

1 Aims as an issue in physical education

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It is perhaps surprising that there should be need for a chapter in this book about the aims of a subject that has been a recognised part of education for almost a century. It is doubtful if there would be call for such a chapter in a book about mathematics or history, for instance. There are perhaps two reasons why the physical education profession needs to confront this issue; one relates to an advantage the subject has in the curriculum and the other to a problem inherent in physical education. To the advantage of the subject there are numerous very worthwhile outcomes of pupils being involved in physical education, for example health benefits, initiation into aspects of the culture of the society and learning to work in groups. (See Capel and Whitehead 1997 for further discussion of a range of outcomes of physical education.) Where there are a number of possible valuable outcomes it is inevitable that there will be debate about where the priority should lie. Working against the subject is the view that physical education is recreation rather than education and therefore does not deserve a place in the school curriculum. From this viewpoint it is held that pupils have plenty of opportunities for recreation at breaktimes and after school; curriculum time should be used for serious study. Faced with this challenge it is not surprising that the profession has to be both clear about the value of the subject and able to articulate this persuasively.

This chapter begins by addressing what is meant by the terms 'aims' and 'objectives'. It continues by discussing reasons why teachers need aims and objectives. The third part of the chapter aims to clarify some differences between physical education, sport and recreation in order to put the following section about aims in physical education into context. This section looks at intrinsic and extrinsic aims of the subject and interrogates some examples of extrinsic aims, before considering two approaches to presenting physical education in the context of its being intrinsically valuable. The chapter then considers the implications of aims in physical education. This last section looks first at the relationship between aims and planning within the physical education curriculum before considering aims of physical education within the school context.

Aims and objectives

While there is some debate about how these terms are used, there is general agreement that they both refer to intentions underpinning a practice. In this chapter aims and objectives are referred to as planned outcomes that can be articulated and justified. One role for aims and objectives is that they answer the question 'Why?' in relation to a practice. The term 'aim' is used in this chapter to refer to intentions that are generally longer term. Characteristically there are aims for physical education, aims for a physical education department and aims for a scheme or unit of work. The identification of an aim would, for example, answer the question 'Why have you included trampolining in your Year 8 scheme of work?' The term 'objective' is used in this chapter to refer to an intention that is short term, such as the intended outcome of a single lesson or a specific practice in a lesson. The identification of an objective would, therefore, answer the question 'Why are you using a 3 v 2 approach in this football lesson?' Objectives are the building blocks to achieve aims. If the aim is to initiate pupils into a particular game form, they will need to master a whole range of skills, tactical procedures and rules.

These specific needs become objectives. Aims, being broader intentions, have to be broken down into smaller steps so that lessons can be planned to work towards a longer term outcome.

The need for clearly specified intentions

Formal education is a social institution designed to be of benefit to a society, especially to the young people of that society. It is a hugely expensive enterprise, usually funded by the government of a country. A government often specifies what purpose education in its society should serve, thus defining the aims that education should achieve. Teachers are expected to work towards this overall purpose and for their part design curricula and lessons to enable this ultimate aim of education to be achieved. This is a fundamental reason why schools, departments and teachers must have clearly specified intentions. However there are also other reasons for teachers needing aims and objectives that relate more closely to actual work with pupils.

First, teachers need aims and objectives because these provide direction for their work. If teachers know what outcomes they want to achieve (where they want to be), they can plan how to get there (what content to use, which methods to employ). Teaching is a planned enterprise designed to achieve a specific outcome. Teaching must have a rationale, a basis from which planning takes place. Having a clear intention therefore is not an option but an essential first step to planning work with pupils. Teaching without a clear intention will result in random activity without coherence or progression.

Second, aims and objectives provide benchmarks to assess success. If teachers know where they want to be, they can judge if they have arrived or how far they have reached. If teachers know what they want to achieve they can identify what they need to assess to judge if they have been successful.

A third reason for having aims and objectives is that they serve to answer the question ‘Why?’ In other words they justify what the teacher is doing. However, because we are discussing teaching in an educational context, just having an aim or an objective is not enough. The intention has to be worthwhile and supported as such. So, for example, if a teacher were to say in a swimming lesson that his objective was to allow a group of pupils to ‘let off steam’, or to say in a football lesson that his purpose was to ‘keep a class quiet’ by playing a full game, it is doubtful if either would be seen as an acceptable educational intention. Aims and objectives advanced by teachers for their work have to be seen as valuable. In fact any stated intention always begs the question ‘Why is that valuable?’ Because there are those in education who are sceptical about the role of physical education in schools, teachers of this subject have to be able to answer both why questions. ‘Why are you doing this activity?’ and ‘Why is that a worthwhile use of pupils’ time in the curriculum?’

