

4 The id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques

The institutionalization of physical education, with its ideal and material interests rooted in sports and games, was also the first historical moment in its future objectification. For institutions imply historicity and social control ... to the point where a way of doing things may well become *the* way. In other words, physical education, the institutionalized profession whose dominant programs consist of sport and games, is viewed as natural process. A way of thinking about, and doing, physical education tends to be the dominant way. This view of physical education becomes part of the common sense disseminated through societal socialization.

(Lawson, 1988: 271)

Lawson captures very nicely in this statement the level at which the id² operates. It is hegemonic in the sense intended by Gramsci (1971) in that it works at the level of assumption, of common sense. The id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques seems so natural and has been the dominant id² for so long that it is, indeed, *the* way of thinking about physical education. But as Gramsci took care to point out, the hegemony of an idea or an ideology is never uncontested, even though it operates for most of the time beneath the level of consciousness. As a 'structure-in-dominance' (Hall, 1985), the id² is a living entity since it exists primarily when it is realised in the practices of teachers and students. As such, it is constantly reasserting its dominance as conditions surrounding it change.

Lawson's statement contains a number of important points which we will come to in the course of this chapter and again later in the book, in terms of this historical process of being made and remade through institutionalisation and socialisation. His description of the dominant configuration of physical education at the time of writing his paper, probably in 1986 or thereabouts, is worthy of our immediate attention since it is of central importance to our consideration of the id² in this chapter. He wrote that the dominant programme in physical education consists of games and sport. In this, I believe, he was correct in the mid-1980s and would be correct in 2009 also. However, as I plan to show here, it is the precise approach to games and sport that is a matter of utmost importance to understanding the pervasiveness of the id²,

which is the pride of place given to the techniques of games and sports over the performance of the games and sports themselves.

This chapter has three purposes. First of all, I want to explain in some substantive detail what the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques is and to explore the id² in its complexity. The language of 'physical education-as-sport-techniques' may suggest that it produces a simplistic form of the subject. I aim to disabuse readers of this notion should they be entertaining it. Teaching and learning sport-techniques forms the centrepiece of the id², but surrounding these techniques is a complex of other forces that give the id² its considerable reach and durability. Second, I want to show why the language I have used, 'physical education-as-sport-techniques' is an appropriate way to describe the id², since in the manner of Lawson's claim that 'the institutionalization of physical education ... was also the first historical moment in its future objectification', the notion of sport-techniques provides the historical link to the id² that preceded it, and also provides the clue to its characteristics which will bring about its demise or, perhaps, its transformation into something else. My third purpose in this chapter is to explain why the id² has been able to survive as the dominant practice of physical education even when critics can provide evidence that its fundamental articles of faith have not been realised, in the face of claims from physical education researchers from different parts of the world, working in different educational systems and out of different paradigms, that physical education is in crisis and in need of radical reform (see, e.g. Puhse and Gerber, 2005).

First, then, I need to explain that skill is typically decontextualised in the common practice of physical education and rendered 'technique', despite the centrality and fundamentality of the word 'skill' in the discourse of the id². Next, I seek to demonstrate through a close examination of the 'skill' lesson and unit how school physical education's subject matter is 'molecularised' (Rovegno, 1995). I then outline the challenge to the id² presented by Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) and in the process seek to expose the basic assumptions of the id². Finally, I explore research on student perspectives and on the institutionalisation and reproduction of the id² to complete this analysis.

Skill versus technique: The decontextualisation of skill

Throughout the physical education research literature and within the physical education community more broadly, the words 'skill' and 'motor skill' are used more often than technique. However, following Thorpe et al. (1986), it is important to be clear about the distinction between these terms. Sport-techniques are specific movements that are designed to be effective in achieving a clearly identified goal. The technique of the dig in volleyball, for example, requires players to make contact with the ball with their arms straight and elbows locked, their hands held together in a specific way, their backs straight, heads up and knees bent. The dig is usually the first contact a

team makes with the ball on its side of the net when an attacking shot such as a spike needs to be controlled so that a counter-attack can be set up. The technique of the dig, where the ball strikes the fleshy part of the forearms, is designed specifically for this purpose. Typically, in order to be able to perform these movements in a coordinated and effective manner, and since sport-techniques are often complex and difficult to perform well, they need to be practised in isolation from the game of volleyball itself. This lifting out of the dig from volleyball, or in other words this decontextualisation of the movements, is a key feature of sport-techniques.

In contrast, according to Thorpe et al., a *skill* is an amalgam of technique and cognition in context. This is because skilful performance in sport involves not just the effective and efficient movement of the body in specific ways determined by the rules and customs of a sport, it also requires the player to choose to move in the most appropriate manner to suit the prevailing conditions of the play, particularly with so-called 'open' skills where the environmental conditions are apt to change regularly. Skilful performance in sport, this amalgam of techniques, decision making and tactical knowledge, is strongly contextualised. To speak appropriately of the dig as a 'skill', then, would require the performance of this technique in a game, at the right moment in the play, as the best, most suitable movements to perform, given the prevailing conditions confronting the player. It is entirely possible for a player to be able to perform the technique of the dig effectively but to be unable to perform the skill; in other words, to perform the movements correctly out of context, but to be unable to decide when to use this technique rather than (say) the volley, or to misread the flight path of the ball and therefore to be in the wrong position to use the technique to best effect, or to misdirect the ball once contact is made. Indeed, as we will see, the possibility of this disparity between a technique and a skill is one of the enduring problems of physical education teaching and of research on skill learning.

Thorpe et al. are correct then to insist that we make a distinction between these words 'technique' and 'skill'. This is all the more important when we examine the research literature on the practice of school physical education, since, as I aim to show, researchers and teachers alike regularly speak of skills when they are actually referring to techniques. Since the practice of teaching and learning decontextualised sport-techniques forms the basis of school programmes informed by the id², my use of the term physical education-as-sport-techniques is very carefully chosen.

The centrality and fundamentality of 'skills' in the id²

'Skills' are considered to be central and fundamental to the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques. Lest we think this may have been true once but surely can no longer be the case, Lounsbery and Coker (2008) mount a strong argument for the development of skill-analysis competency in

physical education teachers. They, in fact, use three terms interchangeably in their paper – ‘skilful movement’, ‘motor performance’ and ‘motor skill’ – to describe the central and fundamental phenomenon of the id². Their argument for the centrality and fundamentality of skill goes like this. ‘Skill proficiency and confidence are paramount to developing a lifelong commitment to being physically active.’ Consequently, one of the primary objectives of physical education is ‘for students to become skilled movers who are physically fit’ (Lounsbery and Coker, 2008: 255). They go on to write:

Because there is both theoretical and empirical evidence that supports the association between skilfulness and perceived competence and a significant proportion of environmental opportunities for school-aged children to be physically active require skill (e.g. sport and intramural participation), it is our contention that an important function for physical education is the development of motor skill proficiency.

