

Chapter 9

Re-imagination and re-design in Physical Education: Implicit and Explicit Models in England and Wales

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Introduction

Two questions provide our point of departure. Does physical education (PE) achieve desirable outcomes for the majority of youngsters who experience it? and, as a corollary, does it need to be ‘re-imagined’ and ‘re-designed’? The answer to both questions depends on what the outcomes for PE are taken to be. In our view, a domain assumption in the PE subject-community (or, at least, amongst academics, teacher educators and teachers) is that a central goal of PE is to encourage more (young) people to be habitually engaged with sport and physical recreation. Put another way, students should become lifelong participants who engage in health-related physical activity and enhance their ‘health’.

The process of ‘re-imagining’ and ‘re-designing’ usually begins with model constructions. These depictions provide ‘blue-prints’ of what PE should look like, often in terms of the content and delivery (i.e., teaching and organisation). Models involve theories about the ways in which youngsters learn and are best taught the subject matter of PE, the sequencing of activities, tasks and forms of assessment, and benchmarks for assessing a model’s implementation (Metzler 2011). Formal models stem from one person’s or several designers’ imagination. What we call “implicit models” also can emerge, incidentally, in custom and practice. These have been particularly significant in PE.

This chapter focuses primarily on models explicitly intended to ‘re-imagine’ and ‘re-design’ PE in response to identified shortcomings with the subject and in an effort to ‘fix’ particular issues. For example, despite growing concerns over young people’s sedentary

lifestyles, robust evidence that PE has had any significant impact on physical activity levels is lacking (Trost 2006; Green 2014). Reflecting this view, McKenzie and Lounsbery (2009) have referred to school PE as ‘the pill not taken’ (p.223). We return to this point later. We begin with a critique the sport technique-based ‘multi-activity model’ (Kirk 2006; 2013) which dominated PE in England and Wales during the late 20th century.

The multi-activity model in England and Wales

The multi-activity PE model emerged from the twin pillars of post-World War II PE in England and Wales: public school games of the second half of the 19th century and elementary school ‘gym’ from the turn of the 19th/20th centuries. Traditional PE is characterised by content revolving around games and physical exercise (in the form of gymnastics). Content delivery is based on a direct, formal, teacher-centred style/approach, one that Mosston and Ashworth (2002) classified as a command style.

This multi-activity sport-based model amounted to a *de facto* national curriculum from the 1970s onwards. It became codified in the first National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) for England and Wales in 1992. The perceived relevance of the multi-activity model has been underlined, implicitly or explicitly, in every subsequent iteration of the NCPE (1995, 2000, 2008, 2013).

Today the multi-activity model of PE in England and Wales continues to revolve around various ‘activity areas’, such as games, athletic activities, swimming, dance, and outdoor and adventurous activities. Games remain dominant. Meanwhile, an implicit model has resulted from PE teachers supplementing the ‘traditional games’ and gymnastics with a variety of newer games, sports and forms of physical recreation believed to be more in

keeping with youth lifestyles and enhancing the probability that they will engage youngsters, particularly at the end of compulsory schooling when they may drop-off or drop-out from sport.

Despite PE teachers' enduring beliefs that the conventional multi-activity model can be a crucial intermediary in enhancing young people's engagement with physically active recreation in their leisure and, in the longer term over the life-course, the evidence demonstrating any 'PE effect' on youngsters' habitual engagement with sport is sparse (Green 2014). Indeed, after substantial growth in the 1980s, coinciding with, and partially explained by substantial growth in indoor sport and leisure facilities in the UK, sports participation plateaued in the mid-1990s and has flat-lined ever since.

A recent House of Commons report, for example, revealed no significant change in 16-25 year olds' sport participation between 2007/8 and 2015/16 (Audickas 2017). In this vein, Gerdin and Pringle (2015, p.211) observed that PE "results in little skill learning, typically fails to produce a lifelong love of physical activity, has negligible impact on student health and can produce student disaffection". Nevertheless, the multi-activity sport-based model influences PE teachers' ideologies and persists in PE practice as a "common-sense consensus" (Kirk 1988; 2010).

