

Primary Physical Education Subject Leadership: Along the road from in-house solutions to outsourcing

The modern primary school is a complex institution containing a growing community of individuals and organisations with potentially competing agendas. Within this environment subject leaders are typically looked upon for advice and guidance within a given subject area such as Physical Education. Yet for those endeavouring to provide Physical Education subject leadership within primary schools, the challenge has grown significantly over the last two decades amidst an ever changing policy landscape. This paper is for and about primary Physical Education subject leadership; the purpose of which, to plot primary Physical Education's policy journey and explore the implications of reform in shaping the subject leader's role. The paper addresses the current lack of guidance for the subject leader and examines the professional knowledge, skills and experience required to do the role effectively.

Introduction

The modern primary school landscape is a complex picture containing a growing community of individuals and organisations with potentially competing agendas (Griggs 2015). In the English state sector, major decisions and directions typically sit with a governing body and are operationalised by a senior leadership team, led by the head teacher (Rainer et al. 2012). Demonstrating that standards can be improved across required aspects of the school has been high on the agenda for those leading such primary schools since the 1990s with an increased focus on Maths and English in more recent times (Ball 2001). Within each school, teachers are required to deliver a National Curriculum comprised of as many as fourteen different subject areas (DfE 2013d) and, because of the breadth of this demand since the implementation of the National Curriculum in 1991, different members of the teaching team typically take responsibility

for one or more areas of the curriculum (Bell and Ritchie 1999). Such positions are commonly referred to as Subject Leaders and though this role can vary in importance from school to school, such a person is typically looked upon for advice for good practice and management within a given subject area (Busher and Harris 2000).

Whilst the role of the Maths and English subject leader has become more significant since the publication of primary school league tables, the roles of those leading other subject areas, such as Physical Education, has diminished (Raymond 2005). Yet for those endeavouring to provide Physical Education subject leadership within primary school, the challenge has grown significantly over the last two decades amidst an ever changing policy landscape (Griggs 2015). The purpose of this paper is to chart this policy journey, examine the implications for those leading Physical Education within primary schools and conclude with a revised understanding of the role defined through professional knowledge, skills and experience.

The development of primary physical education subject leadership

The advent of the National Curriculum in England, with its separate subjects, has reinforced the importance of subject leadership within schools (Bell and Ritchie 1999) and was strengthened further with explicit guidelines published in National Curriculum guidance documents (DfES 1989). These expectations were manifest within teacher training provision and thus trainees would complete three or four year courses having completed considerable practice and gained a deep knowledge of one chosen area of the National Curriculum (Busher and Harris 2000). Schools would recruit and fill vacancies based on such needs and where possible ensure a wide base of subject specialisms within a staff room. This enabled different members of staff to take on roles as subject leaders

acting as the in-house experts for their school. Much was expected of such highly trained individuals illustrated by the National Standards for Subject Leaders (TTA 1998: 9): ‘a subject leader ensures that practices improve the quality of education provided, meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils, and raise standards of achievement in the school.’ Further expertise for subject leaders could be gained from the Local Education Authority (LEA) who within a county or metropolitan borough, typically had well developed and highly experienced teams dedicated to different aspects of schooling and to each individual subject.

A shift from specialist to generalist training

Arguably the most significant shift that occurred to irrevocably change the mechanism for maintaining subject knowledge within schools was the publication of ‘Qualifying to Teach’ (DfES 2002). The significance of this document as opposed to its predecessor Circular 4/98 (DfEE 1998) was that for the first time, ‘Qualifying to Teach’ did not require trainees to hold an additional subject specialism beyond their basic primary training. The consequences of this shift were rapid. Many universities shifted their training from three and four year undergraduate courses, to one year postgraduate courses (Keay and Spence 2012). With less specialist subject teaching required this meant less staff were also needed. Foundation subjects within the National Curriculum, such as Physical Education, were typically delivered with a minimum provision. Where universities had gaps in staffing any shortfall was covered by seconding staff from nearby schools (Griggs 2007). At the same time LEAs began streamlining their workforces and advisory teachers became phased out with many becoming self-employed, hoping to be bought in as Physical Education consultants (Griggs 2007). This arrangement was

sustained in some areas but this dynamic was destabilised again by consecutive significant government policy announcements within Physical Education and School Sport, namely the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy and the Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) strategy (Mackintosh 2014).

