

a discrete and essential experience for all pupils? Are there any other areas of activity which ought to be included in a broad and balanced physical education curriculum and, if so, why? What would be lost if one area of activity were omitted from the physical education curriculum?

Further reading

QCA (1998) *Maintaining Breadth and Balance at Key Stages 1 and 2*, Suffolk: QCA Publications.

— (1999c) *Terminology in Physical Education*, Suffolk: QCA Publications.

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8 Physical education and sport

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Introduction

International sporting success is very important to Britain. The link between sporting success and national pride has been recognised by politicians. For example, in his letter accompanying the publication *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage (DNH) 1995) the then Prime Minister, John Major, stated that 'Sport is a binding force between generations and across borders. But, by a miraculous paradox, it is at the same time one of the defining characteristics of nationhood and of local pride. We should cherish it for both those reasons' (DNH 1995: 2). Such sentiments have been echoed by agencies with responsibility for sport. For example, in its strategy for sport in England, the English Sports Council (ESC) acknowledged that 'England – the sporting nation – takes immense pride and identity from success on the international stage (ESC 1997: 14)'. Thus, as Treadwell stressed:

we are incredibly naive if we have not realised the international political significance in catering for giftedness in sport. Our international arenas of sport are effectively theatres of 'pseudo-war' and success at the highest level can appear to be a reinforcement of the policies, lifestyles and persuasions of any capitalist or socialist state.

(Treadwell 1987: 65)

The relative lack of success of British national sports teams in international competition in recent years has resulted in much debate. Politicians and agencies responsible for sport have identified strategies to improve performance, articulated in documents such as *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH 1995); *England, the Sporting Nation: A Strategy* (ESC 1997); *Labour's Sporting Nation* (Labour Party 1996). Many of these strategies identify an integral role for physical education. One possible reason for physical education being seen as integral to international sporting success is that many people view physical education as playing a key role in developing sporting talent. This is shown, for example, in a leading article in *The Times Educational Supplement* which rejected the practice of a comprehensive school that had introduced 'stool ball' as a game that 'allows both sexes to play and

is non-competitive'. Stool ball was scorned as a game that 'is not going to help England find a quick bowler'. 'The West Indian pace attack', we were told, 'was not reared on stool ball' (TES 11 July 1986).

A second reason could be that many people see a decline in sport in schools as being the cause of lack of international sporting success. It was evident that John Major supported the views of many in the press and other agencies that teachers were to blame for the 'decline in sport' (Gilroy and Clarke 1997). These two reasons have been suggested as being linked. For example, Murdoch cited what she referred to as 'two current prevalent perceptions that, first, sport was in decline both within the school context and in the winning of international honours and, second, that the former was responsible in a direct way for the latter' (Murdoch 1997: 253). This may be one reason why 'many headteachers, teachers, governors, parents and children hold the view that physical education and sport are synonymous' (Murdoch 1990: 64).

But physical education and sport are not synonymous. This chapter begins by looking at some reasons why physical education and sport are seen as synonymous. It continues by considering differences between physical education and sport, starting with some definitions of physical education and sport, then articulating some of the central differences between the two. Despite their differences physical education and sport are inter-related; physical education makes a contribution to sport and sport makes a contribution to physical education. These contributions are considered in the next part of the chapter.

It is important that physical education teachers are clear about, and articulate, the differences between physical education and sport because this has implications for the future of physical education. For example, Evans suggested that 'this conceptual conflation of physical education and sport has damaged and seriously limited academic, political and public debate concerning physical education in schools in Britain and elsewhere' (Evans 1988: 175). Whitson and Macintosh asked, 'Why has the discourse of physical education today so little to do with education and so much to do with systematic production of sporting performance?' (Whitson and Macintosh 1990: 40). More practically, if physical education and sport are taken as synonymous, do schools need to employ physical education teachers? Why not simply replace physical education teachers with a number of sport coaches, each specialising in coaching their own particular activity? Thus, this chapter is designed to help physical education teachers to articulate what physical education is and its unique contribution to the education of all pupils; something which cannot be replicated by sport.

Why are physical education and sport viewed as synonymous?