Health-based PE

Toward the end of the 20th century, concerns were raised about the inability/ineffectiveness of the traditional model of PE and its recent variant, the multi-activity model. Concerns regarding young people's sport participation and physical activity levels were coupled with claims regarding a health/obesity 'crisis'. Together these concerns

were instrumental in the development of a health-oriented PE model in England and Wales. Whilst many terms have been coined for this model, it is most commonly referred to as ‘health-related exercise’ (HRE) (Harris 2000) or ‘health-based physical education’ (HBPE) (Haerens *et al.* 2011). To all intents and purposes, HRE amounted to a contemporary variation of the ‘biomedical model’ (Johns 2010), one that was preventative rather than restorative. This new model was the 20th century equivalent of elementary school physical training in gym and drill of a century earlier (Kirk 1992).

In this new model, PE teachers were charged with developing pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the impact of exercise on health, as well as the skills and predispositions necessary to carry it out. This mission has been built into the NCPE, and HRE has remained an all-pervasive theme therein. In secondary schools in England and Wales, HRE has been organised and expressed in a variety of ways. A combined approach involving focused units of work in PE, integration through the traditional and other activity areas, and delivery areas across other areas of the curriculum has been commonplace (Cale and Harris 2009).

In practice, however, the HRE model has been found wanting on several fronts. Research has highlighted the prevalence of some overly simplistic, inaccurate and potentially damaging practices in PE lessons (Cale and Harris 2009; Harris and Cale 2018), including narrow, limited and often instrumental interpretations and outcomes of HRE (Alfrey *et al.* 2012; Harris and Leggett 2015; Puhse *et al.* 2011) attributable to teachers’ limited knowledge and understanding (Alfrey *et al.* 2012; Armour and Harris 2013; Hastie and Mesquita 2017).

Implementation of the HRE curriculum also has posed challenges. Although HRE gained a foothold in PE curricula, it has not undermined the pre-eminence of sport in PE

curricula and teachers' practice. In recognition of this shortcoming and others, there have been calls for alternative pedagogies, methods or models to effectively teach this area (Armour and Harris 2013; Haerens *et al.* 2011).

Whilst there is evidence from numerous reviews (see Cale, 2017) that school-based physical activity programmes which include PE as a key component can be effective and provide positive outcomes for young people (e.g. improvements in physical activity, knowledge and attitudes), clear limitations to what HRE (and multi-activity models) can achieve merit attention. For example, most programmes have not influenced physical activity out of school (Cale 2017). and survey research suggests little or no changes in long-term involvement in sport and/or physical activity (Sport England 2015/16; 2017).

Thus both the multi-activity and HRE models have characterized the *practice* of PE as preferred by teachers. That said, the HRE model has remained prominent in the ideologies of PE academics as well as teachers. In this regard, the incorporation of the HRE model into multi-activity (but games-dominated) PE curricula represents small degrees of change alongside considerable continuity. On a more positive note, other surveys indicate that the majority of pupils enjoy and see the health benefits of PE (Sport Wales 2016), which implies continuing efforts to address known limitations and constraints are worthwhile.

Additionally, it is important to recognise the complexities involved in changing physical activity behaviour, taking stock of numerous factors within and beyond PE (and schools) which influence young people's physical activity and health (Cale and Harris 2013). In brief, whilst PE may make a contribution to young people's physical activity it cannot, by itself, address their needs (Fox *et al.* 2004; McKenzie and Lounsbery 2009), nor can it ensure

that they engage in sufficient physical activity for health. Consequently, Cale and Harris (2013) highlight the importance of high quality teaching and providing positive, meaningful and relevant PE and physical activity experiences for young people.

21st century models

In the 21st century, new models of PE have come to the fore alongside the multi-activity curriculum.

Teaching games for understanding

In the early 1980s, when interest in HRE was burgeoning, academics such as David Bunker and Rod Thorpe offered critical reflections regarding the games element of traditional PE. The target of their ire was the way in which games tended to be taught. Manifest limitations were illuminated by Bunker and Thorpe's (1982) Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model and, later, Teaching Games for Understanding-Game Sense (TGfU-GS) (Stolz and Pill 2014). For example, many children were not achieving success in games-based PE because teachers emphasized performance in games overall and games skills in particular. Consequently, the majority of youngsters left school knowing and understanding very little about games and were, effectively, 'locked out' of sport. In effect, the content of PE (skills in traditional games) combined with its delivery (largely didactic) resulted in teacher-dependent youngsters who, whether or not they were able to perform games skills, possessed "inflexible techniques and poor decision-making capacity" in games (Almond 2013).

