

Equity and inclusion in physical education PLC

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Abstract

Physical Educationalists in many western and westernised societies across the globe are facing new challenges as system wide changes take place increasing the role of private bodies (e.g. Academy trusts) in the delivery of school based education. This reflective and rather personal paper¹ considers the place and meaning of ‘inclusion’ and ‘equity’ on a terrain of consortia, free schools, academies and de-nationalised curricula, where outsourcing Physical Education (PE), either to corporate coach/sport industries and/or health providers is fast becoming the norm. The paper addresses class, race and gender issues, highlights the repackaging of privilege in PE, and pleads for the rediscovery of PE grounded in education principles rather than the interests of health and sport industries.

Keywords

Equity, inclusion, physical education, privatisation

Introduction

What place, or perhaps more appositely, what price ‘inclusion’ in an increasingly privatised education system, in physical education PLC (public limited company)? In England, central Europe (see Holger, 2011; Olmedo, 2013)² as elsewhere (Arreman and Holm, 2011; Ball, 2012; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010), we increasingly work in a landscape of consortia, free schools, academies and de-nationalised curricula where outsourcing Physical Education (PE), either to corporate coach/sport industries and/or health providers is fast becoming the norm (see Evans, 2014a, 2014b; Macdonald, 2012; Pope, 2012). What are the possibilities of effectively achieving inclusion where ‘free’ market principles require us to make untried and untested changes, driven more by hope and ideology than either research or professional practitioner evidence (see Smith, 2013)? And what does inclusion mean in the Goveian (Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education in the current UK, Liberal/Conservative (Lib/Con) coalition Government) neoliberal project?

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Neoliberal England, rhetorically at least, is a world of opportunity and choice. If UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's New Labour mantra (circa 1997–2007) was 'Education, education, education', then (Lib/Con Prime Minister) David Cameron and Gove's is 'Freedom, opportunity, choice!' Their imagined society implies imaginary, self-responsibilising, self-actualising, self-governing individuals (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) able to pursue personal interests free from constraint; imaginary schools, freed from Local Authority control, liberated to procure resources of their choosing that every parent, pupil, teacher is able to consume without prohibition or constraint. But having the 'freedom to' do or achieve something is, of course, hollow promise if it is not accompanied by 'freedom from' conditions and constraints of material, financial, or knowledge resource that may prohibit access to the variety of opportunities proffered (see Talbot, 1999).

It is as well to remember that we are wrestling with two demons here. Questions both of 'inclusion' and 'equity' refer to a whole range of levels of consideration, including: matters of national system policies and the practices expected to flow from them; school types and access to them; the knowledge contents and pedagogic practices that we choose to make available to students; how we assess and value their outcomes; how we prepare and support teachers in their delivery; and so on. And all these refer only to what Gove's economic demons would call the *supply* side of the problem (Chubb and Moe, 1992; Evans, 2014a). Demand for our services comes from myriad students and their families, not only differentiated by age, aptitude and ability but, among other invidiously ranked things, class, gender and ethnic affiliation. If our 'offer' (to stick with the barbarity of biztalk for a moment) to them is to be '*equitable*' it requires more than offering a few ladders of opportunity to run up and down, provided they possess the right sort of fancy to do so. It requires us to confront what we ought to or can do to offer 'the different' the same, by value and functionality. If we had a month of Sundays we could probably have a tidy go at several of these issues. As it is we can try some passing glances at a few.

Let us go back for a moment to our policymakers. In fairness, during the New Labour years, inclusion was brought to the fore in policy legislation, e.g. in National Curriculum documentation and *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfE, 2003). Every local authority is/was legally bound to realise and promote inclusionary ideals.

The law supporting inclusive education in the UK

Legislation in the UK prohibits discrimination in education and supports inclusive education. The UK also has obligations under international human rights law to provide inclusive education for all children.

Education without discrimination in UK law

It is unlawful for any education provider, including a private or independent provider, to discriminate between pupils on grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief in admissions, access to benefits or services, exclusions, and in the employment of staff. There are some exceptions: to allow for the maintenance of faith schools and single-sex schools [and, in Wales, Welsh medium provision]; some disabled pupils and pupils with a statement of 'special educational needs' may be segregated in special schools; and schools may temporarily or permanently exclude pupils for disciplinary reasons.

Until October 2010, legal prohibitions of discrimination were found in a number of different laws enacted over many years. On 1 October 2010, the Equality Act came into force, consolidating and

strengthening the various equality laws. However, the change from a Labour government to a Lib/Con coalition government between the passage of the Act and its coming into force has delayed preparation for full implementation of the Act and resulted in some elements being targeted for revision or even non-implementation. Consultations are still under way on other aspects of the new law' (see CSIE, 2013: 1).