(Lounsbery and Coker, 2008: 257)

They cite the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (in the USA) to support their claim that:

A foundation for continued motor skill acquisition should be provided and conceivably, it is this foundation that ultimately facilitates successful and advanced motor performance which, in turn as we have already asserted, increases the likelihood of sustained participation in physical activity.

(Lounsbery and Coker, 2008: 257)

Having made these claims about the centrality and fundamentality of skills to physical education, Lounsbery and Coker (2008: 257) confess that ‘there is little evidence to suggest that physical education has made strides in developing more successful or skilled performers’, a key admission that is repeated with some regularity elsewhere in the physical education research literature.

To make this point about the centrality and fundamentality of ‘skill’ even more explicit, O’Keeffe et al. (2007) claim that there are generic, fundamental skills that children must acquire before they can move on to learn more sport specific ‘skills’. They argue that:

If a child has not acquired particular fundamental motor skills they would not be able to participate with success in sporting activities that require these fundamental skills or variations of them. For example, one should have a basic throwing pattern before undertaking the learning of specific skills such as the badminton overhead clear and the javelin throw. Gillgren (1991) had similarly stated that young children should be first taught throwing in ways that are not sport specific.

(O’Keeffe et al., 2007: 90)

Notwithstanding the veracity of this claim, which is what their study and other studies like it (e.g. Miller et al., 2007) seek to establish, O'Keefe et al. demonstrate quite clearly in this statement that what they are naming a 'fundamental skill' is more properly described as a generic throwing or striking *technique*, since the movements they study are even more decontextualised than the techniques of the badminton overhead clear and the javelin throw.

In a 1998 study, McKenzie et al. made clear what most other authors mean when they describe skill as central and fundamental to physical education. 'Historically, the development of motor skills, including manipulative, locomotor and non-locomotor capabilities, has been a primary goal of physical education. ... Skill performance is necessary for successful performance in game and sport play' (McKenzie et al., 1998: 327). Operationalised in their study, these manipulative, locomotor and non-locomotor capabilities become 'catching', 'kicking' and 'throwing' a ball.

Children's ability to catch, kick and throw a ball was assessed in the current study. Object control is a skill requirement in game and sport forms commonly available to children both at school and in the community (e.g. baseball, basketball, soccer, softball). It has been shown that children must master object control before they can use specific manipulative skills successfully in game strategies. ... Mastery of basic manipulative skills enables children to attempt more specialised and complex movements that are part of more dynamic game and sport play, and mastery of advanced skills is typically required if adolescents are to be retained in youth sport.

(McKenzie et al., 1998: 329)¹

The id² rests then on the assumption that the teaching and learning of sport techniques (most often called 'skills') are of such central importance that these activities define the purpose of physical education. The techniques in question are typically sport specific (badminton overhead clear) or, even though more generic and fundamental, nevertheless sport related (throwing, catching and kicking a ball). Another key assumption within the id² is that physical education is a preparation for lifelong physical activity (a matter we examine in some detail in Chapter 6) and that unless school-age children master the prerequisite skills to play sports and games, mastery contributing to feelings of competence, they are unlikely to be lifelong participants. The format of lessons locates these assumptions at the heart of the teachers' and students' day-to-day practices and experiences of school physical education.

The skill lesson and unit

Writing in the early 1970s about what he called the 'traditional methodology' of teaching physical education, Hoffman offered the following description.

Traditionally, 'good teaching' has incorporated the processes of explanation, demonstration, drill and practice on basic skills, lead-up activities, and game participation as fundamental elements. The entire sequence of phases may not be represented during every class but it is generally reflected in a long-range plan for progression within individual units of instruction. These specific elements may be modified, rearranged and occasionally even omitted; nevertheless, a cluster of characteristics always shows through even the most camouflaged forms of traditionalism. (Hoffman, 1971: 51)

While, as Hoffman suggests, the specifics of lessons may be modified, most of these elements of the traditional methodology feature at some point over a unit of work. For example, in a study comparing basketball skills using mastery and non-mastery learning methods, Blakemore et al. (1992) used the following lesson formats.

(Mastery) Warm-ups (about 5 min), formative testing (about 10 min), correctives and enrichments practice with feedback (about 10 min), and competitive game play (about 10 min), ... (non-mastery) warm-ups (about 5 min), skill instruction, practice, and game play (minutes determined by the unit plan).

(Blakemore et al., 1992: 238)

Although the mastery lesson contained elements that differed from the non-mastery lesson, the formats are underpinned by the same logic, which is that the lesson begins with a skill-related warm-up, the middle part and majority of the lesson focuses on skill instruction and practice (and in the case of the mastery treatment, assessment and feedback), and then a game in which the skills learned are then to be applied.

Another example is supplied by Lee and Solmon (1992) in a study of students' thoughts during a unit of tennis instruction. It is worth considering their description of the lesson format in detail.

The lesson plan the teacher followed listed the critical features of the skill to be covered, the specific learning cues to be used, and the questions needed to check for understanding. ... The teacher followed a model of direct instruction that included task presentation, controlled practice, and individualised practice. During the presentation phase on Day 1, the subgoals of the task were defined (e.g. make a V with the thumb and forefinger, grasp the racket as though you are shaking hands, swing level) and their relationships to the primary task (i.e. hit the ball forward toward a floor target) were discussed. Along with the explanation of technique, demonstrations for the grip, footwork, swing, and follow-through were provided. During controlled practice the students were led through a step-by-step progression of the technique. Following

the teacher's cues, the students as a group performed each component of the skill (grip, backswing, forward swing, follow-through) along with the teacher. After several trials, the teacher asked the students to demonstrate the forehand grip, and individualised feedback was provided for each student. The teacher then asked the students to demonstrate the technique for the forehand drive. Using the predetermined list of observation cues, the teacher again provided individualised feedback. During guided practice for the forehand drive, the teacher checked to see if the student's side was toward the net and if the foot opposite the swinging arm was forward. Next, the teacher looked for a level swing. If both of these elements were present, the focus of the observation was to determine if the follow-through was up and over the target. ... The last 15 min of the lesson consisted of individualised practice.