The PESSCL and PESSYP strategies

The phased implementation of two consecutive national strategies transformed the infrastructure of Physical Education and school sport, including the people who work within it and the way they inter-related (Griggs 2012). In October 2002 of the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy invested in excess of £1½ billion into Physical Education and School Sport within the UK. The strategy contained eight different strands (Specialist Sports Colleges, Sport Coordinators, Gifted and Talented, Investigating Physical Education and School Sport, Step into Sport, Professional Development, School/Club Links and Swimming), with its overall objective to enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5-16 year-olds a public service agreement (PSA) pledged to engage children in at least two hours high quality Physical Education and sport at school each week (DfES/DCMS 2003). Five years later the expectation on staff to increase their delivery time was raised again to create a new '5 hour offer' for all (DCSF 2008), made possible by the further injection of £¾ billion through the Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP).

As with many New Labour and 'New Right' strategies the need to be accountable and to measure the impact of its implementation was quick to follow (Ball 2001). The Specialist Sport College strand was further developed from the PESSCL strategy and led

to the creation of School Sport Partnership (SSP) programme which included a series of national evaluations.

From Subject Expert to Link Teacher

Every School Sport Partnership (SSP) had within its structure a specialist sports college which was connected to a further four to eight secondary schools and their associated cluster of feeder primary schools. Day to day management of the SSP was overseen by the Partnership Development Manager (PDM). Located in each secondary school was then a School Sport Coordinator (SSCo), employed for up to a total of two and half days a week to work in partnership with others within the structure, including primary schools. To reinforce the link between each Sports College and their associated feeder primary schools, within each SSP a primary schools a primary link teacher (PLT) was also nominated (often the Physical Education subject leader) who could theoretically at least be released from teaching for 12 days per year. In their role, PLTs were to advocate high quality Physical Education and coordinate and support school sport opportunities. Overall they were tasked with ‘sharing good practice with school colleagues, developing and ensuring implementation of after school sport programmes, using sport to support transition from primary school to secondary, developing programmes to engage non participants them and to work with others to support transition in to local clubs’ (YST 2008: 9). Findings by Griggs (2010) indicated that PLTs were in reality largely passive recipients of targets, surveillance and accountability handed down from their SSCos which lacked relevance to the school specific context. In this era, the primary subject leader became a ‘link’ in both name and practice, between the delivery of Physical Education in primary schools and the transition to secondary school and wider community

activities. Whilst PESSCL and PESSYP offered professional development to address the issues of subject confidence and competence in primary teaching/leadership (Harris, Cale, and Musson 2011), these were modules based upon prescribed national goals, not individual or local needs. The subject leader started to emerge as a passive recipient to policy change, rather than one who led or steered its development.

Early findings reporting on the overall effectiveness of the implementation of the School Sport Partnership (SSP) programme indicated a range of positive impacts on Physical Education and sport in schools, including extending the range and provision of extracurricular activities and increasing the number of young people being physically active (OFSTED 2003, 2004, 2005, Quick and Goddard 2004, Houlihan and Wong 2005, Partnership 2005, 2006). In addition, the later evaluations of Physical Education and School Sport within the SSP system did indicate historic improvements across inter-school and intra-school sports participation levels up to 2010 (DfE 2010a, b, c). The impact of the SSP system was however contested with the evidence base for these claims questioned and the absence of a clear rationale highlighted. Specifically ‘policy goals articulated in the PESSCL strategy were based less on evidence and practical considerations than on politics and pure emotion.’ (Smith and Leech 2010: 336). Reflective of this was the subtle shift from a focus on high quality Physical Education to basic participation statistics (Mackintosh 2014, Griggs 2015). Qualitative data of what was occurring within partnerships was difficult to obtain, yet when it did occur it was again less that glowing in relation to the statistics presented (Flintoff 2008, Griggs 2010). Further to this, (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008b) also identified a number of other issues within the SSP system that were worthy of closer scrutiny. These included differential objectives being pursued by clubs and schools and how this affected the opportunities for

young people. In some ‘partnerships the relationship is less fruitful with the local authority seeing the SSP as a competitor in the out-of-school hours market for young people’ (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008b: 231). The SSP programme finally reached a point under the new coalition government in 2010, where due to reduced or removed funding, the network became increasingly fragmented and in most regions largely dismantled (Pitt and Rockwood 2011). Subject leaders became instrumental in the monitoring and evaluation of national programmes, dedicating much of their time to completing surveys and providing evidence to demonstrate accountability for the scale of investment.