In the UK Local Authorities (LA)³ thus felt legally obliged to make public their endeavour to work with all their partners to reduce inequality and narrow the achievement gap.

This, of course, was good news. Few might contest the notion that every individual should have right of access to educational provisions and processes in which he or she experiences a sense of belonging, of being valued, part of something that will help in achieving fulfilment and happiness throughout their life course. We suspect not one of us would demur from such ideals. But what of the position now, how inclusive can we (are we expected to) be as a profession on new neoliberal terrain in England, across Europe and elsewhere? What policy drivers are there to underpin, aid and abet endeavour toward providing inclusive education and PE? Currently, the position of inclusion in education policy in the UK seems increasingly ambiguous and vulnerable; if not silenced then, for the moment, 'archived' in political discourse:

ITT trainees: The pillars of inclusion

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Well, at least Neoliberals in UK government are honest in their orientation toward inclusion in teacher preparation and, by extension, in society and schools! So we need ask ourselves, will the demise of Local Education Authorities (see Morris, 2013), combined with residual ambiguities in policy, signal support for inclusion policies, or confirm that we are no longer expected to realise commitments to them in school and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) PE? What motivation now is there to institutionalise processes in which every child irrespective of 'ability', social background and other characteristics is made to feel 'included', valued, and educationally and socially fulfilled?

Against this (inter) national policy backdrop, I want to suggest that now more than ever we need to be vigilant about anti-inclusionary tendencies and pressures bearing upon education and PE. Indeed, I'll go further to suggest that exclusionary pressures are forcefully at work both on and within the physical education profession in such a way that current social inequalities and hierarchies are simply being reproduced rather than challenged or eradicated, but in new and, some might say, even more invidious ways. And these may be being achieved, ironically, not despite our profession's best intentions to address the wellbeing of children, but because of them!

Is 'archiving' confined to policy discourse?

Is inclusion *passé* in PE discourse? Has equity and inclusion been so much a part of the mainstream, natural attitude in PE and sport in recent years that it has lost its resonance and import, every LA with an inclusion policy, every University Sports Studies programme an equity module?

Certainly they have become something of a mantra in our trade over the last 30 years; ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, ‘equity’, ‘choice’, tripping off the tongues of pedagogues, public servants, politicians, like petals over water falls.

However, despite such rhetorical commitment and the exceptional actions of teachers in some schools to deliver inclusive education, it is still the case that ‘being included’ is not how a good many children experience education in very many schools. Even in the best of all possible worlds, providing access and opportunity to do something (e.g. gain access to ‘good’ schools, or comprehensive after school sport provision) is not the same thing as being able to actualise or realise such opportunities.

Recently, one of my university students did a neat study of ability grouping in secondary school PE. Among the teachers she researched she found most talking up the virtues of mixed ability grouping as a means of inclusion and education for all, while ‘secretly’ celebrating the virtues of talent identification, either because they enjoyed this aspect of teaching most, or felt pressured by head teachers (in increasingly marketised settings) to engage in talent identification as a primary means toward their schools attracting the ‘best clientele’. For such reasons, early setting and a concentration of resources and pedagogical transactions in the direction of those perceived as already talented was commonplace. The effect, unsurprisingly, was poor take-up of extracurricular leisure opportunities by children from lower sets, i.e. those feeling that they were excluded from what was on offer, having neither the skills nor the cultural resource/capital (the ‘right’ dispositions) to make use of after school hours sport. And what starts as angry blame of teacher or schools for such failings, very soon translates into blame of oneself, ‘I’m useless, PE is no place for me’. This then is a Red Riding Hood inclusion policy: ‘Oh what a lot of inclusion you’ve got in your LA my dear Councillor!’ ‘Oh, yes, all the better to sieve, select and sort them out later via school intakes and internal grouping policies, my dear parent’.

Now more than ever, inclusion should be at the forefront of our thinking in PE and sport and if it is not already so, we should take it out of the archives of our minds, dust it down, and shake it out, because ‘threats’ to the pursuit of equity and inclusion in education are a growing concern (see Booth, 1999; Hatcher and Jones, 2011). Education systems are more complex and fragmented as they become increasingly hybridised, i.e. state/private/public–private/charitable trust provided (see Ball, 2012). New forms of relationships are emerging between schools and communities and teachers, parents and pupils. New technologies and new pedagogies are altering ways in which we think about education and knowledge acquisition and how, where and when it occurs. On this terrain, it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify where and what inequities are being perpetrated, and which parents and children are being denied access to particular forms of schooling, quality resource, teachers, teaching and knowledge (Ball, 2011; Evans, 2014a, 2014b).