Physical education, sport and recreation

In considering the aims and objectives of physical education it is useful to be able to differentiate between this area of the school curriculum and the related practices of sport and recreation. It has to be said that this issue has generated a good deal of literature and could warrant a chapter of its own. Physical education and sport are considered in greater depth in [Chapter 8](#) of this book. All that is proposed here is a working definition to make clear the area of activity which is the focus of this chapter.

Physical education is usually delivered as part of the school timetable and, in England and Wales, is guided by the requirements of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE). It is normally delivered by personnel in the employ of the school/local education authority (LEA). The NCPE is compulsory in Key Stage (KS) 1 to KS4. Beyond this statutory requirement, schools may

make physical education compulsory or offer it as an option within the curriculum. Pupils' ability and progress in physical education are assessed and these judgements are included in reports to parents. Taking part in physical education incurs no additional expenditure in state schools. Some private schools require pupils to provide their own equipment. Characteristically, physical education is child-centred and seen to have value in its own right as well as broad educational benefits.

Extra-curricular (i.e. outside the normal timetable) activities are generally delivered to pupils on school premises, normally by personnel in the employ of the school/LEA. These activities are often seen as part of physical education. Normally, no fee is paid by the participants. They are again child-centred. Pupil progress is monitored and performance may be commented on in reports to parents. The term extra-curricular may also be extended to outdoor adventure trips and other residential excursions organised by the school and run by school staff or other qualified personnel. These may involve such activities as climbing, skiing, camping and sailing and may take place at some distance from the school. Participation in off-site activities usually incurs a cost to pupils involved. Spectators are not involved in curricular work but may be present in some forms of extra-curricular activities.

There is a range of useful definitions of physical education. For example, the Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom (PEAUK) defined physical education as 'those purposeful physical activities and related studies, normally undertaken within an educational context, which develop physical competence, help promote physical development, and enable participants to know about and value the benefits of participation' (PEAUK 1994: 1). The Department of Education and Science (DES) said that 'physical education in schools aims to develop control, co-ordination and mastery of the body. It is primarily concerned with a way of learning through action, sensation and observation' (DES 1989a: 1).

Sport is commonly used to describe a physical activity that has a competitive element. The activity may be carried out by a professional player or by an unpaid enthusiast. Unpaid enthusiasts take part out of choice in their leisure time and very often have a regular commitment so to do. There is usually a cost involved in taking part in sport. Sport characteristically depends on the involvement of other people and in most cases needs some form of organised structure. Participants are often concerned with their level of performance. It is not uncommon for there to be spectators at sports events.

Recreation is a very broad term commonly used to describe activities participants choose to take part in during their leisure time. The motivation to take part may be related to relaxation, health promotion, having fun or mixing socially. These activities include physical activities which are characteristically non-competitive. Individuals can take part on their own, without necessarily needing others, and activities carried out in this context may not need an organisational structure. Participants are not necessarily concerned with their level of performance. They are not paid for their involvement and may take part regularly or irregularly. There may be a modest cost to participate. Rambling, swimming and aerobics are good examples here. Spectators are not involved.

Confusion arises between physical education, sport and physical recreation because many of the same activities are pursued in all three contexts. A description that seeks to differentiate between physical education and sport explains that:

Sport covers a range of physical activities in which adults and young people may participate. Physical Education on the other hand is a process of learning, the context being mainly physical. The purpose of this process is to develop specific knowledge, skills and understanding and to promote physical competence. Different sporting activities can and do contribute to that learning process, and the learning enables participation in sport. The focus

however is on the child and his or her development of physical competence, rather than on the activity

(DES/Welsh Office (WO) 1991: 7)

Confusion arises between sport and recreation as the nature of the involvement depends very much on the personal viewpoint of each participant. For example, in a club tennis match some players may see themselves clearly involved in competitive sport while others may view participation as pure recreation, with the competitive element being incidental.

Aims examined

The discussion of the aims of physical education in this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section looks at aims as intrinsic or extrinsic to the subject while the second interrogates some examples of extrinsic aims. The third section looks at two approaches to presenting physical education in the context of the subject being intrinsically valuable.

