

3 Personalised learning in physical education

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I was in the first year of secondary school. At the end of the lesson I was showing off in front of my mates and threw one of my training shoes into the basketball ring. I scored but it got stuck in the netting underneath and just hung there. Then he came into the gym. Everyone stopped what they were doing. 'You are going to get that down and then I'm going to hit you with it'. And he did – right in front of my mates!!!

Adam (aged 39)
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Biographical reflections

One would be hard-pushed to find a physical education teacher who did not claim to have the best interests of the pupils they taught at heart. Meeting the needs of *all* pupils is complex, challenging and, one might argue, virtually impossible. During my time teaching physical education in state secondary schools in England I remember vividly being frustrated by the competing demands of trying to engage all pupils in a class, year group, school – all of whom are said to have 'individual' needs. The hustle and bustle of day-to-day physical education teaching meant no time to 'sit back and smell the roses' – or more accurately the time to reflect was very limited. I've come to realise now that regular opportunities to stop, reflect and ask: 'What can I do to enhance the learning of more pupils?' are vital if teachers of physical education are to ensure that their subject is to appeal to a greater number of pupils. In the previous chapter Gary Stidder discussed the value of reflexivity for inclusive practice in physical education. One aim of this chapter is to encourage reflection on that very question.

Introduction

Since my previous chapter in the first edition of this book (Theodoulides 2003) there have been a number of distinct changes to UK government policy and the ways in which it has attempted to strategically address the issue of social inclusion in schools for all pupils notwithstanding a change in political terminology from 'inclusive practice' to 'personalised learning'. My intention in this chapter is to

explore factors that underpin curriculum planning decisions, particularly in the light of the revised National Curriculum for Physical Education requirements (QCA 2007).¹ The discussion will examine issues relating to the content and structure of the physical education curriculum, that is, what is taught (the range and content) and how it is organised. As part of a wider policy initiative for placing people at the centre of public services, personalised learning has become an important consideration of the practices of schools and teachers in England and Wales. Whilst elements of the personalised learning agenda have undergone transformation from five components² (Miliband 2004; DfES 2004a) to nine key features³ (DCSF 2008) the general philosophy underpinning personalised learning has remained. This chapter will explore personalised learning and some of the tensions and constraints that exist between aspects of the personalised learning agenda, other government agendas and the way in which physical education is planned and taught in schools. Elements of the personalised learning agenda will be identified and explored with reference to how matters of personalised learning might be pursued further within physical education.

What is personalised learning?

From the outset, personalised learning was part of New Labour government's plan to drive up standards in education by improving the quality of learning and teaching in all schools through a pupil-centred approach to education provision. The DCSF (2007: 64) commented '(t)he distinctive feature of the pedagogy of personalisation is the way it expects all pupils to reach or exceed expectations, fulfil early promise and develop latent potential. Personalised lessons are stretching for everyone'. A central feature of the personalised learning agenda was therefore ensuring schools were focused on ensuring higher attainment for *all* pupils. Furthermore, seen in the context of other education initiatives such as Every Child Matters (DfES 2004b) and later The Children's Plan (DCSF 2007), the personalised learning agenda was also an attempt by policymakers to raise awareness of the educational attainment of pupils from different backgrounds. It was those pupils who fared less well in education who were targeted as most in need within the personalised learning agenda (DCSF 2008). In this context, as the DCSF (2008: 6) pointed out, the personalised learning agenda had a 'moral purpose' to create a more equitable and fair education system.

When outlining personalised learning in a speech at the North of England Education Conference, David Miliband, then the Secretary of State for School Standards, said:

Decisive progress in educational standards occurs where every child matters; careful attention is paid to their individual learning styles, motivations, and needs; there is rigorous use of pupil target setting linked to high quality assessment; lessons are well-paced and enjoyable; and pupils are supported by partnership with others well beyond the classroom.

This is what I mean by ‘Personalised Learning’. High expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child’s needs.

(Miliband 2004).

A concern for greater equality and fairness gave the personalised learning agenda an inclusive focus. Central to this focus on greater personalisation was the role of teachers and schools in catering simultaneously for the different needs of all pupils in the class (DCSF 2008) in order to motivate and engage pupils in their learning. One might ask about personalisation, ‘what is new about any of this?’ Many of the claims made by Miliband (2004) and in subsequent government publications, that personalised learning is characterised by attention to individual learning styles, motivating pupils, target setting and assessment, and well-paced lessons are essentially all features of good teaching that have been central to the work of teachers for a long time. In fact the DfES (2004a) acknowledges this point in an early publication about personalised learning. Whether new or not, what became clear in the years after personalised learning was placed on the education agenda was that it became a key focus of government’s education policy and was reinforced within the practices schools and teaching in a short period of time.