We are duty bound to provide inclusive education. This means seeing inclusion not solely as a matter of access or act of accomplishment or completion but as an on-going process, something that has to be routinely and continually achieved. And inclusion (with respect) is not just about special educational needs (SEN). Indeed, if reduced to a debate about ‘inclusion of special needs pupils’ rather than one about the needs and inclusion of every child, it is likely to constitute (and be experienced as) nothing more than a concealment caper – conveniently hiding or deviating attention away from ‘mundane’ practices which do not routinely address the interests of every child. Inclusion unaccompanied by pursuit of other fundamentals, critically equitable provision of *education* for all, will be bitter pill to swallow for those subjected to it, akin to having access to a sweet shop while having no money or having left one’s false teeth at home.

Education is the key to inclusion; indeed, it seems odd to have to be reminded of this, but inclusion without education is like having a car but no fuel; knowing the desired destination but having no means of getting there. I labour this point because later I suggest we are in danger of becoming an education-less or perhaps more accurately a less educational profession/practice as political and policy pressures drive a wedge between 'Physical' and 'Education', i.e. the processes upon which inclusion depends.

Before we look at those trends, however, let's remind ourselves of some of the stock in trade issues that surround inclusion and its achievement, of the continued need to deal with old intractable enduring 'isms', before foregrounding and dealing with new ones.

Removing the 'ugly isms' from your classroom⁴

Let's take *social class* – it has long been a pet interest of mine (Evans, 1988). Ever since my time as a schoolboy in a mining valley grammar school in South Wales I have been driven by interests in class and wedded to research, teaching and debate about it, more often than not with my dear mentor and friend Brian Davies of Cardiff University. At 11 years of age I experienced the devastating effect of being separated from close friends and witnessing their bitter disappointment at having 'failed' the hated 11 plus (a school entrance exam taken at age 11), and mine at passing it. For them, exclusion was visceral and a lifetime sentence. There was no dominating middle class in my valley, just the tidy and the untidy working class – a division which determined which school you went to, secondary modern or grammar, and the subsequent life chances you enjoyed – decided by culturally loaded examinations and the accident of your sub-class of origin. However, having gained access to grammar school, I experienced another form of exclusion. Inclusion in grammar school education was not warm embrace and liberation but painful imprisonment. I became a stranger in my own land – a footballer in a rugby school – a school no more able or willing to attune its physical education to the diverse and changing interests of my community and its people than, to be truthful, I was willing to attune my interests to those of the school. It is a salutary reminder, if ever needed, that inclusion happens when the interests of pupils become the interests of the school and, vice versa, the interests of the school, those of the pupil. It took another 20 or more years for soccer goal posts to appear on hallowed school rugby terrain, for the culture of soccer and the many more who played it locally than those who submitted to the inelegance of the scrum and maul, to be embraced and given some parity (albeit never equal status) to those who played and supported the fetishised Nation's game. For me, all those years ago, as an outsider, expulsion from school followed. I was considered deviant, 'twp', a failure, and but for the soccer skills which I modestly possessed I was destined for the local pit or warehouse – until Cardiff City FC and a kindly philanthropic uncle stepped in.

Does class still matter? Yes, it surely does (see Evans and Bairner, 2013; Green et al., 2005). Despite politicians' desire to imagine or will it away or fragment and weaken our understandings of it ('hardworking families' is the latest, UK Lib/Con politician, Old Etonian driven obfuscation), it continues to define people's lives including their life chances in education, wealth, leisure and health. In the UK, the length and kind of education one receives is still in major part determined by social background, location and wealth levels. Not everyone has equal access to high quality education, including physical education, and health. That most of our successful Olympians (if that's how you want to adjudge the success of your PE programme) emerge from the middle classes, who can also look forward to leading longer, healthier lives, is more a product of the credit

cards in their back pockets, their incomes and social location than the makeup of their genes (see Smith et al., 2013).

For most parents, of course, it is not a case of wanting or getting access to and being included in private or selective high status schooling but, rather, of receiving quality 'inclusive' education in local, 'community' (and remember those other treacherous UK politically induced labels, 'council' and 'bog-standard') schools. The policy rhetoric of access, choice and diversity is but unhelpful distraction, a diversion from the pursuit and achievement of genuinely inclusive ideals. The lost question, in the face of a successful middle class capture of priorities and places in our schools is 'do we want them to be equally well resourced and desirable destinations for our children – "the same" in that respect?' And given that schools' most important 'resource' is their pupil populations, how do we achieve this desirable 'sameness' – could it conceivably be through competition and choice in unrigged educational markets?