Intrinsic/extrinsic aims of physical education or means/ends

One of the long-standing debates in physical education is about whether the subject has value in its own right, or is best seen as a useful vehicle through which desirable attributes can be acquired, for example personal qualities such as perseverance, social skills such as co-operation and cognitive skills such as problem solving. This debate is sometimes referred to as the means/end issue. Is the subject an end in itself or a means to other ends? Whichever option is taken there are further questions to be answered.

If it is advocated that physical education is worthwhile in its own right the case has to be made for the value of pupils participating in and becoming skilful at a range of physical activities. The focus here is on promoting physical development and enhancing physical competence. The recognition of the value of becoming a skilful participant may be easier to promote in respect of some activities than others. Activities that have a high profile nationally and can readily be continued into adult life, such as football, are more often supported than, for example, gymnastics. Activities that relate to personal survival such as swimming are more strongly supported than others such as dance. The more likely the support for some activities than others, however, has a ring of using the subject for extrinsic ends which, in the cases cited above, maybe the production of winning national teams and the prevention of accidental death.

What has to be formulated is a case for the value of becoming physically skilful *per se*. This case will have to take the brave stance of reminding the sceptic that we have physical capacities and potential and that these are fundamental to human existence and integral to human nature. Supporters would need to argue that these attributes are not inferior in the sense that the body/mind split has tended to label the body as of lesser importance. Physical attributes are part of the whole individual and cannot be separated off as a dispensable capacity. They are fundamental to the very being of humankind. Humankind, as far as is known, is characteristically embodied (see, for example, Whitehead 1990). If education is about nurturing all aspects of human potential, the physical has an indisputable place in the enterprise. If challenged to identify outstanding individuals who have achieved at the highest level, most people would include athletes alongside artists, philosophers, politicians and scientists. This in itself indicates that the physical dimension is celebrated alongside other dimensions.

If physical education is advocated as a means to achieving other ends, such as personal and social

development, teachers of this subject have to face the challenge that other areas of the curriculum can also realise the same ends. If physical education does not bring anything unique to the curriculum and is only contributing to the broad aims of education, it could be argued that it is not time well spent and should be consigned to an extra-curricular programme.

There are at least two ways to answer this point. One is that the nature of physical education lends itself very clearly to pupils acquiring certain personal and social skills. For example, situations in physical education unequivocally demand team work, challenge pupils to be self-reliant and require pupils to use their imagination. Pupil responses are immediately visible and achievement of any of the above can be easily observed and assessed.

Another way to counteract doubts is to argue that pupils need a range of contexts in which to acquire attributes such as personal and social skills. Some pupils master these skills more readily in one context than in another. It is undeniable that physical education provides a unique context and many cite examples of certain pupils making significant progress as a result of successful engagement in physical education (see, for example, Almond 1989: [ch. 8](#)).

Although these arguments may be accepted there may be two further challenges to be faced. First, it could be argued that there is no evidence to prove that the subject makes a significant contribution to such areas as personal and social education. Even if it could be proved that physical education does develop attributes in these areas, doubt has been expressed in some quarters whether learning in physical education is transferable to life in general. Second, it could be argued that nothing is gained from trumpeting the contribution of physical education to the general aims of education, as it is the responsibility of all subjects so to do. If physical educators do not make a worthwhile contribution to general education they would not be worthy of the title of teacher.

It is useful to debate further the two views outlined briefly above. Can physical education be justified purely on intrinsic grounds? Can physical education in its own right claim to be truly part of education? Alternatively, should physical education teachers see themselves very much part of a team, working with other teachers in the interests of the total education and development of young people? (For a useful debate on the role of physical education as educating 'About movement, through movement and in movement' see Arnold 1988: [ch. 8](#). Almond (1989, 1996, 1997) also addresses this issue. There is also further discussion in [Chapter 13](#) of this book.)

Alternative priorities for physical education as a means to other ends

Notwithstanding the cautionary remarks above concerning the problems inherent in advocating the prime role of physical education as a means to achieving other ends, there is a variety of extrinsic ends that are proposed as the *raison d'être* of the subject. These claims are examined in a little more detail to reveal their implications. The four positions that are considered briefly are physical education as:

- promoting health
- providing education for leisure
- offering vocational preparation
- providing initiation into the culture of the society.