(Lee and Solmon, 1992: 258–59)

In this example, Lee and Solmon show clearly the central role of the teacher and the use of 'direct instruction' as the teaching method. In this case, the movements that make up the technique of the forehand drive are demonstrated by the teacher and copied, step by step, by the students. The teacher determines precisely what information is to be communicated, in what order, and whether students have performed appropriately. Note too, in this example, that there is group instruction, where the entire class follows the teacher's lead, feedback from teacher to student as the class perform aspects of the technique, and then a period of individual practice which the teacher monitors. A final point to note from this example is that it is not just the whole technique of the forehand drive that is isolated from the game of tennis. The technique itself is disassembled and the various parts – the grip, footwork, swing and follow-through – are isolated and practised in turn, before being reassembled as one action.

Lee and Solmon are describing an introductory lesson for beginners who had no prior experience of tennis. The case for this lesson format would appear to be compelling. If tennis is a game played with a racquet and a ball, clearly students need to begin by learning how to hold and swing the racquet before they can make contact with the ball. Then once this has been mastered to a satisfactory level through supervised practice, other more complex skills may be taught and learned, such as the backhand drive, the lob, the serve and the smash. The logic of this approach is captured by Blakemore et al. (1992: 35), who argue that 'skills should be taught in a hierarchical order from simple to more complex, and students should clearly demonstrate the ability to master the easier skills before attempting more advanced skills'.

At the beginner stage of learning described by Lee and Solmon, the concern is not for the *skill* of the forehand drive, since, by Thorpe et al.'s definition, the term 'skill' would imply use of the forehand in a game, which requires a player to select the forehand as the most appropriate shot to play in the prevailing conditions, to position herself to meet the ball, to play the

Command
style

Skill used
in game

shot with a purpose in mind relating to the rules and tactics of the games, and to execute the movements efficiently and effectively. Building on the same logic as the beginner's lesson in tennis, Boyce et al. (2006) provide the example of practice variability as a key principle informing how, over a series of lessons within a unit of work, a student would progress from learning the techniques of sports skills to performing the skills.

The curriculum in the secondary setting is predominantly activity based ... and consists primarily of units in sports (e.g. volleyball, soccer, softball, archery) or fitness activities (weight training, aerobics, Pilates) lending itself more easily to the implementation of repeated-blocked or random scheduling. The activity-based units typically span 2–5 weeks depending on the unit and grade level. Middle school students tend to experience shorter units (2–3 weeks in duration) while high school students would experience longer units (3–5 weeks in duration). These units are covered in consecutive days or days that follow a block time class schedule and focus on a variety of skills that make up the sport activity. For example, a softball unit could cover many motor skills (batting, base running, catching, throwing, fielding, etc.).

(Boyce et al., 2006: 338–39)

In the context of this 'multi-activity curriculum', Boyce et al. continue:

practice variability is used primarily as it relates to how the skill will ultimately be used in a game situation and is applied in combination with other skills. For example, in the game of softball the teacher may have students practise different defensive scenarios to help students use a variety of skills (fielding and throwing to the correct base, catching and tagging an offensive player and possibly throwing to another base). In addition, the use of stations as an organising element for the class would allow students to practise a set of skills related to softball and are an excellent way to incorporate repeated-blocked or random practice. ... The practice of multiple skills helps students develop motor patterns for use in improving their game or lead-up game play. Lastly, there are many situations where practice is both variable and random in nature. For example, in modified game play (lead-up or culminating activity), the defensive person must react to the offence by using a series of skills that are dependent on the offensive tactics. Also, in tennis, the forehand and backhand (multiple skills) could be practised in the same practice session in addition to varying the type of ball feed, target location, and/or area on the court from which the learner hits.

(Boyce et al., 2006: 338–39)

We can see in this example that the focus of Boyce et al.'s study, variability of practice, depends on control over the sequencing of lessons and requires

that the teacher has the time to consolidate the techniques of games such as softball and tennis before varying the conditions of practice of those techniques so that they become skills that can be used in the whole game. This style of programming is characterised by Ennis (1999) and others in the USA as the 'multi-activity' programme and is practised widely elsewhere. It might also be described as foundationalist and hierarchical, where the structure of units of work within the physical education programme is a macrocosm of the lesson structure in Lee and Solmon's example.

Boyce et al. suggest that the progression of technique to skill depends on the inclusion of lead-up activities such as modified game play incorporating variability of practice, a principle that is taken up elsewhere in the literature on skill learning in physical education. For example, Rink et al. (1991) investigated the use of a four-stage model for students learning the volleyball set and serve which included introduction, extension, refinement and application. The study supported the notion of a carefully planned and monitored progression of learning from elementary to more complex tasks. However, a major difficulty, as Rink noted in relation to her four-stage model, is that 'the most neglected stages of development of games skills in physical education programmes have been stages two and three. ... It is not uncommon to see units of instruction established that move directly from stage one to stage four' (Rink, 1993: 253). In other words, as Bunker and Thorpe (1982) argued in introducing their TGfU approach, the techniques introduced and practised in physical education lessons never become skills that can be used effectively to play games. Rovegno (1995) has very appropriately described this commonplace practice within school programmes informed by the *id*² of physical education-as-sport-techniques as a 'molecular' approach to physical education.

The molecularisation of physical education

Rovegno (1995) argued that a molecular approach to teaching and learning dominates the practice of school physical education. By molecular she means a foundationalist, linear and hierarchical approach in which advanced skills are added on to basic skills and tactics are learned after skills have been mastered at a level that enables a game to be played. Rovegno explains what she means by this notion of a molecular approach through a case study of a student teacher's dividing and sequencing of subject matter.

Ted divided volleyball and badminton content into skills and games. He divided skill content into components of the biomechanically efficient body positions of mature performers. He focused solely on telling about and reinforcing these body positions. Teaching meant telling the children about a molecular component of the mature body position. In the bump [dig], for example, he demonstrated and explained about keeping the elbows straight, knees bent, feet in a stride, and thumbs together. He

had the children stand in this mature position and he tossed the ball onto their forearms. Ted discussed the mature pattern of skills as the 'correct way' of performing; developmental patterns were 'problems', 'incorrect', or 'infractions'. Learning meant hearing about and then making 'specific changes' in body components to the biomechanically efficient, mature positions.

(Rovegno, 1995: 292)

Rovegno comments that Ted went directly from Rink's first to fourth stage, from the introduction and practice of this biomechanically informed technique learning to playing modified games. Not only did he fail to recontextualise these techniques, but he also treated what were components of an open skill requiring adaptations to the variable environmental conditions of game play as a closed skill. This meant Ted neglected to teach the students about the perceptual aspects of the skill, including anticipation, and the effort aspects in terms of timing and quality of movement such as the application of force.

Rovegno concluded that Ted's division and sequencing of subject matter was informed by a 'hegemony of biomechanics' that included an unquestioned assumption that there is one correct mature movement pattern that constitutes each of the skills of volleyball and badminton.