Let me make one further point in passing about class. There is growing recognition that what children achieve in later life is determined fundamentally in the early years; in the investments in physical and other forms of cultural capital they receive in the family home and from early years' education (see DfE, 2013). Our on-going Early Year Learning (EYL) research (with Julie Stirrup at Loughborough University) certainly suggests that children from a variety of working and middle class backgrounds are likely to arrive at primary school already so differently resourced with not only different forms but amounts of physical capital that it will be nigh impossible for schools to fundamentally alter or eradicate such differentials in later years (see Vincent and Ball, 2007). Families are not equally well resourced to invest their children in opportunities for movement and play, to develop 'physical literacy' (Whitehead, 2010), outside school. Hence, by the time some children reach primary age many will not have acquired the physical capital and cultural resource to make easy transition to and feel included in primary (and afterward secondary) school PE. Current UK policy momentum toward funding employment of peripatetic coaches and coaching rather than quality PE in primary schools is unlikely to help either eradicate or reduce such existing class differences.

The amount of resourcing required to achieve elite excellence – arguably the primary goal of PE in Education PLC (see Evans, 2014b and Macdonald, 2012) – is beyond the wherewithal of most parents and children; and the more this is celebrated as the primary purpose of PE the less likely we are to see the majority retaining interest in physical activity and sport. In this sense, there may be fundamental conflict between the interests of health and the interests of PE and sport. This is not an either/or issue; of course, every child, skilled and unskilled, should be at the centre of our professional concerns and each and every one helped to realise their potential. Throwing money at primary schools' head teachers to employ peripatetic coaches rather than investing in decent PE, however, is hardly the best way of achieving this or attending to inequities and securing inclusion (DfE, 2013).

We do not, of course, rank invidiously by class (and gender) alone but also by race/ethnicity. Let me say something briefly about this. Nearly 40 years ago I took up teaching PE in a large comprehensive school in Kilburn, London whose intake was 60% West Indian, 20% Asian and 20% Irish and English extraction. A neighbouring school boasted the only 'black' head teacher in the country. For me it was a life changing experience. There I learned of the intersections of race and class and of the meaning of abject failure – seeing children, first and second generation, working class Afro Caribbean, West Indian, Asian, living and feeling (as I had felt) 'inside school' but outside its culture; the school (among many others at the time) was simply unable to understand and cope with cultural diversity and the dislocations that followed, between community and school, pupils and teachers, and produced failure among staff (a 40% annual attrition rate) and pupils on a grand scale. Goodness knows how those parents and children felt at that time. Included?

Hardly! I loved the school but left to pursue a research career, desperate to better understand the processes I had witnessed. Over the next few years with Brian Davies and colleagues I became a sociologist and ethnographer spending time in that and other Kilburn schools – learning that the hopes and aspirations of pupils and parents of different backgrounds and cultures were no different to my own. Forty years on, we might ask ‘what now is our capacity to provide an inclusive, multicultural, anti-racist education in PE? Have things changed in the UK, across Europe and elsewhere?’ Well, sadly, in research terms we can say very little about these matters, so little attention is given to race and ethnicity in PE research (the work of Tansin Benn, 2005; Symeon Dagkas, 2007; Laura Azzarito and Melinda Solomon, 2005; Joanne Hill, 2013; Katie Fitzpatrick, 2013; and Anne Flintoff and colleagues being notable exceptions). Consider Anne Flintoff and colleagues’ (2008) study, which reported:

... the findings of research that aimed to explore black and minority ethnic (BME) trainees’ experiences of Physical Education (PE) initial teacher training (ITT). Although the numbers of BME trainees opting to enter teaching have improved considerably over the last few years, PE remains one of three specific subject areas where they remain significantly under-represented. Current figures suggest that PE attracts approximately 3% of trainees from BME backgrounds, compared with 11% for new entrants into teaching overall. (Flintoff et al., 2008: 4)

Given the apparent attention to and presence of ‘black’ athletes in media, sport and athletics, how and why is it that so few young people of BME (black and minority ethnicity) choose PE as a profession – and why are some BME populations so underrepresented in after and post school physical leisure? What does this tell us about our profession and its practices? Of course the reasons for these underrepresentations are complex, but have we really addressed our part, our culpability, in the production in these cultural patterns? Are our curricula and pedagogies attuned to cultural diversity and anti-racist in design and intent? Again, if PE PLC means excessive attention to elite sport, one might reasonably ask, is that concentration likely to inspire *majority* involvement in sport and physical activity, any more, say, than (TV celebrity chef) Jamie Oliver’s food programmes inspire outbreaks of home cooking on a grand scale, or significant reduction in the purchases of take away food. We appear to be significantly better at helping to maintain both sport and cooking as spectator activities and favouring established social categories than breaking and reshaping moulds. Centring achievement on what might be success for the few when they leave school, rather than on what goes on in the immediacy of schooling by way of physical education, seems to me to be both counterproductive and educationally irresponsible if inclusion and education for all is our chosen goal. Most children by the age of 14 know full well that they are not going to be Olympians or play for Real Madrid, Cardiff City or Paris St-Germain. Concentration on talent identification and those who speculatively are going to become elite athletes is more likely to nurture feelings of inadequacy, disappointment, frustration and failure among the majority than any enduring love of physical activity and sport. Producing one or two fine ‘black’ athletes or footballers certainly doesn’t constitute a multicultural or anti-racist physical education.