The relationship between physical education and health has long been an area of lively debate and there is much written on this issue. (See, for example, Colquhoun 1990, Evans and Clarke 1988, Harris 1997a, as well as [Chapter 11](#) of this book.)

Some of the discussion has revolved around whether health concerns should permeate all physical

education or whether there should be units of work dedicated specifically to this area (see also [Chapter 11](#)). Hidden behind this debate are two points of view. Those who advocate dedicated units of work often argue that physical education as commonly taught does little to maintain or enhance health. Much of the lesson time, it would be argued, is spent listening to instructions, waiting for a turn, observing demonstrations and planning sequences or tactics. Furthermore it would be argued that physical education has a vital and unique responsibility to promote physical health and that those teaching the subject should take this aspect of the work seriously. Advocates of this view would remind others that the roots of the subject come from this area, with the early syllabi from the beginning of the last century being designed round such goals as correct breathing and posture. It would also be stressed that the promotion of health is indisputably valuable and that there are no other subjects in the curriculum looking at this area, at least not from a specifically physical perspective.

Those who favour a permeation approach would argue that all physical education lessons should include sufficient practical activity to, for example, raise the heart rate, increase depth of breathing or enhance joint flexibility. They would make the case that the experience of challenging pupils physically in these ways should be inherent in physical education and that pupils should associate physical activity with the satisfactions of feeling thoroughly exercised and in some sense ‘fitter’. Supporters of this position would be opposed to a separate group of lessons that resemble ‘fitness training’, as these would be outside the generally accepted range of activities that, they would argue, constitute physical education. A dedicated series of lessons could well mean that in other lessons the teacher might pay scant attention to the need to be active, judging that this part of the work was being covered elsewhere. There are also views that do not support the body being treated as an object or machine (see, for example, Whitehead 1988). Similarly, others judge fitness training as mindless activity that has little relationship to pupil performance in the activities characteristic of physical education.

Both camps would agree that reference to health should be included in physical education. From this standpoint there are some physical educationists who can see the justification for realigning the whole curriculum to a health focus with activities being used only to achieve this end. It would be true to say that many in the medical profession would support this move. The government might also sign up to this as ultimately saving the National Health Service money.

It could be useful to design a physical education curriculum with the specific aim of promoting health. It may be found that this has a very different nature to a curriculum designed around the requirements of the NCPE.

Education for leisure as the prime aim of physical education is not far away from the health debate and indeed could be seen to be closer to an intrinsic rather than an extrinsic end. Those who advocate that physical education should at all times look ahead to preparing individuals to use their leisure time appropriately would argue that the most important aim of the subject is to ensure that every pupil gains satisfaction from, and self-esteem as a result of, work in the subject. Pupils should carry this positive experience with them outside school and be motivated to continue to take part in physical activity throughout adult life. Taking part in physical activity is beneficial for mental and physical health (Health Education Authority (HEA) 1998a) as well as for the general quality of life. Furthermore, use of leisure time in this way may deter young adults from anti-social activities and, as such, the police force would doubtless be enthusiastic supporters of this aim. (For a discussion on the role of partnerships in achieving the aim of physical education for leisure see DES/WO 1991: Appendix C. Also see of this book.)

Those who would argue against this aim would fall into two camps. One camp would argue that involvement in physical activity is not everyone’s preferred use of their leisure time and that many

people are fit, happy and healthy despite living an overwhelmingly sedentary life. The other camp would caution that this is a dangerous aim as education is traditionally seen as a preparation for employment, with leisure needs being catered for outside school. They would argue that the subject must demonstrate the immediate value of physical education to pupils in their development towards adulthood. If physical education were seen to be directed towards appropriate use of leisure time in adult life there would be the danger of the subject being classed as recreation and consigned to the extra-curricular programme. Another problem of valuing physical education in terms of its contribution to leisure is that evidence to prove the success of the subject in this context would be very hard to substantiate.

The aim of physical education as vocational preparation could be seen as opportune in the current climate as it supports the view that education is really just about preparing individuals for employment. Advocates of this view would argue that the subject must demonstrate outcomes that are economically in the interests of society. If the aim of physical education is for vocational preparation, what are the implications of this aim on the totality of the physical education programme? It could be the case that an appreciation of psychological and sociological perspectives would be essential as well as the understanding of principles of management. Those who would oppose this as the prime aim of the subject would argue that if pupils left school with a positive attitude towards physical education, they would have the motivation to develop the skills necessary to work in the industry. Specific focus on vocationalism would not be seen as necessary; rather teachers should ensure that pupils leave school appreciating the benefits that participation in physical activity can have on the quality of life. (For further discussion of this topic see, for example, Hodkinson and Sparkes 1993.)