Despite the disputed benefits of the SSP, qualitative research following the breakup of the network revealed practitioners identified that the break down in partnerships was an obvious loss in cross school collaboration, facilitation of inter-school planning of events and development of communication (Mackintosh 2014). The piecemeal arrangements that followed from area to area are reflective of other studies examining sport partnership development (Houlihan and Lindsey 2008a, Lindsey 2006, Mackintosh 2011). As Mackintosh (2014: 439) identified:

‘The loss of eight years of development of relationships across the primary, secondary and community sectors will be hard to replace....the longer term picture of the real impact of the dismantling of the SSP infrastructure... remains to be seen. However, what is clear is that primary Physical Education appears to have been a key loser in this policy transition and that a new tier of problems for practice may have unexpectedly been generated.’

Lost in a perfect storm and paving the way to outsourcing

A new tier of problems were indeed revealed by dismantling of the SSP infrastructure in 2010 that in some way were masked over during its existence. As explained above, almost a decade has passed since 'Qualifying to Teach' had been introduced meaning that naturally subject specialists would have been exiting the school system (through leaving or retirement) being replaced only by generalists. Many of those able to give guidance in an advisory or consultancy role had also exited the system during PESSCL and PESSYP and with primary schools now cut adrift without SSP support there was no institutional place to turn (Griggs 2015).

During this period, the gradual deskilling of Physical Education in-house delivery became apparent, not only in a policy sense but evidenced by research and inspection reports. Within three years of the introduction of 'Qualifying to Teach' OFSTED (2005) reported that weak subject knowledge, a lack of focus upon learning, imbalanced activity choice and poor assessment considerably hindered the quality of primary Physical Education delivery. Lack of training was thought to be the reason and was confirmed by research findings a year later showing that in England there has been a steady reduction in the time spent on Physical Education in primary teacher training (Caldecott, Warburton, and Waring 2006). Research papers and reports indicate that trainee primary school teachers taught, and still teach, very few Physical Education lessons during their training period (Haydn-Davies 2008, Haydn-Davies et al. 2010, Randall et al. 2016) with Pickup (2006) describing trainee teachers' school-based experiences of Physical Education as at best adequate, and at worst non-existent. Perhaps unsurprisingly, low level of teacher confidence in teaching Physical Education remained a recurring feature of research in this area (DeCorby et al. 2005, Morgan and Bourke 2008, 2005, Griggs

2010). In-service training provided through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes had done little to improve this situation (Keay and Spence 2012).

Research and reports into CPD programmes for primary Physical Education have continued to be less than positive (Harris, Cale, and Musson 2012). A recent report by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Fit and Healthy Childhood (2016) presented Physical Education as a ‘Cinderella subject’ within our school curriculum. Despite schools receiving high levels of funding, Physical Education is still only given foundation status and school leaders are rarely held to account for the impact it has on pupil outcomes (APPG 2016). Furthermore, wide variations in provision have been reported across England, ranging from nothing to multiple days of professional training, fully resourced and spread over the school year (Woodhouse 2006) CPD programmes continually find themselves rooted in the whims of funding streams, unsystematic planning and often present eclectic menus of contemporary fads and fashions (Armour and Yelling 2004), resulting in ‘fragmented and incoherent teacher learning that lacks intellectual rigour, fails to build on existing knowledge and skills, and does little to support teachers in the day-to-day challenges of improving student learning’ (Sparks 2002: 91). Courses are often inadequate and superficial, leaving participants dissatisfied and cynical, and contribute little to teachers’ learning and development (Atencio, Jess, and Dewar 2009). Set against a backdrop of little training and poor CPD provision, consecutive policy initiatives have presented significant implications.