Whatever this sounds like, I’m not into simply cataloguing inequities still evident in society, education and PE, and certainly not inclined toward blaming teachers, far from it. However, while education cannot compensate for society or alone eradicate inequities, it can and must seek to play its part in addressing them. And there are very many teachers doing just that; valiantly endeavouring to provide education and inclusive PE. What I do now want to highlight, however, is the

way in which ‘traditional’ inequities around class, race, ability, and gender (distinctive ‘isms’) are being reassembled and enacted in schools and PE classrooms in new, more subtle ways.

Repackaging privilege and exclusion

Exclusion does not enact itself in physical education in obvious ways, for example, as straightforward denials or disregard of persons’ subjectivities and cultures. No teacher could legitimately lay claim to being racist, sexist, ageist, ability elitist, etc. in their thinking and practice. At least I hope not. But old, obvious prejudices and social snobberies are being reassembled and enacted in new ways in schools and classrooms across the globe.

Over recent years PE in the UK, across Europe and elsewhere, has been co-opted (some might say corrupted) by the imperatives of obesity discourse – putatively the urgent need to encourage individuals to take exercise, eat better food and lose weight (Evans et al., 2008a; Gard and Wright, 2001, 2005; Borrows and Wright, 2007), thereby addressing the risks associated with what purportedly is an ‘obesity epidemic’. Schools have been identified as both part of the problem (for example, by inducing ill-health through bad food practices and providing insufficient opportunities to be active) and the solution to it, provided they attend to children’s fitness levels and dietary conditions. The pressures on schools and teachers to take responsibility for ‘the nation’s health’ now are enormous and come both from within and outside our profession. A vast array of corporate agencies (e.g. MacDonald’s, Nestle, Frucor) and private/public sector agencies in the UK, as elsewhere, queue to step in and provide necessary resource, particularly where there are perceived gaps or failings in provision, such as in primary school PE, to help schools address the putative growing health crisis. However, we need to bear in mind that obesity discourse is the expression of both a health and moral crusade – it is designed to activate correct behaviours, create good neoliberal citizens, knowledgeable consumers actively taking responsibility for their own personal health and wellbeing. As Powell (2013) has pointed out, the enterprise slogans of big business couch their health education interventions in schools as a contribution not only to children’s fitness but a ‘better society’, ‘building a better world’ (Danone), fostering ‘social responsibility’ (Frucor) and ‘shared values’ (Nestle).

There is in this discourse an implicit packaging of privilege and/or disadvantage depending on where the individual is standing in relation to it and his or her capacity to meet its imperatives. Obesity discourse is an assemblage of exclusionary/inclusionary attitudes, neatly packaged in such a way that professionals can now express prejudices and social snobberies (e.g. about the working class, women, ‘black’ people, disabled) legitimately in one neat pedagogical bundle, in so doing reproducing existing social hierarchies. In our research on obesity discourse (Evans et al., 2008b), for example, we have found perfectly decent, rational minds, often inhabiting leaders of task forces or government ministries, or respected celebrity chefs, using obesity to lambast and pathologise (always in ‘their’ best interest): the working classes for being slothful, lazy, irresponsible, consuming more or other than they should (e.g. ‘packed lunches are close to child abuse’, as claimed Jamie Oliver (2014)); women for being single parents and failing to provide correctly structured mealtimes or finding the right amount of time for their children to play; while the silence in obesity discourse with regard to ethnicity and people of disability itself constitutes oppressive exclusion and prejudice, to the extent it simply fails to consider the unique circumstances and difficulties, if not impossibilities, of some people and populations meeting obesity imperatives and achieving ‘normative’ healthy behaviours – exercising relentlessly, being/becoming ‘the right’ weight and shape.