I am using the term *hegemony* not only to emphasise Ted's taken-for-granted privileging of the biomechanically efficient position over other knowledge but also because such privileging is pervasive and colors much thinking about motor skill teaching. For example, notions that pupils must be taught the correct technique or they will develop bad habits and that pupils should develop the mature pattern of fundamental skills before developing those skills as game skills or using those skills in game situations are common conceptions about teaching and sequencing content. In addition, the convictions that any movement pattern that is not the mature, efficient pattern is an 'error' and that allowing children to explore when learning a skill will lead to errors and is therefore not effective for skill development are widespread and reflect the privileging of the biomechanically efficient body position. ... The phrase *hegemony of biomechanics* is also meant to call attention to the hidden curriculum. ... The hidden curriculum of the privileging of molecular components of the mature body position makes primary that motor knowledge which is efficient, objective, and decontextualized.

(Rovegno, 1995: 299)

Rovegno's conceptualisation of the molecular approach lies at the heart of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques. Her use of the term *hegemony* confirms Lawson's point that this is a highly institutionalised and deeply sedimented practice that, for many teachers of physical education, is

rarely open to question let alone critical scrutiny. Rovegno thinks Rink's four-stage approach is less linear than the molecular approach, possibly better described as 'spiral', though I suggest we can still see in it and in the version of the unitised programme outlined by Boyce et al. the foundationalist and hierarchical characteristics of the molecular approach. She means Ted's case study to represent not an extreme version of this approach applied by one individual, a novice teacher, but to stand instead for an institutionalised molecularisation of school physical education. Nowhere can we see the assumptions of the molecularised nature of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques more clearly expressed and exposed than in the research literature on TGfU.

Challenging the molecularisation of physical education: The case of TGfU

The TGfU approach developed from the work of Rod Thorpe and David Bunker at Loughborough University during the 1970s and 1980s (Thorpe et al., 1986; Bunker and Thorpe, 1982). It generated enormous interest from pedagogy researchers in physical education from the mid- to late 1980s and later from sports organisations such as the Australian Sports Commission (1997), the Canadian Soccer Association (Holt et al., 2002) and the Rugby Football Union in England (2000). Effectively, Bunker and Thorpe challenged the centrality and fundamentality of the teaching of sports-techniques in games, and proposed that games teaching should begin not with practice of the prerequisite skills but with participation in a game modified to suit the level of experience and ability of the players.² So, for example, rather than play tennis with a standard racquet, ball and court, beginners could play with short plastic racquets, sponge balls, lower nets and smaller courts. A modified game of volleyball might include lowering the net and permitting players to catch the ball then throw it rather than begin with dig, volley and spike. Their priority was for players to understand the game and develop tactical awareness that could aid decision making.

The modifications made to the game were of the utmost importance and, as Bunker and Thorpe recognised, required considerable depth of knowledge on the part of the teacher, both of the game and of children's development and learning. Not only did the modified game need to match the current experiences and abilities of the players. It also had to conform to two principles, representation and exaggeration. The modified game had to represent all of the main features of the full game, so that even in a 3v2 rugby game, for example, the game-like qualities of rugby such as attacking to score a try and defending to prevent a score are retained. The modifications to the game also had to exaggerate particular tactics, such as in a 3v2 modified rugby game the ways in which an attacking team might use its extra player to disorganise the defence and score a try, for example, on the overlap, or by splitting the defence.

Bunker and Thorpe maintained that techniques should be practised and skills developed in the usual fashion – that is, through demonstration, feedback and variable practice – but only as the need for the skills became apparent in the course of the players' growing understanding of the game concept and developing tactical awareness. For example, learning the technical aspects of making a lateral pass in rugby – such as how to hold the ball, swinging the arms across the body, aiming in front of the receiver and using the hips to add force – is only relevant when the ball needs to be passed over some distance. In modified small-sided rugby games played on areas of say 10 metres by 5 metres, learning the technique of the lateral pass is not needed in order for this modified game to be played, so long as players can execute a throw of some kind. Bunker and Thorpe's view was that the technique of the lateral pass (for example) could wait until players moved on to a bigger playing area where the possibility of gaining some advantage by being able to pass accurately over a relatively long distance becomes apparent.

Given the central and fundamental role of technique within the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques, the first studies of TGfU unsurprisingly sought to compare TGfU with the so-called 'traditional' (skill-based) approach (for example Lawton, 1989; Turner and Martinek, 1992; Griffin et al., 1995; Turner, 1996). This rush of studies may have been a sign of enthusiasm for the idea of TGfU or a symptom of researchers' dissatisfaction with the dominance of the technique-led molecular approach. Whatever these researchers' motivation, these comparative studies proved to be disappointingly inconclusive.

In an important and influential contribution to this research, Rink et al. (1996) concluded that comparison between the various studies of TGfU was difficult and results were ambiguous due to researchers' use of different games, lengths of unit, ages of students, and so on. In a very thorough fashion, Rink and her colleagues discussed some of the challenges presented by TGfU for research, adding to the issues already mentioned the matter of the valid measurement of learning outcomes. I have already noted Rink's own line of research within the skill-based programme, her four-stage approach and her concerns that teachers too often moved directly from stage one to stage four. In this context, she and her colleagues gave TGfU very serious consideration, theoretically, methodologically and practically.

Their conclusions are revealing, not just for highlighting key aspects of learning and teaching games that the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques in its most sophisticated forms has championed. On these matters, Rink et al. (1996: 490–94) concluded that a minimal level of 'object control' was an essential prerequisite to learning to play games such as basketball, volleyball and baseball. Even though these games could be modified, they argued that players still needed to be able to catch, throw, kick and strike in some fashion, and so 'skill' remained fundamental to learning to play games. This is a point that Bunker and Thorpe always readily accepted and indeed endorsed, their response being that the adult form of a game could often be retained

through application of the principle of representation using elementary forms of throwing, catching, kicking and striking. They understood that within the so-called 'traditional' approach to games teaching, the skills define the game. 'Tennis' is defined by the use of a racquet and a ball; without the racquet and ball and the various skills that make use of them, according to the traditionalists, it is not possible to play tennis. In contrast, in TGfU, Bunker and Thorpe believed that rules defined the game and that something like the game of tennis could be played without a racquet. The point at dispute here for them was, in other words, a matter of degree rather than an absolute barrier. They accepted the fact that some level of 'enabling skill' was required to play games; they did not accept the interpretation of this fact that game play was impossible without conventional equipment and the relatively mature, sports-specific skills required to use it, or that the skills defined the game, rather than the rules and the tactical possibilities they allowed.

