

'A Rose is a Rose by any other Name,' But Physical Education and Sport are Not the Same.®

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Introduction

Are the distinctions between physical education and sport being continually, deliberately and further blurred by those in prominent positions, to the detriment of children's physical experiences? I think so. Lest we forget, now is a good time to remind ourselves that the ruling ideas are the ideas of the rulers. If we, as physical education professionals, are to maintain our child-centred rationale which focuses on the process of learning to learn in order to develop independent, responsible and physically educated adults, who know and understand their own physical requirements, together with how to satisfy these safely and with enjoyment as they age, then we must maintain a close watch on those ruling ideas, and certainly on the ideas of those who have the ear of the rulers. Our subject is education through the physical not the production of a few clones of elite sporting performers. If we forget this

we will further experience the corruption of both the philosophy and purpose of our subject.

It is well documented that £1.1 billion has been marked for physical education and school sport (Campbell 2004). In accessing this, must we have to be careful not to sell our souls to the devil, i.e. to the highest bidder's bandwagon, and end up selling out physical education. If we sell out physical education for a pot of gold, are we selling out the future for generations of children? In the past it has clearly been understood by physical educators that sport in schools has been a part of the physical education curriculum and held within it, not vice versa. Government is not concerned about physically educating children, although currently it is somewhat exercised about the obesity 'time-bomb'. Rather it has, through claims of the benefits of sport, highlighted a remit of social order and social ordering, manifested through the use of sport to tackle youth crime and disorder, to combat obesity, to win more international medals and to collect tax revenue (Caborn 2003, PMSU 2002).

The Ruling Ideas

We should be in no doubt that the ruling ideas are those of sport, for the purposes outlined above and not of physical education. This is clear in the documentation from the DfES, DCMS, QCA and YST over the last few years (DCMS / DfEE 2001, DCMS / Strategy Unit 2002). The 'official' phrase, which now seems to have been adopted uncritically by all, is physical education and school sport, as if the terms are interchangeable, which they are not. This has been a clever manipulation of the language by government, through both documentation and the media, to legitimise the term school sport and to blend it seamlessly with physical education so that now the phrase being used is 'school sport'. It is further legitimised through the designation of 'specialist sports' colleges' rather than 'specialist physical education colleges'. The ascendancy of the language of school sport over physical education has turned the tables, meaning that it now appears that physical education is a part of school sport. Unequivocally, the broad and balanced National Curriculum (DfEE 1999) is still that for physical education (NCPE), not the National Curriculum for Physical Education and School Sport, or the

National Curriculum for School Sport – but how long will that last? We need to watch very carefully and be prepared to take action against that manipulation if, and when, it gathers force.

Three very important developments, which undermined the position of physical education and strengthened the presence of school sport took, place in March 2004 and are outlined below.

The Youth Sports Trust

The first of the three was a presentation by the Youth Sports Trust (YST) to the Higher Education Institutions (Physical Education) Conference in March 2004 at Loughborough (YST 2004). There were two aspects to this presentation which raised concern. Firstly, the YST has been given a remit by government to develop the initial training of teachers in the school setting, free of HEI input. Throughout, the YST representatives and the headteachers, who gave the presentations, continually referred to physical education as sport. What they also outlined as the model being adopted in their schools, quite clearly uncritically, is the sport education model. For headteachers to refer to the curriculum subject of physical education delivered in their schools as sport, shows an unforgivable level of ignorance and arrogance. They, in their position, quite simply should know better.

Secondly, there are serious issues concerning the training of physical education specialists in such an environment. There is no access to the theoretical underpinning of the intentions of educating the whole child through the physical, of assessment for learning, of the understanding and use of learning and teaching strategies and styles or of the fundamental differences between the aims and context of physical education and the aims and context of sport. Indeed, the head teachers were dismissive of the role of HEI in the preparation of new teachers. Even more worrying is the fact that the YST at no time sought to consult HEIs about the process of training teachers in physical education. This is a new undertaking for the YST in which it has minimal, if any, experience. The presentation was to a room of some fifty plus HEI teacher educators. At a conservative guess there was some several hundred of years of experience in the room

to be tapped into, a resource which was, and still is, being ignored. It was quite remarkable to have a presentation from a body of people, namely the YST, who, by dismissing the accumulated experience of the HEI sector, had actually sought to reinvent the wheel. The problem was the wheel they have invented is square. Why square? Because, as OFSTED reports on HEI Teacher Training continually show, the weakest part of ITT is the inconsistent input from schools. It has to be questioned, therefore, why the role is to be handed to schools. This maybe yet another step forward for the YST, but it will be giant leap backwards for the provision of quality physical education.