The physical education profession is not sending a clear message about what physical education is and how it is different to sport

One of the major reasons for people seeing physical education and sport as synonymous is that the physical education profession is not sending a clear

message about what physical education is, what lies at its core and what the differences are between physical education and sport. There may be several reasons for physical education teachers not sending clear messages. First, they cannot articulate clearly the differences between physical education and sport. This may be because they have not reflected on what physical education is, and due to there being a range of definitions they assume a definition based on their own background and experience. Thus, as 'it (is) likely that the majority of specialist physical education teachers entered the profession because of their own enthusiasm for sport and their recognition of the personal benefits and enjoyment it can bring' (Department of Education and Science (DES)/Welsh Office (WO) 1991: 7), they may not have clearly differentiated between physical education and sport and linked physical education very closely with sport. This may be exacerbated by physical education teachers including physical education curriculum time and extra-curricular activities in their reflections on what physical education is, partly because their job includes both work in curriculum and extra-curricular time. (For further consideration of what physical education is and what lies at its core, see also Chapter 13.)

It is the common-sense view of many that physical education and sport are the same

As the physical education profession does not send a clear message about what physical education is, the general public may take a common-sense view that physical education and sport are, in fact, the same. According to Leaman (1988: 97), most common-sense notions equate physical education with sport. There are a number of reasons for this, which include the following examples:

- The physical education curriculum, particularly in secondary schools, has traditionally been dominated by competitive team games and sports activities. For example, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) found that 'in a substantial proportion of schools the curriculum over-emphasises games, in particular invasion games, the programme for boys is sometimes more limited than for girls' (OFSTED 1995a: 12). OFSTED found also that:

the percentage of the available curriculum time for physical education devoted to games in the National Curriculum varied widely. Most fell within a range of 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the time at [Key Stage] KS3, but extremes included 33 per cent in one school and more than 80 per cent in another. The other three chosen areas of activity required by the National Curriculum were squeezed into what time was left.

(OFSTED 1995b: 11, parentheses added)

The dominance of competitive team games in the physical education curriculum in secondary schools is long-standing, stemming from the

traditions of the public schools in the nineteenth century. 'The strong historical tradition set in the public schools is replicated still in the minds of many and is hard to change' (Murdoch 1990: 65). More recently, the dominance of competitive team games has been enshrined in the physical education curriculum in schools in England and Wales, through the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE). This reinforces a belief that physical education and sport are one and the same thing. (For further evidence of the dominance of games in the physical education curriculum in secondary schools, see Chapter 7 of this book.)

- Strong similarities in the kit worn by boys and girls for physical education and many sports reinforce the view that physical education and sport are synonymous. Further, in some schools, pupils are required to have different kit for different activities, mirroring the clothing worn to play the sport being learned, e.g. 'whites' for cricket lessons.
- The success of a school's physical education programme may be interpreted through the success of its inter-school sports teams. The difference between physical education curriculum time and extra-curricular activities is not clarified. The success of sports teams may be used as a marketing tool for the school. In addition, in an era which sees education strongly subject to market forces, it is not unusual to find headteachers and governors giving clear emphasis to the value attached to sport in their mission statements about physical education. This sends a message that physical education and sport are synonymous.

Politicians often reinforce the view that physical education and sport are the same

Politicians often see physical education and sport as synonymous. For example, the working party selected by the then Secretary of State, Kenneth Clarke, to develop proposals for the NCPE (DES/WO 1992) contained two professional sportsmen – John Fashanu (football) and Steve Ovett (athletics) – but no practising physical education teacher. In 1998 the Junior Minister for Education, Estelle Morris, speaking about the government proposals to slim down the National Curriculum in primary schools, was reported in the *Times Educational Supplement* as saying 'No subject – not sport, history or geography – has ceased to be compulsory. They were compulsory, they are compulsory and they will remain compulsory' (*TES* 3 July 1998: 6). It is also seen in various government documents: for example in *Sport: Raising the Game* the action agenda for sport in schools states that 'all schools should offer two hours per week of physical education and sport in schools' (DNH 1995: 3).