Firstly in order to meet such ambitious PSA targets set out in both PESSCL and PESSYP strategies of engaging children in two hours high quality Physical Education and sport at school each week, the number of adults other than teachers (AOTTs) used in primary schools, such as sports coaches, increased dramatically (Lavin, Swindlehurst,

and Foster 2008). Secondly the implementation of the ‘National Agreement for Raising standards and tackling workload’ (DfES 2003) began to remodel and broaden the school workforce in England, ‘designed to tackle the problem of workload, and the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention’ (Gunter 2007: 1). Consequently, since 1st September 2005, all teachers had an entitlement to a guaranteed minimum of 10 per cent of their timetabled teaching commitment for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). With an apparent underlying willingness of primary schools to give up delivery of curriculum Physical Education due to low teacher confidence and a lack of training (Griggs 2010) and the need to cover the 10 per cent shortfall in staffing and many schools opted to employ sports coaches to deliver Physical Education lessons for as little as £20 per hour rather than employ further qualified teaching staff (Griggs 2010).

The delivery of primary Physical Education by sports coaches

The opportunity to be involved in primary school Physical Education and sport was seized upon by an ‘emerging community of degree-qualified sports coaches’ (Kirk 2010: 128). At first many delivered extracurricular activities, but over time the emerging opportunities to deliver Physical Education lessons in curriculum time increased (Griggs 2010). Many embraced the employment of often self-titled ‘multi skilled coaches’ as they were able to make a quick impact in meeting targets of raising pupils’ levels of participation and engagement in a wider range of activities (Lyle and Dowens 2013, OFSTED 2006, 2011). It also enabled primary schools to better manage the constraints associated with several other educational processes (Smith 2015). These processes have included: rising class sizes; increased emphasis on standards in literacy and numeracy; local management of budgets; and the inclusion of Physical Education in an already

crowded and pressured curriculum timetable (Blair and Capel 2011, Rainer et al. 2012, Blair and Capel 2013, Griggs 2010).

Concerns were raised from the outset (Blair and Capel 2008b, Blair and Capel 2008a, Lavin, Swindlehurst, and Foster 2008, Griggs 2007, 2008) about the extent to which coaches, lack appropriate teaching qualifications, prioritise activities and sporting objectives over educational goals and lack class management skills (Blair and Capel 2011, Griggs 2010). Also their employment removed responsibility for the delivery of Physical Education from the class teacher, resulting in them becoming progressively and further deskilled (Keay and Spence 2012). In summary (Blair and Capel 2013:176) conclude that:

‘coaches who have learnt to coach through NGB awards and through their own experiences are unlikely to have the background, experience or knowledge, skill and understanding in relation to working within the NCPE. Formal coach education courses do not adequately prepare coaches for working with pupils in the NCPE (in terms of content) or delivering extra-curricular provision ... or indeed for working with young people inside and outside of school in terms of pedagogy and reflective practice.’

That said, the practice of teachers and coaches working together has become more prevalent, accepted and normalised (Green 2008, Callanan et al. 2015). During this growing relationship, to secure their perceived weakened position in schools, many coaches have committed to a growing ‘professionalisation’ of sports coaching (Smith 2015) placing a renewed emphasis on gaining appropriate coaching awards and NGB qualifications (Taylor and Garratt 2010). This has been encouraged by government policies where those working with and within the public sector were to ‘gain certification

in a culture of performativity and credentialism' (Taylor and Garratt 2013: 33). Though the outsourcing of Physical Education has remained contentious for some, it is widespread in many other countries around the world (Williams, Hay, and Macdonald 2011). At a time where 'deregulation of the work of teaching to allow non-teaching staff to undertake classroom activities' (Ball 2013: 167) is accepted, the outsourcing of Physical Education looks set to remain. Despite the lack of evidence determining whether the use of non-teaching staff is having a positive impact within schools (Evans and Davies, 2010), the more announcement introducing Primary PE and Sport funding (DfE 2013a) is seemingly providing further opportunities for the expansion of outsourcing provision in primary Physical Education.