The aim of seeing physical education as initiation into aspects of the culture of the society has often been used as a justification for the subject. It is certainly the case that much of the school curriculum is based round passing on to young people that which society feels is worthwhile, and much that is seen to be of value is deeply embedded in the culture. In one sense this is uncontroversial in that any education would want its young people readily to take their place in society through an appreciation of its culture and traditions. It would indeed be odd if a whole section of what is seen to be part of everyday life was left out of the education of children. However, just because something is part of the culture of the society it does not necessarily follow that it is always to be valued. To take an extreme example, cock-fighting used to be a common sport, but in time it was seen as cruel and is now illegal. In respect of aspects of contemporary culture the question must be asked at regular intervals as to whether any aspect of the culture is still appropriate and acceptable. To take another extreme example; it is seen as part of becoming an adult in this country to learn to drive a car. A situation could arise that a new strain of bacteria rendered the human race fatally susceptible to all types of fuel used to power cars. The driving of cars could, as a result, be a thing of the past. A real example that currently hits the headlines is the issue over the safety and thus the acceptability of boxing. It is not inconceivable that in the next decade medical evidence will be such that boxing is banned. (For discussion on physical education and culture see, for example, Almond 1996.)

It is useful to consider if the subject can deliver the extrinsic aims outlined above. Would work directed to an extrinsic aim significantly change the nature of the subject? Other extrinsic aims could also be considered, such as cognitive development and aesthetic and artistic awareness. (See, for example, Capel and Whitehead 1997. For discussion of cognitive development as an aim in physical education see, for example, Best 1976. For discussion of artistic and aesthetic aspects of physical education see, for example, DES/WO 1991 and Arnold 1988.)

Approaches to presenting physical education as intrinsically valuable

Excellence versus inclusivity

Among those who advocate physical education as of value in its own right, one of two broad aims may be identified as paramount. One aim could be to produce athletes of the highest standard; the other could be to give all pupils the opportunity to improve their movement skills.

Some physical education teachers see their task as enabling those pupils with the most potential in the physical domain to excel. The justification is that every child has particular skills and abilities and it is the responsibility of every teacher to identify and nurture pupils who demonstrate this potential in their subject. Education is about fulfilling potential and physical education teachers should direct their energies towards those pupils for whom physical education is their area of achievement. It is certainly the case that for some young people physical education is the only subject in which they excel and it is through this subject that they develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. An advocate of this view would have to counter the argument that s/he is neglecting a large proportion of the pupils: those not destined to be highly skilful performers. Indeed, it could be claimed that this majority of pupils are those who need the skilled guidance of the teacher more than the naturally gifted pupils. A case could also be made that able athletes can be more than adequately catered for in extra-curricular time and in local or regional clubs and teams. An elitist approach such as this may also result in a curriculum that is comprised predominantly of competitive team games and a situation that allows some pupils to specialise almost exclusively in a limited number of activities. Advocates of this more elitist approach would argue that a focus on high standards and the elite provides inspirational role models for other pupils, and winning school teams can bring prestige to the school and a sense of pride to all in the school community. In addition, this stance would surely be supported by the government and Sport England (the English Sports Council) in its potential to nurture athletes to bring honour to the country in winning Olympic medals and world cups.

Those teachers who advocate entitlement for all would be concerned that every pupil reaches at least a base line level of physical skill through involvement in a wide range of activities. This base line level has been described as 'physical literacy'. Physical literacy endows pupils with a confidence in their ability in physical activity, an understanding of the nature of different physical activities and the knowledge that experience of physical activity is satisfying and rewarding. A physically literate individual is likely to continue to participate in physical activity after leaving school and will not be apprehensive at trying his or her hand at new activities. Critics of this view could argue that physical literacy is too nebulous a concept to serve as an ultimate aim and that the result would be a levelling down of achievement. Furthermore they could point out that many people live fulfilled lives without taking part in any physical activity. They could take the stand that teachers should devote their time and expertise to working with the able and motivated pupils. Those supporting an inclusive approach would argue that their aim is for every pupil to reach his or her potential, not for all to reach a base line level of performance.