Fisher concluded that

the pressure for a greater emphasis on traditional competitive team games in the school curriculum . . . can be seen as a feature of a political context in which tradition, order, stability and accountability are important. . . . The

demands from outside the school in the political arena and from parents have been for competition and results. . . . If traditional expectations are not fulfilled, the physical education profession is open to criticism.

(Fisher 1996: 140)

This was endorsed by Penney and Harris who concluded that 'the revision of the NCPE demonstrated all too clearly the political nature of educational reform and the inequalities of the development process in terms of "who had a say"' (Penney and Harris 1998: 5).

The media often reinforce the view that physical education and sport are the same

The media is also sometimes responsible for conflating the two concepts of physical education and sport. Murdoch cited an example of a broadcast which was introduced by the presenter as 'School sport, or to give it its proper title, physical education' (Murdoch 1990: 65). Further, the media is often quick to blame physical education in schools as responsible for national sporting defeat. This contributes to the view that physical education in schools exists for the sole purpose of developing sporting excellence.

However, physical education and sport are not the same and it is important that physical education teachers are clear about the differences. These differences are now considered; first definitions of physical education and sport are given, then some differences between the two identified.

Why physical education and sport are different

Definitions of physical education and sport

One of the problems faced in explaining differences between physical education and sport is that there is no single accepted definition of either. There are a number of definitions, or at least descriptions, of physical education and sport. Some definitions of physical education and sport are included in Chapter 1 of this book. Some other definitions of physical education and sport are provided next.

With regard to physical education, the National Curriculum Physical Education Working Group (NCPEWG) stated that:

3.1 Physical education educates young people in and through the use and knowledge of the body and its movement. It:

- develops physical competence and enables pupils to engage in worthwhile physical activities
- promotes physical development and teaches pupils to value the benefits of participation in physical activity whilst at school and throughout life
- develops artistic and aesthetic understanding within and through movement

- helps to establish self-esteem through the development of physical confidence and helps pupils to cope with both success and failure in competitive and co-operative physical activities.

3.2 Physical education also contributes to:

- the development of problem-solving skills
- the development of inter-personal skills
- the forging of links between the school and the community, and across cultures

3.3 Physical education aims to develop physical competence so that pupils are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. It is essentially a way of learning through action, awareness and observation.

(DES/WO 1991: 5)

On the other hand, the Council of Europe in its European Sports Charter stated that:

Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aims at improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

(Council of Europe 1992)

To the School Sport Forum, sport covered:

- competitive games and sports . . .
- outdoor pursuits, in which participants seek to negotiate some particular 'terrain' . . .
- aesthetic movement . . . e.g. dance, figure skating, forms of rhythmic gymnastics and recreational swimming;
- conditioning activity . . . improving or maintaining physical working capacity and engendering subsequently a feeling of general well-being.

This broad interpretation allows for a range of interests to be acknowledged, and for many forms of participation to be encouraged within the provision of 'sport'.

(School Sport Forum 1988: 5)

Despite similarities in, and possible overlap between, some definitions, many people have concluded that physical education and sport are not the same. Murdoch viewed physical education and sport as 'distinct phenomena' (Murdoch 1990: 64). Further, NCPEWG identified physical education as being unique and different to sport:

Sport covers a range of physical activities in which adults and young people may participate. Physical education on the other hand is a process of learning, the context being mainly physical. The purpose of this process is

to develop specific knowledge, skills and understanding and to promote physical competence. Different sporting activities can and do contribute to that learning process, and the learning enables participation in sport. The focus however is on the child and his or her development of physical competence, rather than on the activity.

(DES/WO 1991: 7)

This suggests ways in which physical education and sport are different or distinct and not synonymous. These are considered in greater depth in the remainder of the chapter.

Central differences between physical education and sport

Physical education is essentially an educational process whereas the focus in sport is on the activity

The NCPEWG (DES/WO 1991) emphasised that, in physical education the focus is on the process of learning in a mainly physical context, whereas in sport greater focus is placed on the activity and the emphasis may be placed on the end product, i.e. the performance or outcome. In the non-statutory guidance accompanying the first NCPE document in 1992 this distinction was reinforced: 'In physical education the emphasis is on learning in a mainly physical context. The purpose of the learning is to develop specific knowledge, skills and understanding and to promote physical development and competence. The learning promotes participation in sport' (National Curriculum Council (NCC) 1992: H1). On the other hand, 'Sport is the term applied to a range of physical activities where emphasis is on participation and competition. Different sporting activities can and do contribute to learning' (NCC 1992: H1).