One aim of the personalisation agenda has been to affect change within learning and teaching practices. The DCSF (2007: 6) commented that ‘(p)ersonalised learning is central to a school improvement agenda which has teaching and learning at its heart’. The personalised learning agenda then, places emphasis on teachers and schools to examine their practices and develop more effective ways of making greater provision for all pupils. This focus on high quality teaching and learning through school and classroom practices locates much of the moral obligation in meeting personalised learning outcomes in the hands of schools and teachers. The personalised learning agenda requires teachers and curriculum planners to think more critically about the relationship between the pedagogy, curriculum and assessment (Hipkins *et al.* 2010). In doing so, the personalised learning agenda ignores, or at best marginalises, the impact wider structural constraints such as a prescribed and regulated curriculum, standardised modes of assessment, class organisation based on chronological age and lessons controlled by bells, have on promoting personalisation. As the following discussion will highlight there are tensions, contradictions and constraints in the practices and policies of schools which inhibit the extent to which teachers can fully address the aspirations of the personalised learning agenda. However, before pursuing these further the discussion turns to an exploration of learning and teaching methods which address matters of inclusion and personalised learning in physical education.

Personalisation of learning and teaching within physical education

Meeting pupils’ individual learning needs within physical education has generally been seen as the responsibility of the teacher. Typically, this has focused on teachers employing appropriate learning and teaching strategies to develop a

pupil-centred approach. Published before the personalised learning agenda came into being, three principles of inclusion were identified in the National Curriculum for Physical Education in England (NCPE; DfEE/QCA 1999) which provided useful guidance for inclusive practice and how to meet pupils' individual learning needs. These were: 1) 'setting suitable learning challenges'; 2) 'responding to pupils' diverse needs'; and, 3) 'overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils' (DfEE/QCA 1999; 28–31). The section below will explore three common strategies that are thought to be valuable in personalised learning by virtue of their ability to meet pupils' individual learning needs; these are differentiation, using a variety of teaching styles and employing different learning styles.

As pointed out by Vickerman and Hayes in the following chapter to this book differentiation is thought of as central to personalised learning (DCSF 2008) as well as to inclusive teaching (Vickerman 2004). In general, teachers will set a learning task for the majority of the pupils in their class and then differentiate the task to make it easier for those who are struggling and set a more challenging task for those who find the task easy. So for example, within a unit of work that focuses on outwitting an opponent through the principles of invasion games and in particular goal shooting games, whilst the majority of the group might be working to beat a semi-active defender in a 1v1 situation in basketball before taking a shot, those who find this task difficult could be asked to beat a passive defender whilst those that find the task easy would be required to beat a fully active defender. Through such differentiated tasks a greater number of pupils are likely to be working on tasks that are more closely matched to their ability than if all pupils were doing the same practice. Thus, 'a recognition and commitment to modify and adapt ... teaching and learning strategies in order to enable access and entitlement to the physical education curriculum' is at the heart of inclusive teaching (Vickerman 2004: 162) and greater personalisation for pupils' learning. Differentiation is one way of engaging pupils of different abilities in learning activities that enable them to participate fully in physical education lessons.

The use of different teaching styles also allows teachers to meet pupils' individual learning needs. Mosston and Ashworth's (1986) spectrum of teaching styles identifies ten different teaching styles. Movement along the spectrum of teaching styles from command style, where all decisions are made by the teacher, to self-teaching, where the learner is working independently of the teacher, sees decision-making responsibility transferred from the teacher to the pupil in increasing amounts. This movement along the spectrum from command to self-teaching places increasingly greater responsibility for, and involvement in, learning in the hands of the learner. However the extent to which teachers are willing to employ different teaching styles within their lessons is subject to tension. For example, in their study into teachers' and pupils' perceptions of personalised learning Underwood and Banyard (2008) found that to boost pupils performance in examinations teachers tended to over-rely on a command teaching style which is at odds with a pupil-centred approach to learning. Whilst their study was not focused on physical education, what is clear is that the pressure on

teachers to meet targets for pupils to pass examinations and meet end of Key Stage attainment levels clearly impacts upon and constrains the teaching styles teachers chose to employ to promote pupils' learning.

