elite performance and in recent work I have posed questions about our expectations of teaching and learning in music in an attempt to broaden thinking about the range of learning that we should be addressing and valuing in the context of physical education (see Penney, 2000; Penney & Thomson, forthcoming). I have questioned for example, whether we regard the development of elite musicians who will go on to attain international acclaim as the 'core business' of music and music teaching? - or whether this is instead a route that we acknowledge that only a very few pupils will have the talent, interest and opportunity to pursue? In considering what we might then envisage as alternative pathways in learning, I highlight that these need to not only address different levels of ability in relation to performance, but also, other skills, knowledge and interests that we would associate with the subject. These may relate to, for example, the staging of events, instruction of others, or appreciation and understanding of the skills associated with particular performances and the historical and cultural bases of particular forms of music.

What we see emerging here is a curriculum that values and provides for different types of engagement in a subject, with lifelong interests in mind. Kirk and Gorely (2000) have argued that there is a need for sport development to provide 'multiple

pathways'. In my view, if it is to genuinely address 'inclusion', physical education needs to provide the foundation for those multiple pathways. We need curricula that encompass a range of skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable and inspire children to follow one of several possible pathways for continued engagement in physical activity and sport. The potential pathways that we have identified are

- Participation in **formal organised sport or physical activity** (for example in club, team, and/or other formal competitive contexts) which may reflect performance, social and/or health related interests;
- Participation in **informal sport and physical activity** alone, with friends or family, which again may reflect performance, social and/or health related interests;
- Interest in and support of others' participation in sport and physical activity via **spectatorship**; and
- Interest in and support of others' participation in sport and physical activity via **leadership, coaching or administrative** roles.

(Penney & Thomson, forthcoming)

With this framework, the physical education curriculum and specific units of work within it would be required to address skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to each pathway, and assess learning in relation to each.

The framework advances some of the prompts in the new NCPE in England for teaching and learning to address 'other roles' such as leadership and also extends many of the ideas pursued in contexts of sport education (see for example, Siedentop, 1994). However, it is about more than extension of current practices and initiatives. It is about a reorientation of the whole, to establish what Michael Young (1998) would term a "new form of specialization" (p.6). Adopting the framework would signal a shift in the relative position and status that various interests are accorded in physical education, such that what we

currently view as 'other aspects of learning' in physical education are no longer positioned as 'the other'. It would necessitate accompanying changes in the attention that teachers devote to particular aspects of learning and in the learning that they acknowledge and celebrate as achievement and progression in the subject. There is an explicit challenge here to the dominance of "performance discourses" (Tinning, 1997) in physical education and we are aware that this may be met with some resistance, both within and beyond the profession. However, such a challenge may be necessary if physical education is to develop as a "connective specialism" (Young, 1998) within a "curriculum for life" (Quicke, 1999). Like Quicke (1999) I contend that there is a need for "...educational systems which give equal opportunities to all citizens to acquire and develop the necessary capabilities for life in democratic learning societies" - but also for curricula that are more explicitly designed to provide those opportunities. As Quicke (1999) states, "It is imperative that these systems do not close things down for students but open them up....No one should leave school feeling a failure or feeling that what they have learned in school has been a waste of time, and everyone should be willing and able to continue their education" (p.162). These are concerns that I am sure you will agree, physical educationalists not only in England but worldwide should be seeking to address. If they succeed in doing so, physical education may have a far more secure but also far more central place in school curricula.

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