Murdoch stressed that through participating in physical education it is important that pupils are equipped to 'continue to be engaged in the learning process even after they have left school' (Murdoch 1997: 263). She emphasised that the process of learning through planning, performing and evaluating gives an integrity to the learning of discrete activity areas and 'strengthens the uniqueness of the process to physical education' (ibid.: 267). Activities are selected for inclusion in a physical education programme for a particular purpose (see Chapter 13 for further discussion about selecting activities for inclusion in the physical education curriculum to serve a particular purpose).

This difference between physical education and sport can be illustrated by an example. Whereas a gymnastics coach, for example, might simply be concerned with producing the correct pattern of movement for a particular vault, the physical education teacher might focus on assisting the pupil to engage in a process which involves planning their approach (for example, length, speed of run up, angle of approach), performing the action and evaluating the performance (establishing the feeling, repeating the movement exactly, varying the movement, adapting the movement through repositioning the hands and so on).

The focus on the learning process may provide a knowledge of principles which assist the pupil in learning new skills.

This is linked to physical education commencing from the perspective of the child and dimensions of the child's physical learning whereas sport starts from the perspective of the activity that is to be learned. Talbot reminded us that in physical education 'the game is not the thing, the child is' (Talbot 1987). Further, Lee stressed that 'while training and coaching may be concerned with developing performance, education is concerned with developing people' (Lee 1986: 248).

Physical education involves motor skill development and need not involve sporting activities

A focus on the child requires careful consideration of childrens' needs at different stages in their development. During the early (pre-5 or nursery) years, physical activity has a base in play and playfulness. Structured support for learning through physical education assists the child to develop from this base. During the nursery and primary phases of education, physical education should encompass the learning of fundamental motor skills to form the foundation for participation in a range of physical activities. The primary years are important for helping children to gain mastery of their own bodies. Physical education is concerned with motor skill development and not just learning particular sports. Thus, the focus in physical education for very young pupils – nursery and KS1 – should not be on competing, which is necessarily involved in sports contexts, as this may be too advanced for their stage of cognitive development. The foundation provided at this stage can be the basis for 'more formal phases of participation in the activities of physical education and sport, moving from simple to complex versions' (Murdoch 1990: 73). Activities incorporated into physical education at later stages may not necessarily be sports.

Physical education is a concept broader than sport

Physical education is a concept broader than sport. Physical education encompasses sport but also embraces other physical activities which are not sports, e.g. dance. The inclusion of dance in the NCPE was supported as 'an essential part of a balanced physical education programme' (DES/WO 1990: 13). The interim report of the NCPEWG acknowledged the status of dance as a distinct art form: 'The dance as art model develops in pupils an appreciation of dance as an artistic and aesthetic activity' (DES/WO 1990: 13). Physical education also embraces physical activities which may or may not be sports, depending on reasons for participation, e.g. outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA). These activities are, or may not be, conceptually linked to competition which is inherent in sports. There are aspects of OAA that usefully form part of the learning process to enable the aims of physical education to be fulfilled, such as planning and taking part in an expedition. However, these do not constitute involvement in

sport or preparation for such involvement. Thus, there is no inherent necessity that all forms of physical education should foster and promote the kind of competitive behaviour which is essential to sport.

In physical education, sports should be selected for inclusion in the curriculum for the potential they have for the learning that is to take place and not vice versa (see earlier). If the focus in physical education were only on sport there could be a narrow focus to the curriculum (for example, only rugby).

Further, there are a number of aims for physical education which can be achieved through participation in activities other than sports. One of the aims of physical education can be the aspiration for as many pupils as possible to integrate physical activity as part of their lifestyle. Some pupils may not choose to integrate sport into their lifestyle, but may choose other forms of physical activity.

