

What is the education in physical education?

Margaret Whitehead

Introduction

There has long been debate about the educational value of physical education – for example whether it can be justified on the grounds of its unique contribution to the curriculum or whether the subject is best seen as supporting wider educational goals. This is an important issue for physical education teachers, challenged, as they often are, to justify their subject within the school. This chapter critically considers the place of physical education in education.

From the basis of defining what is to be understood as ‘education’, the focus moves to the work of Arnold (1979). In his landmark treatise, which is frequently referred to and forms the basis of many arguments regarding the value of physical education, he claims that movement experiences in physical education can offer a threefold contribution to the compulsory curriculum. He asserts that physical education has the potential to educate *about* movement, to educate *through* movement and to educate *in* movement. Arnold’s arguments will be set out briefly and will then be subject to analysis. This analysis reveals some contestable issues as well as identifying dangers for physical education. Using the foundation of a holistic approach to the nature of the human condition Arnold’s three claims are re-examined. This leads to an assertion that movement or physical education is valuable and educative in its own right. In respect of reference to wider educational goals it is argued that the subject has the potential to make a valuable contribution on account of our holistic nature, but that this will only be realised through informed, sensitive and effective teaching of movement work. The conclusion outlines the benefits of this approach. Readers are encouraged to form their own opinion as to how far the profession can benefit or otherwise from Arnold’s treatise. The full text referred to in this chapter (Arnold, 1979) and his other work are worthy of study.

Nature of education

The place of physical education in education and the significance of having ‘education’ in our subject name have been the focus of wide debate. Perhaps the first question to ask is, ‘What is understood by *education*?’ Until that question is

answered it will be impossible to identify whether or not physical education can make a contribution to its realisation. There are a number of issues around the nature of ‘education’. Pertinent to this chapter are two particular considerations: first the context of education and secondly the nature and purpose of education.

In respect of the first consideration education can be conceived either as a life-long journey or as the responsibility of schools and schooling. From the former perspective education is viewed as the responsibility of parents, schools, the government and the community at large, and, indeed in adult life, the responsibility of each individual. From the latter perspective education is seen as synonymous with schooling, being focused on learners of compulsory school age and solely the responsibility of teachers, schools and the appropriate government department. Thinkers such as Claxton (1984) hold the former view while Hirst (1974) would hold the latter.

With respect to the second consideration, there are a range of perspectives. However relevant to the debate about the value of physical education it is useful to differentiate between two particular views. One sees education as having an extrinsic purpose, while the other asserts that its rationale is the intrinsic value it offers to individual learners. The former view sees education as initiation into that which a country or culture sees as worthwhile (e.g. Hirst, 1974). Here it is the passing on of what is seen as valuable knowledge, skills and understanding that is central to education. This concept has as an undercurrent of an instrumental role for education in preserving and perpetuating that which the country sees as important. Education must ensure that the country thrives, compares well with other countries and is economically strong. The other view of education is focused more on the learners and what it is in their interests to nurture. Put simply it is learner centred. Education is the vehicle by which every individual

Table 6.1 Alternative views of education

A. Context	Setting	Responsibility
	A1. Life as a journey	Parents, schools, community, individuals themselves
	A2. Schooling	Teachers, schools and government
B. Purpose	Value	
	B1. Extrinsic	Initiation into that which society/culture sees as worthwhile
	B2. Intrinsic	Related to individuals reaching their unique potential

is supported in reaching their unique potential by developing a wide range of capabilities with which he is endowed (e.g. Claxton, 1984; Dewey, 1922).

In this chapter education is understood as that which takes place in schools, as physical education is a term that is, in most cases, used specifically in the context of schooling (see Table 6.1 A2). The following discussion will look at the value of physical education during the years of compulsory schooling. In addition the chapter will look at schooling as an enterprise with learners at its heart (see Table 6.1 B2). This is in line with the overall tenor of Arnold's position and challenges readers to look in depth at the intrinsic value of movement experiences for the participants. This approach underpins much that is written about the subject but is seldom accorded extended consideration and debate. The deliberations in this chapter aim to make a contribution to redressing this situation.