The requirements of the NCPE provide opportunities for teachers to employ different teaching styles to promoting pupil's learning in physical education. For example, in addition to developing skills, the NCPE requires pupils to evaluate and improve, make and apply decisions and make informed choices about healthy active lifestyle. The use of different teaching styles is effective in promoting pupils' learning in these areas (Mosston and Ashworth 1986). For example to evaluate, pupils could be asked to teach another pupil a forward roll (reciprocal style) or video their own forward roll and then evaluate it (self-check style) within a unit of work that focuses on accurate replication of actions, phrases or sequences. In a unit of work that aims to promote performing at maximum levels such as in an athletics lesson to accommodate individual differences, each pupil could be asked to decide whether they wanted to practice the javelin throw, for example, from a standing, a 3-step approach or a 5-step approach (inclusion style) thereby learning at their appropriate level. From these examples it is clear that different teaching styles require different levels of decision-making from pupils which require them to take a more active part in their learning than when a command style is used. The use of a wider variety of teaching styles allows teachers to personalise learning to a greater extent by adopting different styles to meet individual pupils' different learning needs.

Along with teaching styles, different learning styles are also effective in meeting children's individual needs. Popular within education are the learning styles proposed by Honey and Mumford (1992); activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist.⁴ These learning styles address individual needs through the different ways in which Honey and Mumford (1992) claim children prefer to learn new information. Thus, a learning activity which requires problem-solving (for example most effective way in which to throw a discus like object) would be more suited to theorist learners; one which involves group work (such as working together to sling an object over the world record discus distance) to activist learners; a video analysis task (to determine the arm position at the release of a discus) to reflectivist learners; and a practice task (to implement the release of a discus) to pragmatist learners. Such a variety of learning activities are more likely to both challenge and motivate children by engaging a greater number of them in preferred ways of learning rather than by presenting tasks in a similar manner. The use of different learning styles also makes it incumbent upon teachers of PE to think differently about assessment. Different learning styles require children to draw upon knowledge, skills and understanding in diverse ways and this ought to be reflected in the way in which children are assessed. It is to assessment that the discussion now turns.

Personalised learning and assessment

Rigorous and frequent testing has been viewed by policymakers as important for driving up standards in education (DCSF 2008). Miliband (2004) highlighted how accountability of schools had been effective in raising pupils' levels of attainment and he restated the government's commitment to standardised national tests and examinations as a means of measuring schools' success. In order for pupils to improve and be successful in attainment tests and examinations, it is generally thought to be important that pupils know their current level of attainment and what they need to do to improve. Assessment for Learning (AfL) then is seen as valuable in meeting the personalised learning agenda in that it is said to be an effective way of meeting pupils' individual needs (DCSF 2008) as they move towards summative examinations. However, the extent to which assessment and AfL can make a significant contribution to personalised learning has come in for criticism. Pollard and James (2004) argue AfL only has a superficial impact upon personalised learning. For example, in their study into teachers' perceptions of personalised learning Underwood and Banyard (2008) found that teachers viewed the inter-relationship between personalised learning and assessment as mainly to do with improved record-keeping and providing better feedback to pupils. Pollard and James (2004) argue that what is needed are deeper changes in assessment practices which are likely to lead to a greater impact upon personalised learning. For example, in physical education pupils frequently work in groups but are rarely, if at all, assessed formally on their ability to demonstrate the skills needed for effective group work, or to solve problems. Stidder and Hayes (2010) have shown that there are many opportunities within physical education to assess and develop personal learning and thinking skills as well as address the five outcomes of 'Every Child Matters'. Within the key concepts, processes, range and content and curriculum opportunities of the revised National Curriculum for Physical Education teachers can provide pupils with problem-solving and decision-making tasks whilst enabling them to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Pupils could for example, act as coaches and provide other pupils with strategic or tactical advice. In other circumstances, pupils might make independent decisions related to the risks involved in a particular activity whilst evaluating their individual and team performance. All of these tasks can help to develop the key skills of reading, writing, communicating and listening. Teachers can also provide pupils with opportunities to become self-managers, creative thinkers, reflective learners, problem-solvers, team workers, independent learners, and effective communicators according to the style of teaching they adopt in physical education lessons. Ofsted (www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/physical-education-schools-200508), however, has highlighted how pupils are not often assessed in leadership or coaching roles as teachers tend to focus assessment upon skill performance. Assessing pupils in a wider range of learning outcomes may well result in some pupils being identified as successful learners in physical education which might not have been the case had the focus of assessment been upon technique and skills. A narrow focus on assessment outcomes is perhaps