Bunker and Thorpe's (1982) solution to the 'problem' was to focus on the principles underpinning games (e.g. attack and defence and ways of approaching each). They

emphasized action-oriented learning facilitated by playing games, rather than merely practising techniques. They also emphasized a developmental progression by which children could gain confidence in, want to learn about, and understand games.

Unlike the multi-activity model, the TGfU model appears to have had limited impact on PE curricular content and delivery. Although the TGfU approach and its subsequent variations have captured the interest of PE academics (e.g., Oslin and Mitchell 2006), this approach has “passed by practitioners without any major effect” (Almond 2010, p. vii). Indeed, the considerable teacher knowledge and tactical understanding TGfU requires has reportedly prohibited many teachers who lacked pedagogical content knowledge from using it? (Oslin and Mitchell 2006).

Despite the recent development of “a more robust and sophisticated version of the TGfU model” (Kirk and McPhail 2002, p.177) in the form of ‘situated learning’ and other related variations on the TGfU theme (Oslin and Mitchell 2006), games teaching remains resolutely traditional, emphasizing skill development and sports performance.

Changing activity preferences also need to be taken into account in explanations of the lack of popularity and limited carry-over of games participation into adulthood. For instance, the *Active Lives Survey* (Sport England 2017) listed just three games activities (football, badminton and tennis) in the top 15 sports participated in; and only 2–5% of adults take part at least approximately twice a month. By contrast, running and fitness classes are three times as popular.

In view of the aforementioned PE models, a look ahead is in order. What is the status of recent re-design models?

Sport education

One element the TGfU model found re-incarnation within Siedentop's (1994) Sport Education model. This element was the conviction that traditional PE was failing to educate those involved with games at all levels, from player, through coach, to spectator—and at a time when games (and sport) were fast becoming staples of the leisure and entertainment industries. In brief, sport could be seen as a 'valued cultural practice' (McNamee 2009). It followed that PE should focus on the culture of sport, initiating young people into the "rituals, values and traditions of a sport" (Siedentop 1994, p.7) – its customs and conventions – as well as the skills and practicalities.

The Sport Education model is, therefore, designed to provide authentic, educationally rich sport experiences in the context of PE (Hastie and Mesquita 2017). According to Siedentop (1994, p.4), Sport Education involved helping youngsters to "develop as competent, literate, and enthusiastic sportspeople". In terms of format, short 'blocks' or 'units' (of several lessons) were to be replaced by term- or even year-long 'seasons' within which students would experience the various roles involved in a particular sport: from player through to coach and referee/umpire to manager, supporter and so forth. In terms of delivery, sport education encouraged a deliberate shift from the traditional teacher-centred and didactic approach to more student-centred guided-discovery and problem-solving approaches (Kirk 2013), a shift which proved difficult for some teachers (Kinchin 2006).

Despite a growing body of research revealing positive teacher and pupil responses and

outcomes from Sport Education (Hastie *et al.* 2011; Kinchin 2006) in England and Wales evidence of widespread, planned, progressive and sustained adoption is lacking. Indeed, Kinchin (2006) reports how much of the Sport Education research has focused on individual units of work and highlights the lack of longitudinal research on the sustainability of the model and its outcomes across series of units.

Anecdotally, it seems that Sport Education does not extend to any great extent much beyond the network of schools linked (usually for teacher training purposes) to universities whose teacher trainers champion this and/or other such models of PE. Thus, while Sport Education may have taken hold at the level of academe, it has not done so at the level of PE practice (Penney *et al.* 2002).

In fact, some of the same challenges faced by HRE and TGfU, especially teacher knowledge and commitments, apply equally to Sport Education. Additionally, researchers have reported misconceptions about the model and some teacher disinterest (McCaughy *et al.* 2004).