Tinning identified a danger of using sport education in physical education and highlighted the need to re-emphasise the 'educational purposes of physical education' (Tinning 1995: 19). He considered that the work of physical education professionals would be

better facilitated by reaffirming that sport is merely one medium (in physical activity) for the development of physically educated citizens. It should not be the central focus of physical education in schools. To allow physical education to be distilled to sport . . . is to sell our subject short. Certainly sport should be part of a physical education curriculum . . . but we must remember that sport is not the most reinforcing movement form for countless individuals.

(Tinning 1995: 20)

Physical education should benefit every pupil in the group regardless of ability and enthusiasm for the subject; therefore an emphasis on sport and with it an emphasis on competition and competitive success (e.g. at inter-house level or a traditional sports day or at inter-school level) can result in finite resources being used for a few elite performers rather than being available to encourage participation in physical activity for all. 'If one spends a disproportionate amount of time on just a few pupils (in physical education or elsewhere) then it is only to be expected that a higher level of performance will be achieved' (Leaman 1988: 105). Many would regard such an allocation of resources as basically unfair and to be avoided in a school. Thus, 'instead of the expense of transporting a small minority of students to distant corners of the county, a lunchtime and after-school activity programme could be developed that appeals to the full spectrum of youngsters' interests' (Fox 1996: 105).

Most would agree, however, that the pursuit of excellence is important for the able performer. Physical education teachers have a role in identifying potential and enabling pupils to develop their potential, but whose role is it to develop excellence? To what degree should excellence be a focus for schools if it is at the expense of less assistance, effort, time and resources being given to the less able

to help them to achieve their potential? (See Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this book for further discussion about equal opportunities in physical education.) What role should physical education and physical education staff play in the development of excellence? As Fox contended,

The school is not wholly responsible; as many children will take part in swimming, gymnastics, dance and other sports activities . . . Increasingly also, youngsters play sport through the club system on weekends and older adolescents are beginning to enrol in formal exercise classes and take membership at fitness clubs. An important role for schools is to make links and alliances with these alternative agencies.

(Fox 1996: 106)

Thus, identification of potential may occur in physical education time, but development of that potential to achieve excellence can occur in extra-curricular time or through pupils being referred to opportunities at local sports clubs or other types of community provision. Developing potential is an integral part of the sports development continuum (ESC 1997); a framework for sporting opportunity and performance from foundation through to excellence, as shown in Figure 8.1. There is further discussion of community initiatives in physical education in Chapter 10.

Foundation

means the early development of sporting competence and physical skills upon which all later forms of sports development are based. Without a sound foundation young people are unlikely to become long-term sports participants

Participation

refers to sport undertaken primarily for fun, enjoyment and, often, at basic levels of competence. However, many very competent sports people take part in sport purely for reasons of fun, health and fitness

Performance

signifies a move from basic competence into a more structured form of competitive sport at club or county level or, indeed, at an individual level for personal reasons

Excellence

is about reaching the top and applies to performers at the highest national and international levels

Figure 8.1 The sports development continuum

Source: ESC 1997: 5

This section has shown that physical education and sport are different. However, even though they are different, physical education and sport are inter-related. Indeed, the School Sport Forum was unequivocal in its affirmation that: 'Sport and Physical Education are not the same, but they are interdependent' (School Sport Forum 1988: 7).

Physical education makes a contribution to sport and sport makes a contribution to physical education. Some of these contributions are identified in the next section of the chapter.

The contribution of physical education to sport and sport to physical education

The contribution of physical education to sport

There is much that physical education can offer to sport. Ways in which physical education contributes to sport include providing a foundation of basic motor skills for participating in sport. Physical education can provide the foundation level of the continuum for all pupils, on which all future sports development is based. This role is integral to the Sports Development Continuum of the ESC (1997) which is shown in Figure 8.1.

Other ways include initiating pupils into various culturally valued sports; and, linked to this, enabling pupils to make informed choices for engaging in particular sports. In physical education pupils learn to participate in sport, which enables them to make choices of sport(s) in which to participate in extra-curricular activities, out of school and post-school. This role was recognised by the School Sport Forum when it emphasised that 'Physical education prepares each child for satisfying participation in sport, through development of the necessary skills and through knowledge of opportunities available for recreation in the community' (School Sport Forum 1998: 7).