More telling was Rink et al.'s point (1996: 491) that the development of skill and strategy are interdependent, and that the 'ability to execute skills constrains decision making'. This is an argument one imagines Bunker and Thorpe would be ready to concede. Indeed, their point had always been that skill development and tactical understanding needed to advance together, simultaneously, rather than either tactical knowledge or skill taking absolute precedence over the other. Rink et al. (1996: 492) reinforced their argument with the claim that there was an important relationship between cognition and language development. In other words, the students in their studies who had learned to name specific skills had a more sophisticated vocabulary for communicating about game play.

In addition to these important and helpful points of clarification, Rink et al. also reached some more controversial conclusions. On the basis of their studies, they claimed that in skill-based approaches it was possible for students to pick up tactics without explicit teaching. This may be true for some players, but does not mean that this is a good practice to adopt for all. Similarly, contradicting the conventional wisdom that a skill-based approach required direct teaching methods, they claimed that some skills are acquired through indirect teaching (Rink et al., 1996: 492). Again, this could also be true on some occasions but does not make this observation a recommendation for good practice either. Rather more controversially, they stated (p. 493) that there was no advantage for either approach when effective teachers were used, a point McMorris (1998) among others (e.g. Holt et al., 2006) have restated since, claiming that the alleged failure of a traditional approach to games teaching is simply the problem of poor teaching. They did not, however, address the more significant issue of pedagogical content knowledge and the need for teachers to have a high level of understanding of a game rather than merely the techniques of the game in order to use the TGfU approach effectively.

Rink et al.'s conclusions are also revealing because they show clearly the error of assuming that the so-called skill-based approach and TGfU are

equivalent 'models' of or for games teaching. The 'skill-based' or 'traditional' approach is much more than this. It is a manifestation of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques. TGfU is not part of this configuration since it challenges some of the most cherished assumptions of this id² concerning the centrality and fundamentality of 'skill' and the molecular approach. But TGfU offers no wide-ranging perspective on physical education beyond games, whereas the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques pervades all aspects of the practice of conventional physical education. To be sure, we might argue that TGfU belongs to a different id² of physical education, one that is yet to be identified. Despite its popularity with researchers (Griffin et al., 2005; Oslin and Mitchell, 2006) the fact that TGfU has continued to be hailed as an innovation in physical education almost 30 years after its introduction to the physical education community provides support for my point that the 'skill-based' approach and TGfU are not equivalent levels of practice and conceptualisation. To compare them as equivalent models of games teaching and learning makes little sense.

For our purposes in this chapter, the value of TGfU is the challenge it presents to the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques, exposing the strength of the assumptions concerning the centrality and fundamentality of skill and the molecularisation of physical education. One other matter researchers' interest in TGfU underscores is the search for ways of improving the effectiveness of physical education, underpinned by a growing acknowledgement that the dominant form of practice does not only fail to produce skilful participants in lifelong physical activities, as noted earlier in this chapter by Lounsbury and Coker (2008) among others (e.g. Rink, 1993). Much worse, this approach may very well be responsible for widespread and increasingly evident disaffection with physical education among students. Indeed, according to Locke (1998: 247), physical education based on the traditional approach is not just an impediment to learning: 'too often adults have to recover from experiences as adolescents in physical education'.

Student perspectives and the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques

Even where studies have sought to capture student thinking (Lee and Solmon, 1992; Langley, 1995), likes and dislikes (McKenzie et al., 1994), and learning-method choices in problem-solving (Vincent-Moran and Lafont, 2005), in other words, aspects of cognition, this programme of research has worked within the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques, accepting that 'skill' learning is central and fundamental in physical education. However, some studies have suggested that the assumption of the centrality and fundamentality of sport-techniques may be a source of student disaffection. Researching the perceptions of high-school students involved in a badminton unit, Tjeerdsma et al. (1996) found that students preferred game play and competition to skill practices. Rikard's and Banville's (2006) investigation of

high-school student attitudes to physical education echoed this finding. In their study, they reported the following.

If the activity was new, their skill levels did improve, but if the activities were those repeated year after year like soccer or basketball, the challenge was insufficient and skill levels were not advanced, especially when skill grouping were heterogeneous.

(Rikard and Banville, 2006: 396)

If units of work within the multi-activity curriculum model typically consist of ten lessons or less on one topic, the possibilities for advancing skill levels may be seriously limited.

Some studies of student attitudes to physical education have addressed sources of disaffection more directly. While the focus on techniques is not always mentioned explicitly, we might reasonably suppose it to be implied, given the strength of connection we have seen evidenced so far in this chapter. Flintoff and Scraton (2001) among other researchers have noted a connection between physical education and gender, usually to the disadvantage of girls. They found that some of the young women they interviewed in their study who were physically active outside school, participated in sport despite their unhappy experiences of physical education and 'were, at best, indifferent to PE; at worse, hostile'. They concluded that 'it is unlikely ... that a traditional games-based curriculum will attract many young women into an active lifestyle' (Flintoff and Scraton, 2001: 18).

Penney and Evans (1999) argued that the 'traditional' approach to physical education, dominated by masculinised forms of games and sports, had managed to survive the invention of the national curriculum in England and Wales, and in the process perpetuate gender and other inequalities in and through physical education. Williams and Bedward (2001) added:

As far as the 1992 and 1995 Physical Education National Curriculum Orders are concerned, the centrality of 'traditional' team games reflecting a dominant central government view of physical education as synonymous with particular forms of sport, has, in the judgement of some (Penney and Evans, 1999; Williams and Woodhouse, 1996), privileged a curriculum which has much greater relevance to boys than to girls and which reflects a particular and Eurocentric view of physical activity.

(Williams and Bedward, 2001: 53–54)

Smith et al.'s survey of 15 and 16 year olds in the north of England reiterated these points in the context of the National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE).

Although the introduction of NCPE was intended to bring about more equitable PE and sporting opportunities among young people, it has, in

fact, kept in place some of the preconditions for persistent inequalities in participation between young males and females within and between individual schools. The continued emphasis on invasion games and the sex differences in participation therein serves to illustrate this.

(Smith et al., 2007: 186–87)

Smith et al. offer two important qualifications about the continuing dominance of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques that are worthy of note here. The first is that the actual games and sports available to students in this age group depended very much on the schools they attend, with considerable variation between the seven schools in their study. Moreover, the percentages of girls and boys participating in particular games also varied according to school. Their second qualification is that there is a difference in emphasis on skills between Key Stage 3 (KS3) (ages 12–14) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) (ages 15–16), a feature Underwood (1983: 70) also noted some 25 years earlier.