Education *about*, *through* and *in* movement

To debate the question 'What is the education in physical education?' it is valuable to consider the seminal work of Arnold (1979, Chapter 6). Arnold took for the central plank of his argument a notion that had been articulated by a number of writers with respect to physical education but had not been subject to serious interrogation (for example see Williams in Slusher and Lockhart, 1970). He bases his discussion of the educative nature of physical education by considering three ways in which movement can be seen as making a significant contribution to education as a whole, these being 'education *about* movement', 'education *through* movement' and 'education *in* movement'.

In his terms education *about* movement 'can be looked upon as a rational form of enquiry' (Arnold, 1979, p. 168) covering knowledge in the fields of 'anatomy, physiology, physics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, aesthetics and philosophy' (p. 169). He sees these areas of knowledge being referred to, and exemplified, in physical education at different stages of schooling: for example at primary level scientific principles can be highlighted in the movement context and also applied in appropriate classroom lessons. For example height, weight and distance might be highlighted. At the secondary level principles related to broader areas such as aesthetics or social justice could be introduced and discussed in physical education, and again applied to other subjects in the curriculum, such as the arts. In examination work in physical education or sports studies, for those learners who opt for these courses, there is the opportunity to learn and appreciate a wide range of theoretical principles such as those related to areas such as anatomy, biomechanics, health and theories concerning the acquisition of movement skill. He accepts that what he calls rational movement knowledge is mainly of a propositional kind, that is, knowledge that includes theories, beliefs and data. He sees merit in the fact that this knowledge is objective, shareable and communicable and that it provides 'a theoretical background of understanding which helps make coherent and meaningful that which is performed' (p. 170).

With respect to education *through* movement, Arnold refers to Andrews (1970) who claims that it is legitimate to argue that physical education can contribute to the broad enterprise of education in respect of, for example, cognitive development, aesthetic and moral education, fostering sound social relationships, education for leisure and fitness for ‘positive living’. Arnold is mindful of the ambitious claims he is making and the problem of verifying this broader contribution to education. For example, can it ever be proved, without a shadow of doubt, that experiences in physical education are significantly responsible for improved cognitive function or the development of enhanced social skills? He also acknowledges that ‘what is actually accomplished is always dependent upon a set of transactions between the teacher and the learner’, and that effectiveness ‘will entail the intelligent utilisation of those situations that arise’ (p. 173). Here Arnold is alerting teachers to the potential of taking up opportunities in teaching as they occur, such as highlighting moral issues in respect of games playing and giving time to look at personal and social skills that facilitate productive co-operation in groups. Arnold elaborates his argument by suggesting that education *through* movement can also relate to education in two specific ways – that is having either an illustrative or referent function. His examples of illustrative functions include situations in which the working space becomes a laboratory in which scientific principles can be experienced and understood first hand. His examples of referent functions include the suggestions that games can be a valuable context within which to debate the need and value of rules and that dance can provide opportunities to raise issues concerned with aesthetics. In these situations physical education is being used as a vehicle for learning, learning that can be acquired in other settings. Physical education is serving ends that are not necessarily intrinsic to its core responsibilities.

Arnold justifies the value of education *in* movement in arguing that movement activities are worthwhile in themselves, are intrinsically rewarding and should be engaged in ‘for their own sake’ (Arnold, 1979, p. 178). He writes that physical activity permits a person to actualise their physical dimension and to become more aware of themselves and the world they inhabit. The knowledge acquired is substantially ‘know-how’ or tacit knowledge (Polyani in Gill, 2000). Tacit knowledge is the knowledge we have of how to carry out habitual movement tasks such as riding a bicycle, climbing a ladder or brushing our hair. This type of knowledge is seldom articulated but is undoubtedly a source of information on which our ability to move effectively relies. Furthermore he argues that education in movement enables the individual to become part of ‘exemplifications of a culture’s sporting and dance heritage’ (Arnold, 1979, p. 178). That is, it introduces the individual to aspects of the culture of which the learner is part. He concludes in saying that

The world of movement for the agent or the moving being, is a world of promise towards self actualisation.... It is a world in which the mover can come to understand an aspect of his socio-cultural world and in doing so discover more perfectly his self and his existential circumstances.