understandable given that the NCPE levels of attainment against which pupils are judged at the end of each Key Stage make very little reference to group work, leadership and coaching. This highlights how the constraints of the curriculum and the pressure to assess pupils against narrow and limited attainment criteria, work to restrict opportunities for physical education teachers to adopt assessment practices that meet the needs of a greater number of pupils.

In the timing of assessment, practice tends to be rather limited too. Typically in physical education summative assessment (AoL) tends to take place at the end of a unit of work. All pupils are usually assessed on the same knowledge, skills and understanding and at the same time. However, to promote personalised learning, where possible why not allow pupils the choice of assessment mode? So for example, in assessing a pupils' knowledge and understanding when evaluating a partner's ability to accurately replicate an action, sequence or phrase of movement such as in gymnastics pupils might be given the opportunity to decide whether they want to be assessed in written form or audio form. Similarly pupils might be offered the choice of the activities on which they are assessed. For example, given that teachers of physical education cannot assess everything pupils do, pupils might decide the physical education activities and/or the learning objectives on which they would prefer to be assessed rather than having teachers decide. Furthermore, pupils might be given the choice of when they want to be assessed within the unit of work. Some might chose to be assessed in week six whilst others might wait to be assessed in week nine thereby giving them more time to learn. What all this highlights is that assessment practices are not set in stone and there is flexibility for teachers to be more creative in how they decide upon what is to be assessed, when and how they plan and implement assessment practices. By adopting such practices as those outlined here this might go some way to addressing Pollard and James' (2004) concern that AfL has had only a marginal impact upon personalising learning. For greater personalised learning it is generally agreed that pupils ought to be involved in decisions about their education and assessment is one aspect in which they can be consulted. The extent to which pupils are consulted on other aspects of their learning is discussed further below and this begins by looking at how pupils learn to learn.

Personalised learning and learning to learn

Whilst one focus of the personalised learning agenda has been the practices of schools and teachers in order to better motivate, challenge and meet pupils' individual learning needs, Pollard and James (2004: 5) stress that personalised learning should be viewed as more than 'an over-simplified consideration of teaching provision'. They argue for looking at personalised learning as a 'dynamic concept', one built upon 'social practices' that require changes in education provision. For example, one of the attractive features of the personalised learning agenda is a focus on 'learning how to learn' (Pollard and James 2004; Crick 2009). In this respect the Association for Physical Education (AfPE 2008) define physical education in the following way:

Physical education is the planned, progressive learning that takes place in school curriculum timetabled time and which is delivered to all pupils. This involves both ‘learning to move’ (i.e. becoming more physically competent) and ‘moving to learn’ (e.g. learning through movement, a range of skills and understandings beyond physical activity, such as co-operating with others). The context for the learning is physical activity, with children experiencing a broad range of activities, including sport and dance.⁵

Association for Physical Education (AfPE 2008: 3)

In order to promote greater pupil engagement and involvement in learning there have been calls for changes in the way in which knowledge is transmitted within subjects on the school curriculum (Kirk and Macdonald 1998; Glasby and Macdonald 2004; Crick 2009; Hipkins *et al.* 2010). What is needed it is argued, is the teaching of knowledge that is ‘unearthed, encountered and exchanged from the “person up” rather than the “system down”’ (Crick 2009: 186). Learning how to learn focuses on developing higher order skills such as problem-solving, critical reflection and skills of enquiry and places a strong emphasis in getting pupils to be creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients. Such a focus requires teachers to think differently about how to educate pupils.