When reflecting upon their past experiences of PE, pupils suggested that lessons at KS3 were more often than not characterised by a greater degree of skill learning. ... Moreover ... it is clear that young people consider PE, for the most part, to be about learning in the physical. ... [Some] pupils were critical of the almost exclusive use of KS3 PE for the development and learning of skills and, correspondingly, were more likely to suggest that they enjoyed PE less as a result. (Rosie, a GCSE pupil: 'It's boring until Year 10, you have to learn all the skills and do the same stuff over and over again.')

(Smith et al., 2007: 47)

With few specialist teachers in primary schools in the Britain, physical education teachers have often regarded the first two years of secondary school as an occasion for 'remedial' work, in which 'basic' skills have to be taught in the wide range of activities that constitute most secondary school programmes. This emphasis on skills in KS3 identified by Smith et al. may be a manifestation of this attitude among specialist teachers that many students come to secondary school lacking 'the basics', the prerequisite skills they require to play games and sports. According to Smith et al., KS4, in contrast, was less skills focused and considered by these students to be more enjoyable as a result. Most schools offered some choice of activity, something that was strongly endorsed by the students, though Smith et al. (2007) note along with Flintoff and Scraton (2001) that often choice was limited by facilities, the timetable and teacher interest.

The id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques seems to be strongly implicated in these reports of student disaffection. The extent to which disaffection is widespread may be arguable; Tinning (1987) wrote that physical education makes both enemies and friends of young people. Some individuals

would no doubt argue that where the molecular approach is taught well, students enjoy physical education and benefit from it. The evidence presented so far in this chapter not only suggests that the teaching of sport-techniques is pervasive in physical education, but also that it does not seem to result in the development of sports skills to any sophisticated level that could be used to play games. Moreover, though many students may be well disposed towards physical education, the studies just cited suggest there is, to say the least, considerable room for improvement. While the evidence is not conclusive, it could be that, no matter how well teachers teach, the molecular approach may be a chief source of student disaffection, exacerbating gender inequity and failing to connect with the forms of physical culture to which young people relate most closely, matters we will turn to in Chapter 6. As decontextualised techniques, it may be that young people don't see the connection, so obvious to their teachers – many of whom are sportspeople – that techniques must be practised over and over in order for them to be used, eventually, to play games; in other words, it may be that young people 'don't get it' (Kirk et al., 2000).

In the next section, I want to explain why the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques remains dominant contemporaneously. It does so even in the face of its apparent widespread failure to produce young people who are skilful, enthusiastic and knowledgeable players of games and sports. This apparent failure renders problematic core aspirations of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques, that prerequisite skills of games and sports equip young people to go on to lead physically active lifestyles as adults, a matter we investigate in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

The institutionalisation and reproduction of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques

Having sought to demonstrate in this chapter that the dominant id² of physical education contemporaneously involves, in Rovegno's words, a molecularised approach, informed by the hegemony of biomechanics and concerned primarily with teaching decontextualised sport-techniques, I want in the final part of the chapter to highlight some of the factors that seem to me to be most influential in its continuing institutionalisation and reproduction. Lawson's statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter suggests that the reasons for the durability, resistance to change, and pervasiveness of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques are complex, and have deep roots in history. An investigation of the emergence of this id² from a different id² of physical education-as-gymnastics is the topic of Chapter 5. This section seeks to form a bridge from the present to the past.

First, at the level of curriculum, physical education must fit the school timetable. In secondary schools, where the majority of physical education programmes with specialist teachers are to be found, length of lessons varies. In some places, blocks of an hour or more may be available. In others,

lessons can be as short as 40 minutes. In these latter circumstances, the actual time available for engagement in the subject matter of physical education may be very much less than 40 minutes, after students have made their way to the outlying part of the school in which physical education departments often tend to be found, changed clothing, completed the other aspects of the changing-room ritual (O'Sullivan and Dyson, 1994; O'Donovan and Kirk, 2008), and brought out and distributed equipment or set up a playing area. Within this context, the multi-activity programme seems to present itself as a viable option for curriculum organisation. As Cothran notes:

From a curricular perspective, what physical education has been is the multi-activity model. This framework of numerous sport or movement activities offered in relatively short and frequently changing units holds a near monopoly on secondary programs. ... The multi-activity model's purpose is to provide students with an exposure to a wide variety of sport and movement while maintaining student interest with its fast changing focus.

(Cothran, 2001: 67–68)

We noted earlier that within the multi-activity programme units of work can be short, according to Ennis (1999) as short as 4 or 6 lessons, though, of course, in some places enlightened head teachers will permit some units that will be longer. We also noted that this kind of structure works against the development of a level of learning beyond the elementary because, as French et al. (1991: 273) pointed out, 'motor skill acquisition takes time'. The exposure of students in secondary-school programmes to a wide variety of sports is often justified by physical educators in the claim that by this method each student has the chance to find a game or sport they may be good at or could develop an interest in that could sustain lifelong participation, an argument we will scrutinise in Chapter 6. On the other hand, as Cothran remarks, these short units of activity may be driven by the more pragmatic concern to prevent student boredom by providing variety.

The practice of the multi-activity curriculum appears to be widespread in the USA, Britain and beyond (Puhse and Gerber, 2005). In Britain, as we learned earlier in this chapter, a number of studies report that the NCPE has had little impact on altering its main features of sport-techniques, direct teaching styles, gender inequity and short units of work (Smith et al., 2007; Green, 2000; Curtner-Smith, 1999; Penney and Evans, 1999; Williams and Bedward, 1999). The ubiquity of programmes informed by the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques can be accounted for to a considerable extent by the similarity of schools as subject-centred institutions in which the timetable is a fundamental organisational tool. Although writing in the early 1970s, Chanan and Gilchrist's characterisation of the secondary-school timetable and its effects remain salient and informative.

The conventional musical-chairs timetable is based on an assumption of a norm of pupil passivity and recalcitrance. Pupils have to be told what to do; they cannot be trusted; they do not want to learn; they have to be made to learn; this involves imposed discipline; they don't like discipline and are liable to rebel; they therefore need constant supervision. Professing to cope with this situation, the timetable exacerbates it. Sustained concentration, rhythmic development of learning to a natural climax, is impossible. At the sound of the bell, everything must change – the room, the subject, the teacher, sometimes the group. Half the energy of every lesson is taken up by the attempt to establish borders, procedures, norms for an arbitrary unit which will be abandoned again in a few moments. The overriding criterion of timetable planning is to make sure that all classes are occupied in all contact hours. The effect of adjacent lessons on each other, the effect of the cumulative sequence of lessons, is not considered. ... The overall effect is an imposed superficiality, a self-fulfilling prophecy of pupil passivity, uninvolvedness, restlessness and all that follows.