Indeed, we might think of obesity discourse as a latter day version of ‘child saving’ crusades, its goals being not only to rescue a population ‘at risk’ but to regulate ‘deviant’ populations by announcing and (re)establishing acceptable social norms (Evans et al., 2008a). Its contemporary form is well reflected in threats to remove children from purportedly aberrant, non-compliant, fat-inducing families, for example, as expressed in the views of Tam Fry, Chairman of the Child Growth Foundation:

In 99% cases, obesity is so avoidable. Letting a child get fat is a form of abuse as there’s a possibility they could die before their parents. It’s important they are taken out of their homes and put under 24-hour surveillance from doctors and nurses. We have no hesitation in removing a severely undernourished child from their home. We should be as concerned when they are seriously overweight. The blame is not always entirely on the parents. In this case where were the health professionals to intervene early? Going into care is a last resort. But if your kid is obese, do something. Apart from the name calling they will suffer, do you want a death on our hands? (Evans et al., 2008a: 117–132)

Leaving aside the inaccuracies and exaggerations in such claims, when repeated relentlessly it becomes unsurprising that some of them should be recycled unthinkingly by teachers in schools as, for example, reported in De Pian et al. (2014) in England and Van Amsterdam et al. in the Netherlands:

You mentioned that students are getting unhealthy. How do you notice this?

I’ve been saying for at least ten years that I seriously worry about kids who are getting way too heavy [...] Overweight and obesity are increasing tremendously. I believe it’s a time bomb for our health care (Teacher, John). (Van Amsterdam et al., 2012: 793)

Van Amsterdam et al. (2012: 793) point out that most other teachers in this secondary school also conflated an ‘unhealthy’ with a ‘fat’ body, many considering ‘fat’ students to perform at lower skill levels compared to students who were not ‘fat’. They revealed that according to some teachers, for example Chris, ‘fat’ students are not only unhealthy but their performance in PE is often below standard:

How do you determine if students are good in sports or not?

Uh... you can tell by their body size... if you see that a student is fat, you get the feeling that he or she is probably not very good [in PE]. (Van Amsterdam et al., 2012: 792)

In this context then, as in very many of the schools we and others have researched in England (De Pian et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2008b), New Zealand and Australia (Wright and Harwood, 2009) with very few exceptions, teachers tended to divide students’ bodies into value laden categories of ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’: ‘they ‘produced’ fat bodies as ‘unhealthy’, ‘bad’, ‘abnormal’, and ‘deviant’ while non-fat bodies were considered ‘healthy’, ‘good’, and ‘normal’ (Van Amsterdam et al., 2012: 793). Such invidiously ranked distinctions led to practices in relation to health and PE that often, if sometimes unintentionally, ‘reproduced and reinforced slenderness ideals’ (Tinning and Glasby, 2002; cited in Van Amsterdam et al., 2012: 793).

Given the prevalence of such attitudes amongst teachers, it is also unsurprising that we find them being recycled among pupils and peers.

‘they don’t live very long’ (Alex); ‘it’s easier for them to just go and get fast food’ (Alex); ‘maybe lack of discipline, what they’re eating and how they’re brought up to eat’ (Jack); ‘they’re being dangerous with their lives, they’re not staying safe, they’re not eating the right foods, they’re not trying to do any exercise’ (Ashwin). (De Pian et al., 2014)

Peer labelling, stereotyping and bullying with reference to weight, size and shape sometimes follows, often serving to maintain existing social class and cultural hierarchies.

Whatever the merits of obesity discourse, and there are some, its unthinking translation into the PE curriculum or, worse still, its creeping incursion into school as ‘privatised health education’ not as adjunct to, but as substitute for PE, is very disturbing, not least for the damage it can do potentially to the identities of young people and their relationships to their own and others’ bodies (Evans et al., 2008b; Hope, 2013). The effects on teachers and teaching, however, are equally disturbing. Darren Powell’s research in three primary schools in NZ, for example, has illustrated how contemporary concerns about a global childhood obesity crisis have led to a proliferation of primary school based health and physical education policies and practices and an explosion of ‘corporate obesity solutions’ – in effect a mishmash of health and physical education resources, programmes, fundraising schemes and edutainment events developed, sponsored and provided by multinational and regional corporations to primary schools. He points out that these corporate attempts, which have to be seen to be a commercial attempt to be ‘part of the solution’ to childhood obesity, carry a number of unforeseen dangers including: the normalisation of commercialised, branded resources; the de-professionalisation and deskilling of teachers; and the devaluing of health and physical education. These corporate programmes and curricula represent a new ‘brand’ of health and physical education that attempts to shape children’s understanding of themselves and others in terms of being good (healthy, responsible, non-fat, moral) or bad (unhealthy, irresponsible, fat, immoral) citizens and, at the same time, attempts to create ‘good’ consumers (Powell, 2013). So again we ask, how ‘inclusive’ can a health based physical education possibly be if riddled with reductive tendencies such as these?