(Arnold, 1979, p. 179)

In this context involvement in activities has a twofold value, one being an introduction into physical activities in which an individual can take part outside schooling and secondly that, in participation, the individuals can realise and develop their physical potential with the satisfaction this brings.

Arnold closes with the assertion that while education *about* movement, education *through* movement and education *in* movement arise from taking different perspectives on the work in physical education that can be considered separately, in actuality they are closely inter-related in the learning that takes place in school.

A review of Arnold's position

For many years this approach has generally been seen as useful and uncontentious. For example, it has been used as a basis of numerous government publications (e.g. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2004)) and has featured in views expressed by the professional association for physical education in England (Talbot, 2008). It has been referred to and valued as providing grounds for justifying our place in the curriculum by identifying ways that, broadly, would seem to describe different aspects of our work. While this approach has enabled the subject to remain in the curriculum, it has not been able to establish the uniqueness of the subject, nor improve the respect shown to the subject as a significant aspect of schooling. There are indeed some serious questions to ask about this approach.

Education *about* movement

Looking first at education *about* movement, is it the case that curriculum physical education in the secondary school contributes to education in a substantial way by covering aspects of propositional knowledge in the fields of, for example, anatomy, sociology and aesthetics? From where does this claim arise? In one sense there is no difficulty in answering this question. As learners prepare for a lesson with some form of warm up activity, the teacher may highlight the way that particular muscles and joints need to be activated and loosened. In addition attention may be drawn to the cardio-vascular system and how a lesson preparation needs to take account of this bodily function. Similarly in teaching folk dance aspects of anthropology might be mentioned and in teaching creative dance issues of an aesthetic nature might be considered briefly. Whether or not these fleeting references to knowledge in specific disciplines can be classed as significant educational experiences is dubious. This is not to dismiss the value of drawing attention to these issues in a practical situation where learners can reflect on their own experience.

However beyond the reference to related areas of 'theory' as an adjunct to teaching various aspects of physical education, there is a more substantial issue of whether it is the responsibility of physical education teachers to address propositional knowledge in the areas identified. This is a more complex question.

The teachers' own knowledge of these areas is important as schemes, units of work and lesson plans are devised and indeed as they observe the learners in lessons. For example knowledge of anatomy is essential in observing movement and appreciation of the physiology of our embodied dimension is critical in devising appropriate challenges for learners. Psychological knowledge will inform the nature of the teachers' interaction with the learners and an understanding of sociology can guide decisions about aspects of teaching such as class management and group organisation. However that the teacher has the responsibility to pass on this knowledge to learners seems beyond what would be expected. It can be argued that the role of the physical education teacher must be first and foremost to provide appropriate learning experiences in the form of physical activity to enhance learners' movement competence. In most cases any real depth of understanding would need an extended amount of time in lessons for explanation, exemplification and discussion, and, it is argued, this would seem out of place in physical education.

In conclusion it seems somewhat grandiose to claim that propositional knowledge is effectively presented, understood and learnt in physical education, outside studying for an examination at the age of 16 or 18 years. That physical education teachers have the opportunity to highlight aspects of these fields seems acceptable, but to claim that an important contribution is made to education in this way by physical education is both overstating the case and trivialising these important areas of study. Chapter 8 looks in detail at the knowledge content for teaching physical education.

Education *through* movement

Education *through* movement seems problematic from a different perspective. The tenor of this claim is that movement work in physical education is instrumental in learners attaining broader educational goals. Physical education on this justification becomes a means to other ends and not an end in itself. There are at least two dangers related to any claim of this nature. First it is almost impossible to prove that experiences in physical education have a positive impact on, for example, cognitive development or moral education.