(Chanan and Gilchrist, 1974: 16)

In physical education's quest to move from the margins of school life and to be taken seriously as a school subject, it has been forced to accept that it should then be treated just like any other subject (Kirk, 1988). This structure may be able to produce genuine learning experiences in other subjects such as mathematics and geography, though on Chanan and Gilchrist's account, this would seem unlikely. What is clear from the physical education literature is that this commonplace timetabling arrangement creates a constraint on what might be possible in terms of learning. It is little wonder that when the overall effect of such timetabling is 'imposed superficiality', decontextualised, molecularised sport-techniques present themselves as appropriate subject matter for physical education. Moreover, it is understandable that teachers may wish to focus on something tangible, discrete and capable of disassembly and reassembly in a short time, such as sport-techniques.

If the structure of the multi-activity programme and the hegemony of the school timetable delimit what it might be possible to do and to achieve in physical education, research at the level of the lesson provides some insight into other forces at work which support some aspects of the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques, such as the ubiquity of direct instruction as the main mode of interaction between teachers and students. In one of the earliest studies of the ecology of secondary-school physical education lessons, Tousignant and Siedentop (1983) noted that, implicit in the command-style teaching method, teachers and students 'got the work done' through subtle processes of negotiation. They noted that teachers were prepared to compromise the integrity of the instructional task system – the system most concerned with learning the subject matter of physical education – for the sake of maintaining the managerial task system.

This important insight has been noted and developed by others. Schempp's (1985: 165) study of student teaching reached the conclusion that 'student teachers defined progress and no progress in becoming a better teacher as the ability to develop and implement tactics and techniques in order to dominate and control the collective social behavior of their students'. Tinning (1988), also studying student teachers, found that the process of learning to become a physical education teacher was largely shaped by the contingencies in operation in the here and now of the school setting. He argued that 'the pedagogy developed by student teachers is a pedagogy of necessity. There is little sense of a pedagogy of the possible' (Tinning, 1988: 82–83).

Further developing the notion of tacit negotiation between teachers and students in this context of necessity and the pressures of the here and now, O'Sullivan et al. (1994) discovered, like Tousignant and Siedentop, that teachers did not permit students to sidetrack or modify the managerial system in the manner allowed by the instructional task system, and that 'teachers spent inordinate amounts of time establishing, monitoring, and maintaining the managerial task systems of their programs' (O'Sullivan et al., 1994: 422). In these cases, O'Sullivan et al. suggested that the teachers believed their work was not taken seriously in their schools and that little of what they did really mattered. Consequently:

The curricula offered by these teachers were remarkably similar and traditional. The programs of study were sport oriented with a multi-activity format. While district syllabi highlighted increased capacity for skill and strategic play in sport activities such as fencing, badminton, volleyball, and basketball, the nature of the instructional ecologies of these programs could only allow for modest gains at best. While none of these teachers could be said to have thrown out the ball, we observed instructional ecologies that might best be described as casual rather than learning environments in which students engaged seriously with learning activities. While teachers achieved for the most part classrooms in which students respected each other and the teacher, these classes were less enjoyable and rewarding experiences for students who were less skillful in general and were least enjoyable for less skilled girls in particular. The competitive nature of some learning activities within this casual non-goal-oriented environment allowed more assertive students, who were predominantly male in most (though not all) cases, to act as the steering group and control the tempo or pace of the class.

(O'Sullivan et al., 1994: 425)

As we learned in Chapter 3, O'Sullivan et al. concluded that there is a 'co-dependency' of physical education and the school as an institution. In circumstances where physical education lacks the educational status of other fields of study, they suggested that teachers are more likely to see the

management of students' behaviour as of greater priority than their learning of the subject matter.

This point, that teachers have different goals for their work from those stated in official curriculum documents or assumed by researchers or, at least, some goals have a higher status for them than others, is supported by Parker's (1995) study of secondary-school teachers' views of effective teaching.

Findings drawn from these investigations [teachers' views on effective teaching] seem to indicate that from the teachers' point of view, student learning may not be the most important criterion of effective teaching. Much of the previous research on teacher effectiveness has been process-product in which the behavior of the teacher constitutes the process, and student learning is regarded as the product. ... Although this research has value, the use of student learning as the major dependent variable limits its applicability when, as the literature reviewed here suggests, teachers may have other objectives and measures by which they judge their effectiveness.

(Parker, 1995: 128)

Just as the teachers in O'Sullivan et al.'s study felt that their work was not valued as equivalent to other subjects, so the research on students' attitudes reveals a similar marginalisation among students. Smith et al. (2007: 54) noted that 'there was a near-universal acceptance among pupils that physical education served as a break from other "academic" aspects of school life and was a context in which they can have fun and enjoy themselves by participating and interacting with friends'. Similarly, Flintoff and Scraton found this in contrast to physical activities undertaken outside the school, which offered opportunities for socialising and keeping fit

The purpose of school PE was less clear. At best it was seen as a break from academic work; at worse, an unnecessary imposition impacting negatively on their academic studies, and one in which they rarely learned new skills useful for their out of school lives.

(Flintoff and Scraton, 2001: 11)

In these circumstances, it may hardly be surprising that teachers and student teachers measure their competence according to the criteria of their students being 'busy, happy and good' ahead of learning skills. However, as the passage quoted earlier from Channan and Gilchrist showed, the timetable and the institutional assumptions underpinning its arrangements present a powerful force delimiting what teachers can do. Thus, as Brown (1999) noted, the prioritisation of control over learning is not simply a matter of choice for teachers. Their concern for management and control of student behaviour ahead of learning of subject matter has a gendered dimension and, indeed,

there is an expectation that 'good' physical education teachers will display particular kinds of behaviour consistent with dominant forms of, in the case of his study, masculinity. Brown reflected:

There is a very real concern for controlling classes and trying to fit into such a strongly regulated institution such as a school. Children, teachers and parents often demand strongly gendered displays from male PE teachers if they are to be considered legitimate and worthy. Given this combination of factors, even well meaning male PE teachers such as Joe and Derek, are likely to be drawn towards demonstrating complicit masculine teaching identities, and so remain active intermediaries in the reproduction of the gender order.

(Brown, 1999: 156)

Brown and Evans (2004) developed this argument, suggesting that particular dispositions in new teachers can be traced to relationships with other physical education teachers, especially those experienced in a pupil-teacher and athlete-coach relationships. They suggested that these relationships may be viewed as inter-generational links which form key moments in the process of cultural production, in particular the production of gendered forms of physical education. This argument finds support in the work of Green (2002) on teachers' everyday philosophies and their figurations of values. Green claimed that these values are grounded in personally successful sporting experiences, complicit teacher education programmes, and a workplace culture that reproduces a particular physical education teaching *habitus*.