Process versus product

The process/product debate cuts across two pairs of competing aims already discussed: means/ends and excellence/inclusivity. The issue is worthy of note as at times in the debate about the physical education curriculum there have been strong advocates for each of these views.

Those who see the principal value of physical education in the process would probably share a

number of beliefs with those who support an approach aligned to physical education as a ‘means to an end’, with the experiences of learning in physical education as being the vehicle to achieve desirable general educational aims. Process advocates could claim that the quality of the product is entirely dependent on the quality of the process and that all learning is crucially about making sense of experience. Through working on challenges set in the subject pupils learn to, for example, co-operate, solve problems, create and persevere. Advocates of the process value of physical education would also favour inclusivity in that the aim would be for all pupils to have equal opportunity to have experiences from which they can learn. This learning would include emphasis on the experience of taking part in physical activities. Time would be taken to reflect on all aspects of the processes of planning movement, performing and replanning in the light of experience. It would also include an appreciation of personal potential and the setting of realistic personal goals.

It is not difficult to anticipate the criticisms that could be levelled at this aim of learning through the process of engagement in physical education. These would include claims that the aims were too vague. Opponents could argue that aims such as these would be impossible to control or measure and that every child would be learning something different through an experience. Opponents could also question the disregard for the quality of the outcome and doubt whether pupils would feel any sense of achievement if no value was placed on the standard of their performance. The importance of process is discussed further by Murdoch (1997: 263).

For the ‘product advocates’ the aim could be high quality performance. As far as possible the quality would be measurable or clearly judged against predetermined criteria. They would argue that success breeds success and that pupils thrive on the knowledge of how well they are performing. Process advocates could caution against very mechanistic methods of assessment and the demoralising effect of never achieving as well as the most able, particularly if results are made public. A defence for product advocates would be to argue that their approach is one where pupils are competing against themselves, working to improve personal performance, not comparing themselves with others.

These dichotomies are hard to untangle but need careful thought as allegiance to one or the other significantly influences the nature of physical education work in a school. It could be useful to do an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a SWOT analysis) of each of the two sides of both approaches and then weigh up what could be the best way forward.

Implication of aims

While each of the three needs for aims identified at the start of the chapter are of equal importance, the relationship between aims and planning is fundamental and warrants some consideration before concluding this chapter. This is because aims are not something that are committed to paper and can then be forgotten. As many writers have argued, notably Mosston and Ashworth (1994), aims cannot be achieved unless appropriate planning and teaching are devised (see also Whitehead 1997). To be true to their convictions and to achieve their stated aims teachers must select the curriculum, lesson content and teaching method that enables these aims to be met. So, for example, if health promotion is advocated as the prime aim the teacher needs to plan schemes and units of work that focus on this type of work and all lessons need to be geared to this end. Lesson objectives need to highlight elements of health and the actual movement work covered in lessons must ensure that health objectives are achieved. Feedback to pupils in lessons should highlight health components, and all assessment of pupil progress and lesson success should be based around the achievement of these elements. Similarly, if social development is advocated as a prime aim the teacher needs to design a curriculum that includes substantial opportunity for group work. Lesson objectives should highlight social skills

such as leadership, listening skills and tolerance. As above, feedback to pupils and assessment of achievement must be clearly related to the objectives of the lesson. Here it would be mastery of the social skills identified.

Working through the implications of adopting a particular point of view is a valuable exercise and well worth exploring before coming to any firm decision. This exercise could be carried out on all of the aims discussed above. Below are two examples that look at the implications of two different aims, together with resource needs that would be required to achieve them.

Example 1: education for leisure

Curriculum content: A broad range of activities, indoor/outdoor, individual/team, competitive/non-competitive are included. Specific attention is given to activity opportunities in the local area available to the pupils when they leave school. There is some opportunity for choice in Years 10 and 11. Involvement in General Certificate of Education (GCSE)/Advanced (A) Level examinations is an option.

Teaching methods: Teaching strategies such as Inclusion, Discovery and Problem Solving (Mosston and Ashworth 1994) are highlighted. Mixed ability teaching is used, with tasks differentiated to cater for all abilities. Teaching is pupil focused. Feedback is linked to personal improvement and effort. There are opportunities for pupils to make decisions, e.g. setting their own goals, evaluating own progress. Ipsative assessment is stressed.

Lesson objectives: These highlight mastery of skills needed to take part in range of activities, as well as social objectives such as working in a team to solve problems. Objectives are differentiated by task and outcome.