Claims such as these are seldom taken seriously except in the sense that all teachers, whatever their subject area, have a responsibility to contribute to the all-round education of the learners. The second danger is that, in different ways, most other curriculum subjects are making a contribution to these broader educational goals. If physical education lays particular stress on this contribution to education, there could be rational grounds to leave it out of the curriculum – other subjects being well able to achieve these goals. The profession is to be reminded that physical education has, in its history, too readily taken the opportunity to jump onto educational bandwagons, which, when these become out-of-date, can leave the subject somewhat beleaguered. For example when learning through discovery was in vogue, physical education argued that this was its main vehicle for learning and when life skills were championed as crucial to learning

in school, physical education teachers claimed that these skills underpinned all physical education learning and teaching.

The claim that physical education contributes to education *through* movement experiences has another problem in that the impression is given that simply by taking part in, for example, gymnastics, swimming or competitive team games, broader educational benefits will be accrued. This has been contested and rightly so (e.g. Whitehead with Blair, 2010). In what ways will learning gymnastics in and of itself promote independent thinking? How will competitive games automatically foster appropriate moral development and is it the case that group work in dance will enhance social development? Similar questions can be asked in respect of the cluster of personal learning and thinking skills (Department for Education (DfE), 2011) that all schools should promote – as in the 2014 government papers which referred to physical education as contributing to building character and helping to embed values of fairness and respect (DfE, 2014). Is it the case, for example, that athletics will of itself foster self-management, that outdoor and adventurous activity will by its nature nurture communication skills and that group work will by its very nature will promote foster an awareness of fairness?

The answer to all these questions must be in the negative. Examples are not hard to find. For example a didactically taught gymnastics lesson will not foster independent thinking skills. A competitive games lesson in which learners are allowed to win at all costs will not foster moral development and a dance lesson in which group leadership is insensitive and domineering will not enhance social development. There is no guaranteed relationship between forms of physical activity and the acquisition of broader educational goals (see also Chapter 7 which considers means and ends in respect of physical education).

It is true that Arnold includes a word of caution in respect of this claim in writing that the achievement of contributing to education *through* movement will depend on ‘transactions between the teacher and the learner’, and ‘will entail the intelligent utilisation of those situations that arise’ (Arnold, 1979, p. 173). These observations are wise and need to be clearly understood. While it seems without doubt that physical education can make a contribution to wider goals, this is not because physical activities per se are being taught, but because of the way they are taught. It is suggested that it is not the *what* of physical education but the *how* that can be effective in promoting wider goals. The onus is firmly on the teacher, first, to plan schemes, units of work and lessons in which learning is designed in such a way that wider educational goals can be addressed, and, second, to make sure that, in the pupil-teacher interaction in the lesson, attention is paid to the achievement of these goals. For example if group work is being employed in a lesson to promote social skills, the teacher will not only give feedback about how the movement work is developing but will also reinforce co-operative pupil behaviour. In a dance lesson that is also aiming to promote creativity, feedback should consider both movement outcomes and imaginative ideas. Achieving these goals does not spring solely from *what* physical educationists are teaching but depends on the way teachers work with learners, the nature of interaction with learners and the methods of teaching used.

A cautionary word is needed here in that the focus of physical education is generally understood to be movement development. There could be a danger of so much attention being given to achieving broad educational goals, such as developing communication skills, that less actual physical activity takes place. A balance needs to be struck.