The Primary PE and Sport Premium

Following the dismantling of SSPs and under felt pressures to deliver upon on promises of a post-Olympic legacy in March 2013 (DCMS 2007, Griggs and Ward 2013), the coalition government announced the launch of the Primary PE and Sport Premium, an investment of ring-fenced funding totalling £150 million per annum until 2015 (DfE 2013a). The expenditure of monies provided (equating to approximately £9000 per for each primary school) is left to the discretion of individual schools for which they are accountable which will be monitored by OFSTED during inspections. The large sums of money available to external companies are obvious who could seek to profit from the multiples of £9000 available to secure. Indeed, the House of Commons Education Committee (2013: 49) noted that primary school head teachers were met with 'a rush of commercial providers once the funding was announced. This was seen as a danger, with

unknowing head teachers taking on commercial providers who were of questionable quality and limited to coaching rather than teaching Physical Education.

More recent evidence indicates that since the funding announcement there has been a significant rise in the employment of sports coaches to deliver both curricular Physical Education and provide further extracurricular clubs in primary schools (DfE 2014, 2015a, Griggs 2016). As a consequence of this funding, many primary schools may well have locked themselves into an increasingly privatised model of Physical Education provision (Smith 2015) but must now take care to negotiate ‘a new generation of specialist childhood PE/sport advisers and services [who] have come into play and thrive on the commercial exploitation of their anxieties’ (Evans and Davies 2010: 773). Paradoxically to negotiate this current landscape the need for Physical Education subject leadership has never been so important, yet many who occupy such a role have never been so unqualified to offer such direction (Griggs 2015). Such decisions on how to spend the money to which schools are accountable thus have fallen to head teachers but as OFSTED (2014) revealed, those making such decisions do not feel confident or well prepared to use the funding effectively. This difficulty in making effective decisions is clearly of concern and is perhaps best illustrated by the emerging CPD picture.

Since the SSP programme was dismantled in 2010, primary schools have lacked options for CPD delivery within Physical Education. Yet despite the tensions and questions discussed earlier concerning the use of non-teaching staff to deliver National Curriculum Physical Education lessons, these very same people are now being employed to deliver CPD sessions to teaching staff (Author, in press). OFSTED (2014) welcomed the renewed investment in staff development but also acknowledged that in many of the schools visited, funding was being used to employ specialist PE teachers and sports

coaches to work with school-based colleagues. Across the 1148 schools sampled, Randall et al. (2016) also identified that most schools had taken the decision to outsource all teaching and resourcing of Physical Education, including their planning and assessment. Though duty of care must remain the responsibility of the school (AfPE 2016), there is every reason to suggest that Physical Education subject leadership now sits outside the four walls of some primary schools. The recent introduction of the new National Curriculum will do nothing but strengthen this situation.

The most recent iteration of the National Curriculum for Physical Education for primary schools is a much slimmer document than any that have gone before (DfE 2013d) and thus arguably requires teachers to have a more secure understanding of the subject in which to interpret it. What is apparent on face value is the increased focus on competition, which is now expected for children, aged 5-7. One assumes this will occur for some children through a narrow experience of competition in a 'games-based' learning environment as indicated in Figure 4. Though the appropriateness of such words may well be questioned given the developmental age of the children (Gallahue and Cleland-Donnelly 2007, Gallahue and Ozmun 2011), their inclusion is perhaps less surprising given the political landscape following the London 2012 Summer Olympic Games. A central tenet within the London legacy commitments was how the games was to 'inspire a generation of young people' (DCMS 2007). Both during the Games and in its aftermath government rhetoric was awash in the media concerning the different ways in which our young people were going to be inspired. Significantly however it was on 11th August 2012, on the eve of the close of the games that the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, published a statement on the Number 10 webpage stating that we will put 'competitive sport for children at the heart of the Olympics' legacy' (HC 2013). The impact and

influence of a particular event or policy upon the planning of another is what Dery (1998: 163) has termed “policy by the way.” Here dominant discourses and rhetoric are favoured and permitted often without understanding the appropriateness or impact that may result – hence the inclusion of competition for children aged younger than seven. The Physical Education Expert Subject Advisory Group (ESAG), a DfE formed group that were put in place to support the profession in interpreting the (new) National Curriculum (Cale and Randall 2017), expressed caution over a narrow interpretation of what ‘competition’ meant. Guidance given by ESAG suggests that competition should be a tool to motivate, inspire, challenge and promote learning (ESAG 2014), thereby conceptualising competition more as a pedagogical tool of, and for learning, rather than placing value purely on a performance outcome.