The contribution of sport to physical education

Likewise, sport has a place in the physical education curriculum. Sport is a very useful vehicle for learning in physical education and it supports the process of learning. Sport can offer a number of valuable educational experiences. For example, the sports context can provide a forum within which young people can experience success and satisfaction. They may feel successful through showing ability (often by being better than others), mastering an activity for its own sake or for the first time, being able to please others, feeling a sense of adventure, or being able to achieve as a member of a team. Pupils may be motivated to participate in sports rather than other types of physical activity included in the physical education curriculum and this is likely to have a positive effect on their continued participation in post-school physical activity (White and Coakley 1986).

However, in order for sport to contribute positively to the learning process in physical education, sports must be selected for the potential they hold for learning.

The interim report of the NCPEWG identified that 'within a programme of physical education, sporting activities such as competitive games, swimming and athletics are vehicles for education – *education through sport* – and they are also valued in their own right as worthwhile activities – *education in sport*' (DES/WO 1990: 12).

Conclusion

This chapter identified some reasons why physical education and sport are seen as synonymous. It then considered some of the central differences between physical education and sport. Although physical education and sport are different, they are inter-related and each contributes to the other. The contribution of physical education to sport and the contribution of sport to physical education were also considered in the chapter.

The inter-relationship between physical education and sport can be seen as threatening, as was recognised by the School Sport Forum, when it stated that:

The close relationship between sport and physical education can lead to misunderstandings, some of which may be caused by unrealistic expectations. Some people in the sporting world, largely through the media, are voicing dissatisfaction with sport and physical education in schools saying, for example, that standards in performance and commitment are not as high as they should be. Tensions can arise in the other direction when behaviour in top-level sport, such as reluctance to accept decisions of umpires, violence and the taking of drugs to enhance performance, conflict with educational objectives. There is a need for dialogue.

(School Sport Forum 1998: 7)

Murdoch proposed that rather than looking to polarise physical education and sport, a better way forward may be to integrate physical education and sport 'from pre- to post-school and both in and out of school in the most appropriate way' (Murdoch 1990: 72). She identified five models for the relationship between physical education and sport: Substitution model; Versus model; Reinforcement model; Sequence model; and Integration model. She suggested that the first two models have negative connotations and do not hold potential for the development of working relationships, whereas the others are positive attempts to capture the significant relationships that are considered worth developing. Readers should refer to Murdoch (1990) for further discussion about each of these models. Murdoch used the models to ask questions such as: Can and should physical education serve the needs of sport as a cultural phenomenon? Should physical education educate for sport? Does sport provide a vehicle for physical education? These questions provide a useful basis for reflection on the inter-relationship between physical education and sport.

Despite their interrelationship, differences between physical education and sport should not be ignored. Reflection on differences is important to enable

their unique roles to be fully utilised. Further, it is important that physical education teachers can articulate the differences so that they are able to justify the subject to agencies such as national government; government departments/agencies such as the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), ESC; National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs); local councils; school governors; headteachers; and fellow teachers (Gilroy and Clarke 1997; Peach and Thomas 1998). This justification should be based on what is unique to physical education and its unique contribution to the education of all pupils; something which cannot be replicated by sport. If physical education can be reduced to sport, this might have implications for the curriculum and for those teaching the curriculum (see also Chapter 13).

Questions for reflection

- 1 Should the success of the physical education programme be based on the success of the school teams? If so, why? If not, how can you articulate differences between physical education and sport to the headteacher, governors, parents and other people to ensure that the success of the physical education programme is not measured by the success of the school teams?
- 2 How do differences between physical education and sport affect what you do in your teaching of physical education in curriculum time and in your approach to extra-curricular activities?
- 3 What, if anything, do the differences between physical education and sport mean for differences between the role of a physical education teacher and that of a sports coach? Should sports coaches be employed to teach in physical education lessons? If so, how should this occur?

Further reading

- Murdoch, E. B. (1990) 'Physical education and sport: the interface' in N. Armstrong (ed.), *New Directions in Physical Education: vol.1*, Leeds: Human Kinetics: 63–77.
- (1997) 'The national curriculum for physical education' in S. Capel (ed.), *Learning to Teach Physical Education in the Secondary School: A Companion to School Experience*, London: Routledge: 252–70.