It is indeed the case, as indicated above, that work in the movement field has the potential to make a significant contribution to the educational enterprise as a whole, but this is not necessarily on the grounds that movement learning is somehow a separate aspect of our human nature which can be related to other areas of learning. This is based on the appreciation of each individual as a whole, or in other words on an acceptance of a monist philosophical position. This is a belief that we, as humans, are, each one of us, an indivisible entity. We are comprised of a variety of capabilities – cognitive, affective, interpersonal, embodied – that function in concert, mutually enriching each other. Any action we take, any experience we have, whatever capability or capabilities we are drawing on, will affect all other capabilities and resonate throughout all aspects of the individual. From this position it goes without saying that education in the broadest sense of developing each individual's potential will be affected by all experiences in school. Learning in music or art can permeate ways in which we see and appreciate the world at large, success in understanding mathematical procedures can add to our self-confidence and taking part in a debate in a history lesson can make us more sensitive to listening to the opinions of others. Experiences and learning are not compartmentalised, they change us as a whole person. Experiences in physical education are no different.

In conclusion, with respect to the claim that physical education provides education *through* movement, it is suggested that a stress on this justification for the subject paints a picture of a need to justify ourselves as a means to ends outside our unique contribution to the curriculum. Furthermore, it is not the case that wider goals will automatically be achieved simply by participating in physical activity. However, it needs to be remembered that as teachers it is our responsibility to address wider goals; we are teachers first and physical education teachers second. All that having been said there is a sense, from a monist standpoint, that the claim is stating the obvious. Our nature as human beings is such that all experiences change us, for better or for worse, whatever capability or aspect of our human potential we may be engaged in exercising.

Education *in* movement

In respect of Arnold's discussion of 'education *in* movement', he addresses three themes. In relation to the individual these are concerned with:

- initiation into sporting and dance activities in which they can take part beyond school
- involvement in activities that are engaged in for their own sake, the experience being intrinsically rewarding, interesting and satisfying
- realisation of self and self-actualisation

On first reading, all three themes could be accepted without contention. However it is suggested that there have been some worrying implications of the first theme, being a focus on the initiation into forms of physical activity. A stress on the centrality of activities as the prime role of the subject has led to an activity-centred curriculum. Physical education becomes no more and no less than learning activities and the techniques and skills of those activities. Teachers see themselves as teachers of activities rather than teachers of learners. The experiences of the pupils are not judged as central to the work. Pupil needs, interests and motivation are seldom a concern. It is of course true that this introduction is in 'the interests' of learners, facilitating their ready participation in sport and dance activities in the 'adult world', beyond the years of schooling. However where physical education becomes synonymous with learning named activities there can be further limiting outcomes. If named activities and initiation into those activities that have the highest profile in a culture, together, become the focus of physical education, the result could be, as in, for example, the UK, a curriculum directed to participation in competitive team games, such as football and rugby. Furthermore this approach can all too readily 'dance to the tune' of those who see physical education as instrumental in bringing prestige to the country through international sporting success in key activities such as Olympic events. An insidious corollary of this is a focus on the identification and promotion of talent in physical education, at the expense of the majority of the learners.

Care also needs to be taken with respect to the second theme. The claim that physical activity can be justified on the grounds of the pleasure it brings, via intrinsically rewarding experiences, can in fact work against the subject. This is because this assertion is often interpreted as arguing that the purpose of physical activity is simply to have fun. Is this a sound basis for a subject to be included in the curriculum? Enjoyment or fun experienced by participation in an activity does not necessarily add weight to its inclusion in education. Do we employ teachers to provide enjoyment above all else? There is no doubt that taking part in physical activity can be satisfying and rewarding, but this of itself does not justify its inclusion in the curriculum.

The third of Arnold's themes – that of self-realisation and embodied experiences enabling learners to become 'more fully human' – has been subject to little attention and development.

This is most unfortunate as it is argued that it is with this insight that Arnold puts his finger on the real value of physical education and the intrinsically rewarding experiences it offers to all participants. Indeed it can be argued that herein lies the unique value of embodied activity, the realisation of a distinctive human capability. The nurturing of this aspect of human endowment has far reaching effects on the development of all learners, development that can be supported as significantly educative in the sense of being learner centred and nurturing learner potential. There is little doubt that Arnold would unequivocally see this contention as at the heart of our work.