More recently, two additional models have begun to take root in England and Wales: (1) Physical Literacy/Fundamental Movement Skills (Whitehead 2010); and (2) Co-operative Learning models (Dyson and Casey 2012; Goodyear *et al.* 2012).

Physical literacy/fundamental movement skills

Although, as Kirk (2013) observes, this new model amounts to “a justificatory argument seeking a pedagogical model” rather than a fully-developed blueprint for PE in its own right, Margaret Whitehead’s Physical Literacy (<https://www.physical-literacy.org.uk>)

stands out as a nascent model of current ‘re-imagining’ and ‘re-design’, among PE academics at least. Physical Literacy involves “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the life-course” (Whitehead 2010, pp.11–12).

Subsequently, the Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) model has emerged as a branch of Physical Literacy. FMS are grouped into locomotor (e.g. running, dodging, jumping, hopping, and skipping), stability (e.g. balancing, turning or rotating, and landing) and manipulative (e.g. throwing and catching) skills. Whilst Whitehead (2010) sees physical literacy as a ‘journey’ with different age-related stages through which individual journeys pass – spanning from preschool through to the older adult years – both ‘models’ are particularly relevant to primary schools, especially as PE attempts to put in place the physical building blocks for ongoing sporting and exercise habits.

Cooperative learning

As a variation on the Sport Education model, Cooperative Learning (Dyson and Casey 2012; Goodyear *et al.* 2012) also takes issue with the traditional way in which PE is said to be taught: i.e. teacher-centred approaches with a primary focus on sports skills and performance. Cooperative Learning characteristically involves working in ‘learning teams’ such that while participating in different roles, students help each other to learn. As well as aiming at what might be termed ‘personal and social education’, Co-operative Learning is also believed to sow the seeds for greater participation in sport and physical exercise by down-playing or even temporarily removing the physical dimension of PE in order to bring

about a positive effect on the likelihood of longer-term engagement in PE (Goodyear *et al.*, 2012).

Although it may be too early to form a judgement on effectiveness, a recent review of literature suggests Cooperative Learning can achieve positive outcomes, predominantly in the physical, cognitive and social domains (Casey and Goodyear 2015) and is, therefore, “worth doing” (Casey 2017). However, these successes are restricted to initial instructional units (Casey and Goodyear 2015) or one-off interventions, and there is still little indication that either of these approaches – Physical Literacy/FMS or Co-operative Learning – have caught on much beyond devotees: i.e. at the level of day-to-day practice in PE. That said, both have potential to do so and there is growing anecdotal evidence of experimentation with various forms of FMS and Cooperative Learning in schools in England and Wales.

Like earlier ‘re-designs’, the more recent models of PE outlined above are alternative responses to the alleged shortcomings of the traditional multi-activity sport-based model implicit in the PE curricula of secondary schools (as well, to a large extent, primary schools) across England and its former empire (Kirk 1992). All are examples of ‘re-designs’ with a paradoxical status. While these models have been prominent at conferences and in journals, they have yet to permeate on any scale or really influence and impact the everyday ‘philosophies’ and practices of PE teachers across England and Wales. Why haven’t they?

Various issues with implementing models generally have been identified in the literature, especially teachers’ commitments and knowledge (see Casey 2017; McCaughy *et al.* 2014). Suffice to say that implementation depends on teacher change and teacher

learning, indicating that implementation is complex, takes time and requires support (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2007).

Two new influences

As promising re-design models continue to evolve and develop, two processes are underway to varying degrees in the schools of England and Wales. Both are tantamount to implicit models of PE and show signs of surreptitiously changing, even transforming, the subject in practice. We call them “academization” and “sportization.” The former is manifest in the growth of an academic model of PE (often referred to as ‘examinable PE’). The second takes the form of a de facto re-emphasis on the traditional PE model of sport and games.

Examinable PE

Some ‘re-designs’ are happenstance rather than strategic. Examinable PE is one. What started as a piecemeal and reactive development in the 1980s, expanded and became widespread in the 1990s. In the first decade of the 21st century, it was considered by some to constitute a ‘new orthodoxy’ in PE (Reid, 1996), at least at the upper-secondary level, where physical educationalists increasingly assumed examinable PE to be an essential component of contemporary PE provision.