Of significant note in the revised curriculum document is not simply what has been included but what has been removed in comparison to the 1999 iteration. The six activity areas to be delivered have gone, strands have learning have gone and assessment levels have gone. Significantly recurring OFSTED criticisms of primary Physical Education such as weak subject knowledge, a lack of focus upon learning, imbalanced activity choice and poor assessment have been circumvented in one go as none of these now apply with the new curriculum document (OFSTED 2005, 2009c, a, 2013). Of additional significance is that these greater freedoms make delivery of Physical Education by external agencies much easier as they cannot be held to task for not delivering strands of learning, not assessing pupils and just delivering competitive team sports (Griggs 2010). In fact, a football or rugby coach for example has never had a greater justification for just bringing their sport focused drills and matches into Physical Education sessions. What should a Physical Education subject leader do in this environment and have they,

in effect, been rendered obsolete? Up until the revised iteration of the Primary National Curriculum (DfE 2013d), the word ‘sport’ had not been a feature of the Physical Education programme of study. In planning a purposeful and meaningful curriculum for young people, subject leaders will need to observe the statutory guidance over the non-statutory examples of sporting activities, making sure the subject is not narrowly defined by games-based experiences of badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders and tennis (DfE 2013d)

Reframing primary Physical Education subject leadership

The ‘Legacy’ of the London 2012 Games and the reallocation of money from the SSP’s to schools have now placed the primary Physical Education subject leader in a unique position. Although the issues facing primary Physical Education are no longer determined by money or resourcing (Petrie and lisahunter 2011, Harris, Cale, and Musson 2011, Rainer and Cropley 2015) the changing political landscape and the recent Primary PE and Sport Premium have created other factors effecting the subject’s status. The introduction and subsequent doubling of the Primary PE and Sport Premium (DfE 2017) has placed Physical Education on a par with core subjects such as Maths, as parallels can be drawn in regards to pre-service training (Murray 2016), funding for in-service professional development (see Maths Hubs) (Truss 2014) and accountability through the OFSTED inspection frameworks (OFSTED 2015). As a direct comparison, Maths will receive £41 million of investment into a maths Hub infrastructure and professional development over four years (2016–2020), compared to the £320 million per annum currently allocated to Physical Education (DfE 2017, Murray 2016, Truss 2014). Nonetheless, money alone is rarely a ‘catch all’ answer to issues confronting an educational community. Despite years

of political interest and increasing accountability, Physical Education has still yet to reach ‘core’ curriculum status (APPG 2016). The reality of which means that despite a perceived increase in subject profile, the subject leader continues to meet daily challenges of competing curriculum time, subject value and teacher competency.

Whilst we do not advocate that funding should be removed, the influx of money into Physical Education at a time when primary schools are experiencing increasing austerity measures (Murray 2016) has created a new set of challenges for the subject leader to carefully navigate. Seen from this perspective, it is perhaps understandable how decisions about the subject might result in attempts to solve other ‘policy problems’ (Cochran-Smith 2005). Of immediate concern is ensuring funding results in sustainable and robust provision of high quality Physical Education, school sport and physical activity (PESS/PA). Key questions that subject leaders might ask are: ‘what impact has the funding had on our school community?’, ‘have our teachers become more confident and competent in teaching Physical Education compared to five years ago?’, ‘has there been a culture shift across the school towards PESS/PA?’. The funding for the Primary PE and Sport Premium has been made possible by commitment across three Government departments: the Department for Education, the Department of Health and the Department for Technology, Culture, Media and Sport. In turn, this has generated interest and expectation beyond just the education community. Competing discourses about this subject’s aims and purpose has created a dichotomy for the subject and those who lead it. Now at a crossroads, we see the subject leader has two viable options.

One option is to follow a path of enacting popular policy, where the main aim is to ensure compliancy of current political and neoliberal agendas. On this path there is likely to be a sense of ‘doing what is right’ reinforced through narratives of ‘best practice’.