It is most unfortunate that in attempting to clarify the 'educative opportunities' related to physical education, many in the profession have selected some or

all of education *about* movement, education *through* movement and education *as initiation into* culturally relevant activities as their guiding principles. As can be seen above each of these justifications leaves the profession open to a series of dangers, for example, claiming too much for the subject, rendering it without a unique contribution and resulting in a focus on specific named activity-based work.

Arnold himself is careful to articulate the complex interdependence between all the ways that physical education can be seen as being ‘educative’. He is also careful to stress where the significance of movement experience can be located. However these points seem to have been disregarded by the profession in favour of the more easily articulated aspects of his treatise. It is argued that the physical education community needs to move on from these more readily understood claims, appreciating their inherent problems and dangers, and work to understand and articulate the unique and invaluable contribution that physical education can make to the education of every learner.

The individual as a holistic being: taking a different perspective

Notwithstanding the above concerns about Arnold’s seminal paper, he provides the springboard for identifying the unique contribution of physical education to education and thus its justification. Indeed building from an element of his third theme of ‘education *in* movement’ – that of nurturing individual potential – a very different picture comes into being, that, far from rendering his treatise problematic, in fact, underwrites his ideas without their being open to misuse.

This argument rests on the premise, as stipulated at the start of this chapter, that education is essentially learner centred. Education, it is argued, is the vehicle that enables every individual to reach their potential, by means of developing a wide range of capabilities with which they are endowed. Furthermore the claim is founded on a holistic understanding of the nature of persons and the way that all human capabilities function in concert. In line with the thinking of existentialists and phenomenologists, as well as numerous modern-day philosophers, psychologists and cognitive scientists, the individual human being is, by nature, a whole (Whitehead, 2010; 2019). Scholars such as Gallagher (2005) and Lakoff and Johnson (1999) support a monist concept of being and refute dualism – this latter being the view that humans are comprised of two separable ‘parts’: the mental and the physical. It is argued that each person has to be appreciated as a whole before any consideration of their various abilities can be considered. And indeed when these capabilities are examined it is found that they are intricately inter-related. For example cognitive capabilities, embodied capabilities, musical capabilities and inter personal capabilities are not ‘free standing’, they feed from and into each other. Exercise of any of these capabilities provides experiences that resonate throughout the whole person. Experiences are not compartmentalised. In this situation the crude dualist view that a person is comprised of

mental capabilities and embodied capabilities, with the former vastly superior to the latter, is exposed as seriously flawed. Indeed some of the recent research proposes the contrary view, that the development of cognitive concepts relies on embodied experience before they can be understood and established (see Edelman, 2006; Gallagher, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Other work in this area refers the notions of an essentially embodied existence (Maiese, 2016) and enactivism (Valera, 1993). This is a fascinating area to follow up.

It is argued that each human capability is of value in its own right, being a human endowment. Each is worthy of respect, appreciation and development. Human embodiment is not an inferior aspect of our personhood but a vital component in our human make-up.

The spectre of the usually unquestioned superiority of the mental faculties in comparison with the inferior status of our embodied capabilities would seem to be the underlying cause of the profession's lack of confidence in its own work and as a consequence its ready use of arguments that justify physical education as a means to achieving what might be seen as 'more worthwhile' educational ends. Nurturing an individual's embodied potential is valuable in its own right, its justification does not rest on its contribution to the development of other capabilities. Interestingly Leder (1990: 153–154) writes about our being trapped inside a dualist picture that has limited our self-development and self-realisation. There is a great deal written, not least in relation to the concept of physical literacy (see Chapter 7), that spells out the value, *per se*, of nurturing embodied potential. This soundly grounded case for the significance of the embodied nature of the human condition should be the profession's starting point in setting out the contribution of physical education in education.