Since its introduction, the NCPE has been conceptualised in narrow terms, that is skills and techniques in the context of elite sport performance (Penney and Evans 1999; Penney 2000). Despite some attempt in the revised NCPE to move towards a thematic curriculum (DfE 2011), the physical education curriculum is still dominated by traditional team games (Quick *et al.* 2010) through which the teaching of sport specific techniques is an enduring factor (Kirk 2010). One upshot of these ‘performance discourses’ (Tinning 1997) is that they presented knowledge in such a way that it seen as both agreed and static, with the teacher as the mediator of knowledge and the student as the passive recipient. A ‘person up’ approach would, arguably, have the effect of involving children much more in creating knowledge through which they identify and pursue their own learning goals (Underwood and Banyard 2008). This ‘facilitates the individual in acquiring dispositions, skills and attitudes for learning how to learn. And learning how to negotiate the values issues and dilemmas of the real world’ (Crick 2009: 187). Within physical education Kirk and Macdonald (1998) have argued that a situated learning approach to pupils’ education. Based upon a constructivist approach to learning which views learning as an ‘active process’, Kirk and Macdonald develop Lave and Wenger’s idea of ‘communities of practice’ to argue that situated learning through a sport education model has potential to offer ‘greater opportunities for meaningful, authentic, and differentiated participation’ in physical education than traditional forms of the subject (Kirk and Macdonald 1998: 384). Put another way, Kirk and Macdonald argue that situated learning through a sport education model engages pupils in a form of physical education that is relevant to their lives, their social context and their capabilities (Kirk and Macdonald 1998). The idea is that pupils then develop autonomy for their learning and become less reliant upon teacher input. This point was made also above in the

discussion on teaching styles and learning styles in physical education. Personalised learning is enhanced through pupils' ownership of their learning. It is clear from this discussion that how pupils learn is intimately related to the nature of the physical education curriculum and it is to this that the discussion now turns.

Personalised learning and curriculum organisation

A key feature of the personalised learning agenda is 'curriculum organisation' and in particular flexibility to design a curriculum that is more relevant to pupils' needs (DCSF 2008). Such flexibility would appear to be an attractive proposition for teachers and pupils alike. Flexibility, the argument goes, allows teachers to plan a curriculum that is pertinent to the needs of the pupils in a particular school. For pupils, a curriculum which is specific to their needs is likely to be one which they find more interesting, stimulating and through which they achieve success. However, Campbell *et al.* (2007) point out government regulation of the curriculum means that 90 per cent of what is taught in schools, and when it is taught, is determined by education policy. Given the current level of government prescription with regard to curriculum content any flexibility to personalise a school curriculum is likely to be constrained by the very structured demands and requirements of the National Curriculum and subject areas. But despite curriculum constraints schools do have some degree of flexibility for teachers to be creative in how they utilise such opportunities. In Chapter 10 Stidder and Wallis provide what they believe to be a compelling case for wholesale accredited awards in physical education for all pupils aged 14 and over. For example, there is at least one school in the South-East of England in which all pupils start their GCSE⁶ subjects in year nine rather than year ten thereby in effect, reducing Key Stage three to two years. It is also quite common practice now for schools to 'fast-track' high achieving pupils to start GCSE in physical education in year nine. Indeed, at the time of writing the implementation of the new National Curriculum for England is to be delayed by one year and will take effect from 2014 with the possibility that Key Stage three could be reduced to just two years with Key Stage four changing to three years. This would mean that the lead up to GCSE would be a more substantial and meaningful three-year programme of work but perhaps less personalised as all pupils would follow an accredited award in physical education. One might wonder whether such changes to physical education curriculum in these schools are intended to meet pupil's individual needs or to enhance the school's standing in league tables. These two aims are not necessarily mutually exclusive in leading greater personalisation, but it does not necessarily follow that it is advantageous for pupils to be 'fast-tracked' to start GCSE's in year nine. Whatever the motivation of schools, what this highlights is that some possibilities exist for thinking about different ways of structuring the school's physical education curriculum to meet a wider range of pupils' needs. The challenge for those that plan the curriculum is to seize upon these opportunities and use them to promote greater personalised learning.

Over the last 20 years there have been a number of developments within physical education which have indicated possibilities for changes in physical education pedagogy whilst still meeting NCPE requirements. For example, there have been moves towards a more pupil-centred approach to the way in which athletics is taught within schools with more emphasis on developing the fundamentals of running, throwing and jumping (Morgan 2011 UK Athletics 2005) rather than Olympic-style events. Kirk and Macdonald (1998) have reminded us how games for understanding and sport education have the potential to promote learning in a wider range of outcomes than lessons which focus predominately on teaching techniques. More recently Quick *et al.* (2010) identified that schools are offering a much greater range of physical activities and sports within the physical education curriculum in an attempt to motivate and engage more pupils. As part of a much broader study Stidder and Binney (2011) explored the suitability of 'alternative' physical activities within the formal physical education curriculum through the findings of a pilot survey completed by physical education teachers and pupils after completing a series of 'alternative' activity taster days hosted by a university in South-East England. The results suggested that 'alternative' activities have a great deal of appeal to pupils and there is a willingness amongst teachers to promote 'alternative' types of physical activities within the formal physical education curriculum. On that basis they proposed an 'alternative' physical education curriculum for pupils in secondary schools.