Such illustrations have been made public to the subject leader via professional networks, blogs, journal articles and government reports; seeing a shift once again in decision making from the ‘central management’ of the school, ‘to a competitive, decentralized environment’ (Parnell et al. 2017). In a report published by OFSTED (2014) examples of best practice for the ‘Premium’ were illustrated by strengthening school partnerships, increasing competition, recording physical activity levels, staff development, active lunch times and intervention/inclusion strategies. While taking a popular route is arguably the safest in terms of decision-making; over time it runs the risk of placing the subject leader in a position of ‘diminished responsibility’ and ‘technocratic managerialism’ (Schon 1983). Placed in a position where it is generally accepted to act upon set of pre-determined responses, the subject leader is relinquished from requiring specialist knowledge to make decisions about complex matters. Furthermore, this path also places Physical Education within a means-end justification, where its sole purpose is to provide solutions to other educational issues e.g. physical inactivity, a sporting legacy, childcare provision, staff workload etc.

The alternative option is to forge a bespoke path, based upon local needs and underpinning subject values. This requires the subject leader to act upon vision and be able to articulate a clear subject purpose regardless of popular agendas and general public consensus. Viewing the subject leader as an individual who is defined by the completion of tasks and consequently doing what others do, ignores the complexity of the role and the status of the subject. With teachers now expected to deliver lessons that are considered by OFSTED (2013) as ‘good’ or better, the subject leader must be driven to create and implement a vision for PESS/PA that is shared and owned by the community it serves. The danger of subject leaders outsourcing the Physical Education curriculum to external

providers means responsibility is passed to often less experienced and less qualified professionals. In order for subject leaders to take path of leadership, not managerialism, they will need to challenge the assumed culture of ‘more of the same’ and ‘what has been done before’. Not an easy task, even for the most experienced and knowledgeable teachers.

A way forward for subject leadership

The National Standards for Subject Leadership (TTA 1998) were a set of guiding principles for school curriculum leadership; the aim of which was to set high expectations for the subject and advocate the outcomes across the education community. In light of the changing landscape and revisiting this guidance some twenty years on, we propose to offer clarity of the subject leader’s role amidst a complex political landscape and situate the role of subject leader in one who is an expert in primary Physical Education.

Necessary further considerations that have flavoured adaptations to the original guidelines are:

- A distinction between Physical Education, sport and physical activity
- Increased emphasis on accountability and reporting
- Management of a diverse workforce that extends beyond the classroom teacher
- Increased expectation for provision beyond the curriculum that promotes of health, physical activity and competition
- Professional development of teachers and leaders in Physical Education

Table 1: Key areas of subject leadership

Key Areas of Subject Leadership
<i>1. Strategy, Vision and Advocacy</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establish a vision for the subject that is shared with staff, children and parents about the subject's importance b) Provide clarification between Physical Education, physical activity and school sport and the unique contribution they each have in the school context c) Develop and implement policies that maintain high expectations for pupil attainment, safety and participation d) Have knowledge of and respond to local and national policy that influences the future direction of PESS/PA e) Undertake strategic planning for the improvement of PESS/PA across the school f) Work with local and national partners to promote PESS/PA and develop opportunities for collaboration g) Promote key achievements of staff and pupils in PESS/PA
<p><i>2. Teaching and learning</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop and maintain medium and long term planning that ensured curriculum coverage progression and continuity b) Provide guidance on appropriate teaching approaches and how to include all learners c) Exemplify how the wider-curriculum can be embedded in Physical Education, with specific reference to literacy, numeracy and technology. d) Establish and implement clear approaches for assessing pupils' learning and ensuring all curriculum delivers have an understanding of the learning objectives within the curriculum e) Ensure provision for the statutory requirement for all children to swim 25 metres (unaided)
<p><i>3. Management of the wider-workforce</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure appropriate checks and inductions have been undertaken for all external PESS deliverers b) Evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in PE and monitor the delivery of enrichment programmes c) Ensure the wider workforce in your school are kept up-to-date with curriculum developments, safe practice guidance and school policy
<p><i>4. Accountability and reporting</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Undertake regular audits that inform strategic planning and annual spending on PESS b) Ensure all teaching and learning areas are safe environments for working in c) Maintain risk assessments for all curriculum and enrichment activities d) Manage PESS budgets and report on detailed spending to all stakeholders e) Maintain records (e.g. on staff qualifications, training, pupils' attainment, participation, accidents, complaints and achievements) f) Liaise with school leaders, parents, governors and inspectors on the progress and provision of PESS/PA within the school
<p><i>5. Professional development of staff</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify staff needs for confident and competent delivery of the curriculum b) Ensure newly qualified teachers are inducted, encouraged and well supported to teach Physical Education