Re-visiting education *about*, *through* and *in* movement

Education about movement

In respect of this notion of the role of physical education in education it is recommended that the focus should be on the development of an understanding of the nature of movement. Concepts of intrinsic importance in movement learning such as control, balance and co-ordination should be highlighted, discussed and grasped. Sensitive self-awareness of movement as experienced and an ability to analyse and articulate aspects of movement are both of significant value to the central project of learning in physical education. This knowledge and understanding have the potential to develop thinking, independent learners who have the confidence to evaluate their progress in the movement context, take responsibility for their own learning and plan strategies for improvement.

This task relates closely to an appreciation of oneself as an embodied, moving being. There is a fine line between education *about* movement, in Arnold's terms propositional knowledge, and education *in* movement in the sense

of understanding the principles underlying effective movement. In fact the knowledge and understanding of movement is better seen as an element of education in movement.

As indicated above, claims to contribute to education through the enhanced understanding of certain academic disciplines and their attendant propositional knowledge are highly questionable and are perhaps better forgotten. There is, however one exception, being the knowledge and understanding of the effect of exercise on the functioning of body systems and on health as a whole. Physical education is an ideal situation in which to inform learners of this important area of ‘theory’. Developing this knowledge in the context of taking part in physical activity certainly makes an invaluable contribution to education. This aspect of education *about* movement would seem to be wholly legitimate to our work and can indeed help to show the importance of physical education and legitimise its place in the curriculum.

Education through movement

From the standpoint described above of the holistic nature of the person, together with the significance of all human capabilities and the way in which all capabilities function in concert, the broader contribution of physical education to education can be seen in a different light. *On account* of our holistic nature, experiences in physical education can, without doubt, influence other capabilities such as cognition, aesthetic appreciation, musicality and interpersonal skills. The use of the notion of ‘*on account*’ of moves away from giving the impression that physical education is principally of value in education by serving ends beyond its principal focus. Learning in physical education is an end in itself, not a means to other ends.

It would seem to be in the profession’s interest to drop the notion of education *through* movement or *through* the physical, with its dualist connotations and the impression it gives of needing to rely on aims beyond its central remit as justifying its place in the curriculum.

The profession needs to argue with conviction that *on account* of the holistic and embodied nature of the learner, physical education not only fosters our unique embodied capability, but alongside all other aspects of schooling can have a profound influence on the total educational experience of every learner.

Education in movement

Looking at the areas of unease about elements of Arnold’s notion of ‘education *in* movement’ the explanation needs to take a different approach. The rationale for the coverage of a range of activities, it is argued, should be less focused on introducing learners to culturally established movement forms and more concerned with providing an appropriate range of experiences for learners to deepen and extend their embodied potential.

In order to foster each individual's embodied potential, experiences of physical activity need to be broad, in respect of both the range of movement capacities and patterns that are nurtured and the variety of environments in which these patterns can be challenged and extended. Issues of depth and choice in the coverage of different activities are debated in depth in Murdoch and Whitehead (2013).

Arnold's inclusion of the educational contribution of 'education *in* movement' as providing opportunities that are rewarding and satisfying is not straightforward to unpack. However it needs to be understood not as justifying physical activity simply because it is fun, but because successful involvement in embodied activity enables the learner to come to know himself as an embodied being and to appreciate the fulfilling experience of celebrating an aspect of their human nature. This experience is profoundly rewarding and can contribute significantly to the enhancement of self-confidence and self-esteem. Herein lies the seat of pleasure, satisfaction and enjoyment. In this context it needs to be remembered that individuals will be working within the potential of their particular embodied endowment. Any notion of success must be understood as related to the individual learner, not as the achievement of reaching pre-ordained benchmarks, and teachers should reinforce this.

Conclusion

It has been proposed in this chapter that reference to the trilogy of 'education *about* movement', 'education *through* movement' and 'education *in* movement' as the guiding principle in answer to the question 'What is the "education" in physical education?' is both less than helpful and can have dangerous consequences.