The evident growth of examinable PE was a consequence of PE teachers seizing upon opportunities to bolster their occupational and ‘professional’ standing in secondary schools – a process given further impetus by neo-liberal educational policies that created market competition not only between schools but also between subjects within schools. Thus, “the introduction of significant elements of propositional knowledge into [PE] (taught in a fashion

more typical of the classroom than the gymnasium) ... culminating in examinations” (McNamee 2005, p.5), and the attendant academicization of PE, has become arguably the most striking and significant (at least partial) ‘re-design’ of school PE – internationally (Brown and Penney 2017) as well as in England and Wales and the UK.

A manifest tension merits analysis: Examinable PE seems at odds with the physical nature of the subject. Indeed, examinable PE is also reportedly impacting on the PE curriculum for younger secondary school students with a trend towards schools selecting to cover examination content earlier in an attempt to improve exam results (Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) 2017). For some, the rapid growth and expansion of examinable PE lends weight to the claim that ‘normal’ (practical) PE is in the process of being marginalized, and even ultimately eliminated, from the secondary school curriculum.

This ‘new orthodoxy’ at the level of PE teaching implies that PE has, to all intents and purposes, joined other school subjects on the academic ‘treadmill’ (Dore 1997). In the process, PE has become more like other (academic) subjects and, correspondingly, less like conventional or traditional PE with a nearly exclusive emphasis on students’ movement and performance. This hints at the transformation of PE rather than mere change, but at what expense? The same question applies to another implicit model, introduced by the phrase “the sportization of PE.”

The sportization of PE

‘Sportization’ is shorthand for a process by which sport becomes prominent in the justification for and the practice of PE. In extreme form, it represents the *de facto* transformation of PE into school sport. This is a transformation from something nominally

focused upon education to something essentially focused upon sport in both leisure or recreational and high performance forms. In this new framework, educational outcomes are purely incidental.

An initial phase of sportization within PE can be traced back to the emergence and development of games in the Victorian public schools (Kirk 1992). A second phase took the form of the establishment of games, and sport generally, alongside gymnastic-type activities as the two staples of secondary school PE in the second half of the twentieth century. Recent developments in England and Wales suggest a third phase of sportization may be underway. This one which finds expression in the “widespread and normalized” (Smith 2013) use of sports coaches in the delivery of curricular and extra-curricular PE at both elementary and secondary levels (Griggs 2010; Jones and Green 2017).

Does PE teacher education need to be re-designed?

The continued dominance of a sport-based model of PE (assimilating, by degrees, the HRE and examinable PE models) at the level of PE practice implies that if PE is to be effectively re-imagined and re-designed then PETE also needs to be re-considered. That said, the extent that models such as TGfU, Sport Education and Co-operative Learning are being advocated at various PETE institutions, suggests that attempts to re-imagine and re-design are well in hand.

The belief that PETE is implicated in the success or otherwise of PE is clear in Lawson’s Introduction to this collection. At first glance, this seems axiomatic. However, the

landscape of initial teacher education (ITE) is constantly undergoing change and this may affect its ability to impact on the re-imagination and re-designing of future PE curricula.

For example, ITE in England has undergone something of a transformation involving a shift towards school-centred ‘training’ with the introduction of new routes such as ‘Teach First’, ‘School Direct’ and the development of new School-Centred Initial Teacher Training institutions (known as SCITTs), alongside provision by higher education institutions. School-centred routes into teacher education amount to a form of ‘on-the-job’ training intended to further the development of practice-based skills within the school setting. These developments amount to a loosening of the links between higher education institutions and initial teacher training (Cater 2017).

These new routes into teaching and new forms of ITE provision are firmly rooted in the ideological conviction that effective teachers need to be trained rather than educated. Nonetheless, questions remain regarding whether or not a ‘profession’ trained solely or predominantly ‘on-the-job’ is any more or less effective than one educated in higher education institutions working in close partnership with schools.

Governmental Ofsted inspection outcomes, while often praising the practice-based skills acquired by school-centred trained trainees, have emphasised the narrow focus of much training (Cater 2017) implying shortcomings. This may not be good news in terms of PETE positively impacting on re-imagining and re-designing future PE curricula that will effectively promote and facilitate physically active lifestyles amongst young people.