Squeezing Talent

The second occasion was at the British Olympic Academy Conference in March 2004 at Lillishall; Sue Campbell (Specialist Advisor to the Government on Physical Education) gave a presentation which focussed on the role of physical education in promoting and assisting the squeezing of talent (Campbell 2004). She explained that squeezing talent is to act as an advanced version of the present talent identification and the gifted and talented initiatives. The aim is to identify performers in particular sports (sports, rather than physical activities, was the word used) as young as possible and to squeeze their 'training' (as opposed to their 'education') and to expose them to competition at a more intense level from an earlier age. The purpose is to harness that talent, cream these children off from the less able performers to focus on specific training for their sport, and to get them ready for a higher level of competition, particularly at international level. This resonates with the sport factory models adopted by the previous soviet block nations and is contrary to intentions of the present NCPE, which is to develop a well-rounded, socially balanced individual. It also favours those children already socialised into sport either through economic or physical ability advantages.

Another outlined focus of Sue Campbell's presentation was the intention to bring world class sports performers into schools to work with the children, specifically with those who had been identified for 'squeezing'. This will, no doubt, assist the elite performers technically and tactically, will be a nice treat for the other children, and may well encourage some

to become more active and generate a level of interests in others. However, these performers are not teachers and will not necessarily understand education through the physical. They have no responsibility to deliver the requirements of the NCPE such as social, moral, spiritual and cultural development (SMSC), the key skills (communication, numeracy and literacy, IT, working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving) or other aspects (thinking skills, work-related learning and education for sustainable development). They will have no understanding of, or responsibility for, meeting the requirements of cross-curricular links or citizenship. It also undermines the whole nature of undertaking at least four years of study to qualify as a physical education teacher. The focus of such initiatives is on coaching sport, not on teaching children. It is high profile and gimmicky and gives little, if any, thought to the educational principles focused upon equality of opportunity and inclusion, which are fundamental to physical education and are the entitlement of every child.

I challenged Sue Campbell about whether such initiatives actually worked against the notion of 'activity for all' in an inclusive and rewarding manner, as they would exclude and eliminate the majority of pupils from activity. Put simply, rather than 'squeezing talent' it would be more a case of 'squeezing out' the rest. Her reply, similar to the YST's reply at the HEI conference, was to refer throughout to curriculum physical education as sport. She even used the line 'the subject of school sport' when reiterating that it was certainly the place to identify the best, for squeezing that talent, and to bring in coaches to work with these children. The British Olympic Academy Conference did not seem a suitable place to pursue educational matters in further detail. Her response was a masterful side-stepping of the question that was commented on to me later over tea and biscuits by other delegates at conference, many of whom had little educational expertise but clearly understood the issues and what was at stake.

High Quality PE and School Sport for Young People

The third, and by far the most worrying, development in the blurring of the place of physical education in the education of children and young

people, comes in the document *High Quality PE and School Sport for Young People* (DfES/DCMS/QCA/Sport England, March 2004). This booklet, full of the usual glossy pictures and high sounding words must, however, be viewed critically. In a highlighted text box at the foot of the first page, the following statement is found;

In this guide, the term 'PE and sport' refers to any activities that are taught as part of the national curriculum PE or that are set up as purposeful, structured activities in the school or community. (DfES/DCMS/QCA/Sport England, March 2004: 1).

This at first glance may appear inconsequential. However, if we analyse the discourse contained within this statement critically – i.e. in tandem with the changes in language from teacher education to teacher training, from physical education to physical education and school sport, and thence to sport in school (Kay 2003) – we should be alerted to the use of language that is very powerful in shaping our understanding of the world we experience and so perceive, and thus what we, and others, expect and demand from it. The result could be the shift from the uniqueness of education through the physical for all pupils, to the delivery of sports provided for and played by the elite.

Firstly, sport is not taught in school, children are taught in school. Secondly, they are taught the National Curriculum for Physical Education some of the activities of which may be recognised as sports but which are subsumed within, and arise out of, physical education. Thus, when referring to the teaching of children through the physical in schools, there is no need to even use the word 'sport' as we all fully recognise that it is a part of physical education. There is no need to separate it out and highlight it as something different or something special. After all, it has not been deemed necessary by the Government to take the same approach with physical education and dance.

Thirdly, and most worrying, is the claim that "...any... purposeful, structured activities in the school or community" are 'PE and sport'. This indication that community-based activities are physical education, not only totally undermines the status both of physical education and the

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