Ambience/climate: This is accepting of all, irrespective of ability. It is encouraging and caring. It celebrates progress. Enhancing self-esteem/self confidence are highlighted. It is empowering.

Extra-curricular programme: There is a wide range of open access clubs. The stress is on matches within the school to provide opportunities for all to represent their form/house.

Facilities: A wide variety of facilities would be needed. Appropriate use of local facilities would be an advantage.

Staffing: In years up to Year 9 essential ground work is taught by school staff. In Years 10 and 11 there could be some use of personnel from the local area. These personnel are people whom pupils will meet in out of school contexts, who could be attached to local leisure centres or local clubs. All adults with whom the pupils come into contact should be welcoming of the young people, whatever their level of ability.

Example 2: elite level performance

Curriculum content: Particular focus is on competitive activities, particularly high prestige national sports and some Olympic sports. There is specialisation in fewer rather than more activities. Possibly, examinations are not offered, allowing for staff time to be directed to working to improve quality of pupil performance.

Teaching methods: Teaching strategies such as Command and Practice (Mosston and Ashworth 1994) are highlighted. Classes/years are streamed according to ability in each activity. Staff with particular expertise in an activity teach the most able. There is opportunity for pupils to move up or down groups as their performance changes. Records are kept of levels of success. School records would be displayed and those improving on these records would be rewarded. Assessment would tend to be norm referenced.

Lesson objectives: These identify a key skill, game procedure, compositional technique that was to be practised and mastered.

Ambience/climate: This is performance oriented. Pupils are challenged to work hard, set themselves ambitious goals and beat others. Praise has to be earned through clear improvement.

Extra-curricular programme: Team practices are held in the lunch hour and after school. They are open only to the most able. There is concentration on fewer rather than more activities. The emphasis is on involvement in matches against other schools and in local, regional and national tournaments. There is encouragement for the most able pupils to move on to elite regional squads.

Facilities: Quality facilities are focused on a few activities.

Staffing: School staff are employed to work in specific activities with key teams. There is some involvement of coaches if needed.

The exercise carried out here in respect of education for leisure and elite performance is valuable as it identifies clearly the implications of a particular approach. It would be useful to carry out this same exercise for other aims of physical education.

Aims in the school context

As can be seen from this discussion, there is a complex web of views in respect of the aims of physical education. The NCPE has never offered a definitive answer in that it has made reference to many of the positions outlined in the sections above. There could be a number of reasons for this. The physical education curriculum, along with most other curricula, was designed by a group of people and it is likely that different views were presented and that all points of view were included. It could also be the case that, as certain of the possible aims of physical education appeal to different sections of government, it may have been seen as wise to make reference to more rather than fewer aims, to enlist the widest possible support.

Pragmatically, however, it could be argued that to cater for the range of pupils, both in age and characteristics, who are to be subject to physical education lessons, it is necessary to identify a range of aims or valuable outcomes that can be associated with this area of work. The nature of the pupils and the environment in which they live are certainly features that have to be taken into consideration

in, for example, identifying the aims of a school physical education department. Aims have to be realistic and practical. Those for a primary school would, quite legitimately, be different from those in a secondary school. Context is important too, with an inner city school putting certain aims to the fore while a rural school might have different priorities. (For discussion of teachers' views on a wide range of aims see Armour and Jones 1998: chs 10, 11 and 12.)

The situation, therefore, may not be as clear cut as it might be. However, notwithstanding this dilemma about aims, it is still essential for every physical education teacher to have thought through very carefully where his or her priorities lie. This is vital, as mentioned at the start of the chapter, for planning, assessing and justifying work in physical education.

This debate is continued in [Chapter 13](#).

Questions for reflection

- 1 Is there one prime aim for physical education?
- 2 Could it be argued that there is no one fundamental aim for the subject? How do you weigh up, out of all the valuable outcomes that the subject can work towards, what the best use of time is with a particular group of pupils?
- 3 Will a physical education curriculum directed to a particular extrinsic end be a distorted curriculum?
- 4 Could it be that well taught physical education, approached as a subject with intrinsic value, will have beneficial influences outside its specific remit? Will confidence gained in physical education help individuals to secure a job? Will mastery of skill in a physical activity result in lifelong participation and thus the productive use of leisure time and the maintenance of health?
- 5 Should physical education teachers believe, without reservation, that there is value in physical activity *per se*?
- 6 Does the physical education profession have the courage of its own convictions?