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Promote and source professional learning opportunities for staff that are matched to the needs of their learners d) Lead staff meetings to share innovation and best practice e) Set annual targets for development of the subject leader f) Promote expertise within the PESS workforce and identify opportunities for internal professional collaboration
<p>6. <i>Beyond the Curriculum Provision</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Plan and implement a programme beyond the curriculum for sport and PA that offers opportunity for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extension and challenge of high achieving pupils - Enhancement of core curriculum provision - Experience of different activities - Trip and visits - Pupil voice - Inter and intra school competition - Participation and the promotion of physical activity - Leadership and volunteering

Distinguishing between a subject specialist and a generalist teacher is currently politically charged and determined by the direction of government funding and policy documentation (NCTL 2015, DfE 2013a, 2015b). A response to policy in England has been to displace the generalist teacher in favour of a ‘specialist’ subject deliverer (Callanan et al. 2015, Parnell et al. 2017). This has led to a varied workforce and leadership models as schools strive to identify what works best. While the government agenda is to welcome specialist experts within the primary school (NCTL 2015, DfE 2015b) the nature of how a ‘specialist’ is defined is at best contested (Whipp et al. 2011, Sloan 2010) and at worst not known. A report by Callanan et al. (2015) headlined that since the introduction of the Primary PE and Sport Premium, there had been an increase in the number of schools with a ‘specialist’ teacher of Physical Education, from 30 per cent before the premium to 46 per cent in 2014/15. The report, however, was unable to define what a ‘specialist’ was (Callanan et al. 2015). Price (2008) and Carney and Howells (2008) suggest that a specialist should be a teacher, and furthermore a generalist

teacher who is able to demonstrate good practice and understanding of the education of primary-aged children. Whereas Sloan (2010) views that a specialist can also be an outside provider or a secondary Physical Education teacher. The link between specialist and subject leadership is becoming increasingly synonymous. The current political agenda entices entrants into the profession, via a funded Primary Specialist Physical Education route, that will eventually fill the expertise and knowledge gap in schools (OFSTED 2009a, 2013, NCTL 2015). However, teachers at an early career stage are typically known to have limited knowledge and are managerially demanding, suggesting they will require high levels of support and mentoring (Hargreaves 2000). An ambitious expectation for a newly qualified teacher to undertake a role that is associated with expectations around accountability, knowledge and experience (Pickup and Price 2007, Lawrence 2017, TTA 1998).

Randall's (2015) Model of Professional Knowledge offers a comprehensive overview of subject expertise that aligns the role of the subject leader with an 'aspirational knowledge' base. Lawrence (2017) suggests that this type of model can help schools and subject leaders audit their professional learning needs and requirements. Rather than focusing on a model of teacher expertise governed by a popular discourse of sport and health, or a particular training route, Randall (2016) attempts to clarify the role of subject leadership by bringing it to a focus on knowledge. Although not necessarily determined by years' experience, or a specific teacher education training route, the Model indicates that a subject specialist should demonstrate 'aspirational' levels of confidence and competence across the breadth of professional knowledge in Physical Education, including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, case knowledge and reflective/academic knowledge (Randall 2015).

Conclusion

The journey for Physical Education subject leaders in primary schools has been a complex one over the last two decades. The increased demands placed upon them have not been aided by less training and less available and consistent advice. With a new curriculum to deliver and new funding to manage in the form of the Primary PE and Sport Premium, indications are that the move towards outsourcing will continue unabated. In this new environment however the role of the Physical Education subject leader remains unclear especially if management decisions are taken by the head teacher and curricular delivery and CPD are provided by external agencies. The future for such role holders must therefore be considered uncertain unless a significant change occurs. The most likely change, one might speculate, is when the funding is reviewed in 2020. Such funding streams do not last forever which raises significant questions of the sustainability of outsourcing. It is in the post funding world where Physical Education subject leaders in primary schools may again find they have a role of note to play. Yet given how much the landscape continues to change, what this role will become in the next five to ten years remains unclear. However a focus on expertise, knowledge and accountability will help the primary Physical Education subject leader reclaim a position of leadership over managerialism and retain this position regardless of future political directions.

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