Considering the role of physical education in education from a holist or monist perspective and taking account of the concerns expressed in this chapter it is recommended that:

- the notion of education *about* movement should be confined to knowledge and understanding of aspects of health that relate directly to physical activity
- the concept of education *through* movement should be dropped and a rationale based on our holist human nature should be articulated to explain our potential for making a significant contribution to education as a whole
- education *in* movement should stress the development of personal embodied potential and the enrichment of self-confidence and self-esteem that this can bring. Notions of initiation into activities and the fun of participating, as justifying physical education, should be played down. Also part of education *in* movement is the knowledge and understanding of the nature and principles underlying human movement.

Fundamentally physical education is educative in that it develops the embodied potential of the learner. The subject area needs no further justification. We are,

by nature, embodied. Our embodied dimension is irrefutably involved in almost all aspects of education and life and as such it is worthy of respect and nurturing in the same way as any of our other capabilities. The uniqueness of physical education lies in its ability to enable each individual to realise, nurture and develop their embodied capabilities and thus become more fully human.

The benefits of the approach suggested in this chapter in relation to the 'education' that can be addressed in physical education are that, as a profession, we:

- can state and justify, with confidence, the value of physical education in its own right
- can claim with confidence that we make a unique and distinctive contribution to the education of all learners
- are not wholly reliant on dubious claims that the subject's principal contribution in the curriculum is to achieve wider educational goals
- have a clear rationale for devising curricula that are learner focused, not activity focused and respect each learner as an individual.

This chapter has looked at Arnold's (1979) seminal presentation of the values of physical education and raised serious doubts as to the validity of some of the claims he makes. It has been argued that the educational value of physical education is founded on its principal concern with education *in* movement. The nurturing of our embodied potential has value of its self, which on account of our holistic nature has resonance with and contributes to the enrichment of many other aspects of our nature as humans.

Questions for reflection

- 1 Critically consider the suggestion that it is counter-productive to claim that physical education has the capacity to deliver a wide range of educational ends.
- 2 Critically analyse the concerns expressed in the chapter in respect of Arnold's views, identifying criticisms with which you agree and those with which you disagree.
- 3 Critically consider the benefit of using the expression *on account of* rather than *through* to address the way that physical education has the potential to contribute to broad educational goals.
- 4 Discuss the notion that the place of physical education in schooling can be most strongly justified on the grounds that it makes a unique contribution to the curriculum.

Further reading and resources

Arnold, P.J. (1979) *Meaning in Movement, Sport and Physical Education*, London: Heinemann.

Chapter 6 in this text sets out Arnold's reasoning behind his support for education about, through and in movement. It is valuable to refer to this treatise in debating the validity of the challenges raised in this chapter.

Whitehead, M.E. (2000) 'Aims as an issue in physical education', in S. Capel and S. Piotrowski (eds.) (2000) *Issues in Physical Education*, London: RoutledgeFalmer, pp. 1–21.

This chapter addresses a range of issues in respect of the aims of physical education. Particularly of interest in respect of the discussion above is the consideration of aims as ends in themselves rather than means to other aims.

Whitehead, M.E. (ed.) (2010) *Physical Literacy: Throughout the Lifecourse*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

This text sets out the philosophical position that underpins the arguments put forward in this chapter. Part I provides a valuable insight into the rationale behind advocating a monist approach to the human condition. This supports the claim that it is *on account* of our nature that physical activity can have a profound impact on many aspects of human achievement and life.

Whitehead, M.E. (ed.) (2019) *Physical Literacy across the World*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

This text builds on Whitehead (2010) and includes useful chapters on the value of physical education in the context of physical literacy. Chapters refer to physical competence as a human capability and the role of physical competence in human flourishing.

The following physical education journals should support further reading. There are also many education journals which contain articles related to relevant topics across education more generally, which are useful to extend debate further. They may also contain physical education specific articles.

- *European Physical Education Review*
- *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*
- *Physical Education Matters*
- *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*
- *Quest*
- *Sport, Education and Society*

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