The increase in popularity of what have been termed 'lifestyle' activities (Wheaton 2004; Green 2008) has been said to have the potential to challenge stereotypes and dominant discourses in physical education around notions of gender and ability (see [Chapter 5](#) for a further discussion of these issues). However the reality is that whilst lifestyle sports might have the potential to transgress social identities and challenge notions of masculinity with sport thus far they have failed to do so (Wheaton 2004). As Wheaton (2004: 19) notes, within adult lifestyle sports 'femininities continue to be framed by discourses and practices that perpetuate stereotypes of white heterosexual attractiveness, and masculinities based on normative heterosexuality and whiteness, skill and risk.' What all these initiatives have in common is that they have been seen as alternatives to the dominant pedagogy of 'performance discourses' (Tinning 1997) within physical education which reinforces elitism and defines excellence in terms of a limited range of sports skills and competence (Penney 2000, Green 2002). As such, they have potential to enhance personalised learning through the way in which they promote learning in a different range of outcomes than 'performance discourses' and are therefore able to meet the needs and interests of a wider range of pupils than those who are currently attracted to physical education and school sport.

Personalised learning and the extended physical education curriculum

Alongside curriculum organisation is the extended curriculum through which personalised learning is said to be enhanced (DCSF 2008). Physical education

extra-curricular activities have potential in ‘(h)elping pupils to discover or develop new interests and talents (which) is an important aspect of personalised learning’ (DCSF 2008: 44). Between 2003 and 2010 the Physical Education and School Sport Clubs Links strategy (PESSCL; DfES/DCSF 2003) and Physical Education and School Sport and Young People Strategy (PESSYP; Youth Sport Trust 2009) were focused upon increasing the amount of physical activity and sport in which pupils participated outside of curriculum time. Both PESSCL and PESSYP attempted to build links between schools physical education and sport and national governing body sport clubs in order to encourage more pupils to participate in sport outside of school. Whilst much of the focus of PESSCL and PESSYP was aimed at encouraging pupils to take part in more *sport*, by the time PESSYP had replaced PESSCL in 2009 there was greater recognition of pupil’s diverse interests in ways of being active which acknowledged preferences for less structured and more informal physical activity as opposed to structured and organised sport (see [Chapter 11](#) for further discussion of these issues). PESSCL and PESSYP are no longer part of the physical education agenda, but encouraging pupils to engage in physical activity or sport outside of physical education lessons and outside of school is one aim that resonates highly with teachers of physical education (Green 2003). Given the strength of this ‘ideology’ which Green (2003) found in the physical education teachers in his study it seems reasonable to concede that this remains an important aim for physical education teachers today and one way in which this aim might be addressed is through extra-curricular activities.

In essence and as highlighted by Stidder and Hayes in Chapter 1, for teachers of physical education, extra-curricular activities serve two main purposes; to encourage ‘sport for all’ and to provide opportunities for competitive sport (Green 2003). Whilst some of the teachers in the studies by Green (2003) and Haycock and Smith (2011) claimed to provide extra-curricular activities which were ‘open to all’ pupils, that is those who wanted to participate for recreational purposes, for fun and enjoyment, and those who wanted to play competitively, Green (2003) noted the tension and confusion that existed between rhetoric and reality. The reality is that in most schools extra-curricular physical education is heavily focused on competitive team sport in which the more able pupils participate (Penney and Harris 1997; Green 2003; Haycock and Smith 2011). The result of this is ‘limited opportunities and experiences to only a minority of pupils’ (Penney and Harris 1997: 43). If the potential of extra-curricular activities to promote greater personalised learning is to be utilised then extra-curricular provision is one aspect of physical education to which teachers ought to pay attention. As Haycock and Smith (2011) so aptly put it when writing about the experience of pupils with special educational needs such as physical disabilities in extra-curricular physical education:

... until those involved (in organising extra-curricular physical education activities) are willing and/or able to bring about desired change in the content, organisation and delivery of ECPE (extra-curricular physical education), it may be that rather than developing more inclusive and non-segregated forms

of provision, teachers in many schools will be constrained and/or inclined to continue providing programmes that, in effect, continue to provide what Penney and Harris call ‘more of the same for the more able’ pupils in ECPE. Haycock and Smith (2011: 522)

Pertinent questions to consider would seem to be; how can extra-curricular physical education be planned and delivered so that they appeal to, engage and motivate a wider range of pupils to participate? What activities should be offered to bring about greater participation for all pupils? What are the implicit and explicit messages pupils pick up about the aims and purpose of extra-curricular activities? One way of meeting pupils’ extra-curricular needs, as the discussion below highlights, might be to engage with pupils in discussion on some of those questions identified above.

Personalised learning and curriculum organisation in PE: pupil choice and pupil ‘voice’

Whilst pupil choice was a key component of the early personalised learning agenda (DfES 2004a) it was less explicit in later publications (DCSF 2008). Nevertheless, pupil choice opens up possibilities for a more personalised learning by providing pupils with opportunities to make decisions about their physical education and thereby better meet their individual needs. Within the curriculum student choice is possible where there is flexibility to deviate away from NCPE requirements. Typically this tends to occur at Key Stage 4 where pupils choose which examination subjects to take and in core physical education where pupils often chose which activities to do as part of their physical education programme. Glasby and Macdonald (2004) alert us to the possibility of greater ‘negotiation’ between teachers and pupils in physical education in all key stages in order to involve pupils in decision-making about their education. They identify two areas where teachers can negotiate with pupils; the content of the curriculum and assessment and approaches to teaching and learning. They argue this would lead to pupils making decisions about their learning such as what tactics and strategies *they* would want to learn; whether *they* want to be assessed individually or as part of a group and how they prefer to learn. The important thing to note here is that such decisions are being made by the pupils and not by the teacher.

Through greater personalisation which involves pupils in decision-making about what is taught, when it is taught and how learning is assessed ‘(t)he learner becomes a leader in his or her own journey: the boundaries between the individual learner and the organisation are troubled by subtle shifts in energy as the notion of “a learning eco-system” redistributes and changes conceptions of power’ (Crick 2009: 187). One might think that in schools funded by public money that any other approach is simply unacceptable. Such challenges to the power relationships between teachers and pupils’ means granting greater power to pupils. Many teachers, head teachers and governors might feel uncomfortable with this. However, in some areas of the physical education curriculum there appears to

have been some evidence of a shift in power between teachers and pupils. For example, Smith *et al.* (2009: 218) point out that activity choice is evidence of a 'democratisation of PE'. They continue however, that 'despite the prevalence of "activity choice" the power differentials between young people and teachers remains tilted in favour of the latter' (Smith *et al.* 2009: 217). Where teachers have listened to pupils 'voices' pupils have felt a greater sense of ownership of their education (Ruddock *et al.* 2006). As Glasby and Macdonald (2004: 143) argue 'if schools are for and about pupils, then the way forward in how educators (teachers, parents, curriculum, writers, coaches etc) work with students is clear. Physical education practices need to adopt a pupil-centred negotiated approach to teaching and learning'. One way of adopting a more pupil-centred approach might be to listen to pupils' 'voices', and those of their parents with regard to their preferences for physical education.

The notion of pupils and parents having a 'voice' in the way in which education services are employed is problematic.⁷ Campbell *et al.* (2007) distinguish between 'deep' and 'shallow' personalisation. 'Deep' personalisation they argue, occurs when users (in education this would be parents and pupils) 'become "designers and paymasters" of services' (Campbell *et al.* 2007: 136). Shallow personalisation, on the other hand, provides users with a limited 'voice'. Currently, one constraining element within education and physical education in striving for 'deep' personalisation is the level of government regulation of the curriculum which then manifests itself through the decisions made by head teachers and school governors at a school level. Currently, the extent to which pupils and their parents have significant 'voice' room appears limited but the personalised learning agenda opens up possibilities for developments in this area. The extent to which pupils and parents might have meaningful input into curriculum matters is also dependent upon the 'social and linguistic competence' (Pollard and James 2004: 11) of those who are aiming to get heard. Users that 'speak' the language of the school are more likely to be successful in this and typically this is likely to be the middle class (Pollard and James 2004; Campbell *et al.* 2007). Glasby and Macdonald (2004) highlight the time, energy and commitment that is required by teachers and pupils when negotiating upon curriculum matters. Those from middle-class families are much more likely than those from working-class families to possess the social, cultural and economic capital to engage in such negotiation. So while the notion of listening to pupils' and parents' 'voices' is central to the personalised learning agenda a note of caution is required. An education system that ignores, or fails to listen to the 'voices' of the working class is likely to increase inequality rather than reduce it.