Futures: inclusive pedagogy

Physical education: a harmful arm of public health?

Given the authority and influence of ‘obesity discourse’ across the globe it is no accident that a recent Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) (2013) report in England and the press releases accompanying it centred on PE as ‘failing’ essentially to deliver sufficient ‘activity’ in its curriculum.

‘Kids not active enough’ bellowed the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) (Richardson, 2013), failing to point out that Ofsted had actually identified the majority of PE lessons observed to be ‘very good’, with many ‘outstanding’ PE teachers. This Ofsted focus on physical fitness rather than education was as unsurprising as it was unhelpful. Why not identify elements of good ‘educational’ practice and share understandings of it among teachers and schools? Why, instead, focus on fitness? We simply do not know how much or what form of physical activity is required to make people fit. Is more poor quality physical activity better than less good quality provision? What is ‘inclusive’ about reducing PE to fitness driven health education? Nothing! Absolutely nothing (see Cale and Harris, 2009)! Can we as a profession really claim to be offering an inclusive education if the culture of our classrooms has already stigmatised and pathologised half its children (and their parents) by assuming that they are less capable or have less potential of being physically

active and educated simply by virtue of being the wrong size, shape, ‘overweight’ or ‘too fat’? We surely can’t expect children to want to change into kit, reveal their bodies and take their place in physical activity or sport in public if they have been routinely told that their bodies are not the right size, shape or weight. We should no more ‘exclude’ or pathologise a child in PE for being ‘the wrong’ shape or weight than for being the ‘wrong’ ‘ability’, ethnicity, gender or class. Yet health discourse and Government policy in the UK, Europe, Australasia and elsewhere press in that direction. And an inspection service (as in the UK) simply aping the mantras of obesity discourse uncritically, which is neither able nor willing to reflect critically on the ways in which its knowledge base, recommendations and emphases help produce anti-educational pedagogies that damage the lives of children in schools, is one of the most depressing and unpalatable sights in contemporary education. That such orientation and evaluative practice is now enshrined in UK legislation, e.g. demanding weighing and measuring in primary and secondary schools at Year 6 (age 10–11) (NHS, 2012), is deeply disturbing, knowing the ill effects and damage it can do both to young lives and the cause of getting children to feel positive about their bodies and interested in sport (Evans et al., 2008b).

Towards inclusive physical education

PE has a contribution to make toward inclusive education, and most teachers (as far as I know) feel deeply about pursuing it. However, the abovementioned policy tendencies are making it increasingly difficult to activate inclusive curricula and pedagogies. The further PE moves away from being an educational enterprise the less likely it is to achieve inclusionary ideals. Look at what inclusion requires by way of pedagogy:

- Inclusion in education involves the processes of increasing the participation of children/young people in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools and EY [Early Years] settings.
- Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools and EY settings so that they respond to the diversity of children/young people in their community.
- Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all children/young people vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as ‘having special educational needs’.
- Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for children/young people.
- A concern with overcoming barriers to the access and participation of particular children/young people may present opportunities for schools and EY settings to respond to diversity more generally.
- All children/young people should have the opportunity to receive an education in their locality.
- Diversity is not viewed as a problem to overcome, but as a rich resource to support the learning of all.
- Inclusion is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities.
- Inclusion is concerned with promoting racial harmony, to prepare children/young people to live in a diverse society and address racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. (Rutland County Council, 2004–2007)

As this list (like others of its kind) indicates, inclusion, if it is to be more than sloganeering, requires a sophisticated pedagogy, highly trained, skilled and knowledgeable teachers, not 'privatised' peripatetic coaches or the reductive fitness initiatives of profit-driven health industries. It requires resource (physical, financial and time commitment, from Early Years onward) and a willingness to see education not as a set of discrete units but as a journey through contiguous regions of educational development, with open borders in relations between communities and their schools, phases within schooling and Further Education, Higher Education and beyond. Inclusion without education is but an empty gesture to a fairer society, at best palliative measure and at worst invidious social control. Sadly, neoliberal ideals are now so embedded in social structures and patterns of interaction that they are often taken for granted by health and physical educators, and teachers' enactment of them in PE and health education settings contribute to social class and other inequalities, albeit unintentionally.