Conclusion

The abiding impression one forms when reflecting upon the fortunes of the various models of PE – some, in part, as a response to the perceived shortcomings of traditional PE – is that while these have increasingly been the subject of research and by degrees, taken root in academic PE, they have largely not done so in school PE, much beyond the sphere of influence of the institutions advocating particular models with their students and beyond individual units of work. This observation is not meant as an indictment of any particular model. Rather, it amounts to an observation about the conservative character of PE and of a profession resistant to change (Alfrey and Gard 2014; Kirk 2010). For example, the impact of teacher education tends to be ‘washed out’ relatively soon after PE teachers begin teaching ‘properly’ (Stroot and Ko 2006), and as they return to their sporting roots in contexts that have long constrained teachers towards the multi-activity sport-based curriculum model.

Notwithstanding the theoretical appeal of various models, it would seem that the actual everyday ‘classroom’ practice of PE remains conventional (Capel and Blair 2013). Having said this, there is empirical and anecdotal evidence of pockets of innovation. Meanwhile, the challenges that teachers face and which undoubtedly hinder innovation must be acknowledged.

Calls have been made for “more and better re-research” (Lawson 2009) – specifically for research into models-based practice (Casey 2017). Research, it is assumed can and should underpin and inform conscious and deliberate attempts to ‘re-design’ school PE.

However, there is no escape from the realisation that school PE may be being ‘redesigned’ without the involvement of PE academics. We have identified two ‘implicit’ models impacting the practice of PE in England and Wales: examinable PE and sport-based

PE. Arguably, only one ‘explicit’ model seems to have gained traction and impacted the practice of PE: HBPE is becoming embedded within PE curriculum across England and Wales.

However, an important qualification is in order. On the ground, implicit models are more influential than explicit ones. The net effect is mixed. Whilst achieving important outcomes in individual studies in the short-term, no model has shown substantial signs of positively impacting levels of regular participation in sport and physical activity. Consequently, we cannot escape the possibility that whatever PE models we develop may be relatively powerless to countervail the significance of other influences on young people’s physical activity.

On the other hand, there is no reason why PE models delivered effectively cannot contribute towards PE’s role and responsibility in stimulating “interest, enjoyment, knowledge, competence and expertise in physical activity and sport for health and well-being”; and also “providing positive, meaningful and relevant PE and physical activity experiences for young people” (Cale and Harris 2013, p.86)

‘Explicit’ PE models can be broadly placed in one of three categories: (i) those that circulate within academia, whose influence is largely confined to PE teacher training students and fellow academics through lectures, articles and conferences; (ii) those models that find their way into policy, such as the NCPE in England and Wales; and (iii) those models that seep into the practice of school PE.

If truth be told, most models are largely restricted to the first category and impact is often limited to students/trainee teachers, teachers in schools involved in ITE partnerships (laudable, of course, as that is) and the minority of interested practitioner researchers or schools which agree to participate in academics' research. A few make it through to policy documents.

Perhaps as a result of its statutory place within the NCPE in England and Wales, HBPE/HRE is one model which is an exception in this regard. Although we all hope and sometimes claim to influence the day-to-day practice of PE teachers, those that actually do are few and far between. Furthermore, analyses of the HBPE/HRE model serve as reminders that challenges with every model's effective delivery and organisation remain.

Lawson (2009) and Kirk (2010) argue that sport-based PE is a remnant from the industrial age and 'out-of-sync' with the values and practices of late-capitalist societies and, as such, at risk of extinction. That is not our view. While Kirk (2010, p.8) argues that "change resistant physical education-as-sport-techniques ... seems increasingly likely to become culturally obsolete" (Kirk 2010, p.8), obsolescence does not appear on the horizon in England and Wales.

While the multi-activity sport-based PE model may not deliver the holy grail of a generation of youngsters likely to engage in lifelong participation in sport and PA, it nonetheless dovetails with the dominant discourses in education in England and Wales in the early decades of the 21st century. For better and worse, this model continues to occupy the high ground of school PE, both in theory and practice.

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