Thus the relationship between the personalised learning agenda and matters of equity are deeply related to the nature of the curriculum (Hipkins *et al.* 2010). As other contributors to this book have shown the physical education curriculum has long been complicit in the reproduction of class, gender and race related ideologies. As Hipkins *et al.* (2010) point out:

If it [the curriculum] becomes a programme or pedagogy solely for those who have not been the winners in the curriculum, then it will be seen as a second-class curriculum option which is marginalised from the mainstream. On the other hand, if it is subsumed within the dominant curriculum it will favour those who possess the largest helpings of officially sanctioned cultural capital. We fear that lack of attention to issues such as these will simply enlist the new pedagogies into the project of reproducing the status quo.

Hipkins *et al.* (2010: 115)

If curriculum planners fail to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive and the 'voices' of parents and pupils from all social classes are heard and given equal consideration, then it is not too difficult to imagine how '(p)ersonalisation, therefore, might increase the already large inequalities in educational provision and achievement, deriving mainly from social and economic status' (Campbell *et al.* 2007: 39). The educational attainment of working class pupils still lags behind that of pupils from middle class (Green 2008). The challenge for physical education then, is to develop practices which address issues of inclusion for pupils from all social-classes and marginalised groups.

Conclusion

Despite the tensions and constraints that exist between competing government education agendas and the difficulties these pose for schools and teachers in addressing matters of personalised learning it seems right to claim that physical education has greater potential to enhance personalised learning. A more pupil-centred, pupil-led curriculum; flexibility (where it exists) provides for alternative approaches to a competitive, skills-based, games dominated curriculum; choice and 'voice' through which pupils and their parents have a say in shaping their school experience; learning and teaching methods that place greater emphasis on students to create knowledge, make decisions about their learning and engage more fully in the learning process, are all strategies that open up new possibilities to shape the physical education curriculum into one that will meet the needs of a greater number of pupils. Given the recent UK coalition government's proposal to introduce more competition within school physical education (Conservative Party 2010) it might appear that future policy decisions are more likely to reinforce the focus on sport-specific skills, élitism and competition in years to come particularly in the wake of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. But all is not lost. There is often 'slippage' (Penney and Evans 1999) between policy and practices as teachers adapt government policy in order to meet their own priorities (Swaby and Penney 2011). Smith *et al.* (2009) remind us that despite NCPE orders which lead to a narrowing of requirements at Key Stage 4 (particularly with regard to breadth of study) teachers of physical education have continued work against the grain in this area by offering a broad range of recreational-type activities to enhance pupil's motivation for leisure style activities. Therefore, with a commitment to 'desired change' (Haycock and Smith 2011) physical education

has to promote greater personalised learning and has potential to do more to meet the needs of *all* pupils. What is required is for teachers to open their minds to new possibilities.

Notes

- 1 A fourth national curriculum for physical education in England was published by the QCA in 2007 and implemented in September 2008 for all pupils beginning their compulsory secondary schooling at the age of 11.
- 2 The five components were: assessment for learning; teaching and learning strategies; curriculum choice; school organisation; and school links to the wider community.
- 3 These nine key features were high quality teaching and learning; target-setting and tracking; focused assessment; intervention; pupil grouping; the learning environment; curriculum organisation; the extended curriculum; supporting children's wider needs.
- 4 According to Honey and Mumford (1992) a reflectivist learner prefers to learn by watching and thinking through a novel experience; a pragmatist by practicing, that is, applying new learning to practice; a theorist by thinking through the problem; an activist by working with others to meet a challenge.
- 5 AfPE's view of physical education is as follows:

The aim of Physical Education is to develop physical competence so that all children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome – physical literacy – is as important to children's overall development as literacy and numeracy.
- 6 The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is an academic qualification awarded in a specified subject, generally taken in a number of subjects by students aged 14–16 in secondary education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 7 For a more detailed discussion of some of the challenges for children and teachers in allowing children more input into their learning and the curriculum, see Glasby and Macdonald (2004).

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