The hope, then, must be for heightened awareness of these processes and the emergence of alternative pedagogies and philosophies. In my view, a socio-educative PE and health education; one that is actively political, inherently social and always inclusive; is action-orientated and community-conscious, inviting a new common sense to replace neoliberalism and its busted ideals (Evans, 2014a, 2014b). This will mean rethinking the meaning of the values of education, health, efficiency, equity, community, liberty and security; no small task for those steeped in (and believing there can be no alternative to) neoliberal ideals. As indicated above, the recent Ofsted report on primary and secondary PE (2012) barely conceals the assumed purpose and nature of PE and health education within it; it is to produce sporting elites and resolve health crises, such as the 'obesity epidemic'. In this discourse, investment in children's physical activity, rather than health and physical *education*, is perceived as integral to the 'future' of a neoliberal society and 'weight' and 'lifestyle' are taken as indisputable, visceral indices of neoliberal personal responsibility and, more broadly, a nation's 'health'. While these values prevail, then, the development of more holistic and/or alternative views of health will remain laudable but unattainable ideals.

Attention needs to be directed away from the interests of sport and health towards discussion of what in policy and pedagogical terms needs to be done in PE if an inclusive education that enhances children's 'abilities' and desire is to be achieved. If our agenda is inclusion, we should routinely ask (Evans, 2004, 2014b) not only how 'ability' is configured within the practices that define PE but how thinking about it as teachers and teacher educators is influenced by the knowledge/s that define our fields. How is it encoded by the interests of sport, health and science and how is physical capital reflected, reproduced and perhaps reconfigured and challenged in schools? We should also investigate how physical capital is distributed and allocated in the family, the school (e.g. in new privatised edubusiness networks, see Evans, 2014a) and across other fields. What 'abilities' are recognised, valued, nurtured and accepted, while others are rejected by whom, where and why in schools? Can and does privatised PE make a difference to the form, content and distribution of physical capital? And as argued in a previous edition of this journal, above all else, we need agendas and discussions of physical 'ability' and educability in PE which go beyond those ordained for the profession by the interests of capital, health and sport via their political sponsors. None of this ought to attribute ontological priority to any given 'body', or privilege a particular form of movement, or define in advance what is to constitute 'ability' 'educability' or 'physical intelligence' in PE. It is intended only to open up the range of thinking on these matters and to at least consider that there are forms of education, 'ability' and educability beyond those that currently prevail.

I had a dream in which I was a strange dealer: a dealer in looks or appearances. I collected and distributed them. In the dream I had just discovered a secret! I discovered it on my own, without any help or advice. The secret was to get inside whatever I was looking at – a bucket of water, a cow, a city (like Toledo) seen from above, an oak tree, (*a child*) and once inside, to arrange its appearances for the better. *Better* did not mean making the thing seem more beautiful or more harmonious; nor did it mean making it more typical, so that the oak tree might represent all oak trees; it simply meant making it more itself so that the cow or the city or the bucket of water (*or the child*) became more evidently unique! The doing of this gave me great pleasure and I had the impression that the small changes I made from inside gave pleasure to others. The secret of how to get inside the object so as to rearrange how it looked was as simple as opening the door of a wardrobe. Perhaps it was merely a question of being there when the door swung open on its own. Yet when I woke up, I couldn't remember how it was done and I no longer knew how to get inside things. (Berger, 2001: 13–14; my italics; from Evans, 2004: 104)

We would be hard pressed indeed to find a better definition of 'inclusive education' than this or one further removed from the interests of corporate capital, sport and health. We can only speculate on how we achieve this. Perhaps the real issue is whether we any longer have the opportunity or the desire in PE PLC, given the current political culture, even to debate such things.

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Notes

1. This paper was presented to the Edge Hill University PE and Sport Forum in conjunction with *North Western Counties Physical Education Association 3rd Annual conference: 'Inclusion: Can do? Can't do? Won't do?'* June 27th 2013.
2. Readers might note the June 2014 edition of *European Education (Volume 1 and 2)*, a special issue in two volumes dedicated to 'the marketization, privatization, and shadow education in Southeast/Central Europe and Eurasia'. That issue foregrounds Europe as witnessing a 'mushrooming of hybrid forms of public and private financing and delivery' (European Education, 2013: 1). Evidently, privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation are spreading, albeit in different forms, to different extents, across all levels of the educational systems of EU member countries. Issues of inclusion raised in this paper, therefore, may resonate with the experiences of practitioners way beyond the 'English context' emphasised here.
3. 'The pattern of local government in England is complex, with the distribution of functions varying according to the local arrangements. Legislation concerning local government in England is decided by the Parliament and Government of the United Kingdom, because England does not have a devolved parliament or regional assemblies, outside Greater London' (see Wikipedia, 2014).
4. The reference point here is Pat Dodds' (1993) illuminating paper on inclusion in Physical Education entitled 'Removing the ugly "isms" in your gym: Thoughts for teachers on equity', as relevant now as it was 20 years ago.

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