Lawson (1983; 1988) has drawn on research into occupational socialisation to argue that this inter-generational reproduction is how institutionalised forms of professional practice sustain themselves.

Assuming that all social institutions aim to reproduce themselves, the joint effects of education and sport on the aspiring teacher-coach should be very powerful, indeed. Most such persons should be oriented toward acts of curriculum maintenance, resulting in the continuing dominance of the sport education model. Very recent work on the occupational socialisation of physical educators appears to confirm this suspicion. ... The subjective warrants of recruits into physical education teaching are resistant to their teacher education programs, the programs themselves are not designed to have a high impact on these subjective warrants, and teacher educators can't agree in any case what the main focus of their subject is or should be.

(Lawson, 1988: 274)

The very nature of the field, grounded as it is in competitive success in organised physical activities such as games and sports, tends to attract individuals with similar physical attributes and dispositions. At least, this was

the case until the academicisation of the field of physical education teacher education was fully under way by the 1980s (Whitehead and Hendry, 1976: 52). Even though physical competence perhaps has counted for less than it did up to the mid- to late 1970s, as we will see in Chapter 5, recruits to physical education continue to express the same or similar subjective warrant as earlier generations. The sheer visibility of physical competence or lack of it, on display daily to the hypercritical community of young people in schools, continues to demand a particular kind of physicality from physical education teachers. Macdonald's and Kirk's (1996) discovery of the pressures felt by young teachers of constant surveillance suggests that the *habitus* of the physical education teacher remains even today relatively narrowly defined.

Producing a different kind of teacher may offer the possibility of change. But as the research on socialisation into teaching shows, the pedagogy of necessity and the peer pressures of workplace culture soon wash out any radical ambitions that may reside in neonate teachers (e.g. Stroot et al., 1993). Those who discover that teaching physical education offers a different kind of challenge from the one they expected may move on to other occupations, as the work of Macdonald (1995) suggests. But this attrition is in itself a further mechanism of selection, ensuring that only those teachers who are committed to 'acts of curriculum maintenance' persevere with the hardships and pleasures of teaching physical education.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the need to have some acquaintance with most of the very wide range of subject matter that many physical education programmes now contain adds a further powerful force to the perpetuation of the id² of physical-education-as-sport-techniques. If it is only possible to have expertise that is 'a mile wide and an inch deep', if the academicisation of physical education has squeezed the space available for the development of expertise in practical physical activities so that teachers 'are so unprepared in the content area that they would be described as "ignorant" if the content area were a purely cognitive knowledge field' (Siedentop, 2002a: 369), then the impetus towards molecularisation is accelerated. In place of the deep knowledge required of teachers to teach games for understanding, for instance, there is an irresistible draw to apply the biophysical knowledge that now occupies pride of place in the preparation of most physical education teachers and to treat learning as a technical biomechanical process of acquiring mature, discrete and decontextualised techniques.

There may be a parallel here with Harold Benjamin's 'Saber-Tooth Curriculum' (Peddiwell, 1937). In his satire, Benjamin's Palaeolithic teachers persisted with a curriculum that included saber-tooth tiger-scaring-with-fire, woolly-footed horse-clubbing, and capture of fish-with-the-bare-hands even when the environmental conditions for using these skills had changed. The tigers were replaced by bears who were not easily scared by fire, the woolly footed horses became extinct and the rivers became too muddy to see the fish. The curriculum was culturally and economically obsolete. Even when

this was pointed out to the traditionalists among the Palaeolithic teachers, they argued that the educational value of these activities lay precisely in their lack of direct relevance to the real world (see Lave, 1997). While the environment has changed in terms of the physical culture of society, as I will argue in Chapter 6, physical educators have continued to teach decontextualised techniques of an ever-widening programme of games and sports with an ever-decreasing expertise to do so, particularly in terms of understanding how techniques become skills and how the use of skills is determined by an understanding of games and sports. Despite clear calls on physical education to make a contribution to ameliorate the alleged obesity crisis, it is not scepticism about the reality of this crisis that has prevented teachers from subscribing wholeheartedly and implementing faithfully forms of health-related exercise (Harris, 2005). It is as if physical education gains greater educational status as its subject matter becomes, like the saber-tooth curriculum, more decontextualised, more technical, but ultimately superficial and less meaningful.

Conclusion

My purpose in this chapter has been to offer an account of the currently dominant id² of physical education. I have sought to show that 'skill' learning has been viewed, unproblematically for the most part, as central and fundamental to physical education, and that this molecular approach (Rovegno, 1995) is ubiquitous, long living and resistant to change. In fact, and more accurately, I have argued that physical educators are concerned less with skills and more with the techniques of a wide range of games and sports. There is a hegemony of biomechanics that physical educators sustain on a daily basis as they teach the same short units of elementary sport-techniques 'again and again and again' to increasingly disaffected students. Moreover, this hegemony is perpetuated as *the way* (Lawson, 1988), through an inter-generational process of cultural reproduction, whereby like-minded and socialised individuals are recruited and socialised into 'acts of curriculum maintenance'. To change the dominant practice of physical education would appear to require a wholesale change in the perspective of physical education teachers and teacher education. If there is to be a shift in the id² of physical education, it may seem to require, as I will argue in Chapter 7 along with Locke (1998), radical reform.

But are there signs of an impending crisis? Alternative forms of physical education have emerged such as TGfU and health-related exercise that have challenged the id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques. Physical education fails, by its own admission, to develop skills and thereby to facilitate lifelong physical activity, a claim we will interrogate in some detail in Chapter 6. Young people appear to be showing dissent. Physical culture is, most certainly, in constant process. And governments have expectations that appear to far surpass the modest offerings of current practice. It seems to me

that change is something that can happen to physical educators or, alternatively, they can take an active part in bringing about change, even if this action works against the current self-interest of traditionalists.

I have suggested that the currently dominant id² of physical education-as-sport-techniques emerged around the 1950s from a formerly dominant id² of physical education-as-gymnastics. How did this shift occur? Was it through revolution, or evolution? By studying the conditions of the emergence of the id² of physical education-as-sport-technique we may be in a better position to understand the circumstances in which this change happened, and to identify any lessons in these events for what the future may hold for physical education. At the very least, by studying the emergence of the current id² and its early days, we may be better able to understand the hopes and aspirations of those early pioneers of the 'new' physical education (as it must surely have been), and to see which of these if any have been realised, changed or forgotten over time. We need to search, in other words, for the 'first historical moment of its future objectification'.

