

Moving Forward from the Physical Education, School Sport and Young People Strategy

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Introduction

Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) in the UK has changed considerably since the inception of the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy in 2002 and the subsequent Physical Education, School Sport and Young People (PESSYP) strategy in 2008. These initiatives featured unprecedented funding for PESS with over £2billion being invested by government between 2002 and 2010 (Armour, Sandford and Duncombe, 2011). The evolution of PESS has witnessed a number of radical changes including the emergence of School Sport Partnerships (SSPs). This development ensured that, by 2006, all schools in England were part of an SSP which featured secondary, primary and special schools working collaboratively to enhance PESS provision for young people (Ofsted, 2011). SSPs were developed to improve the amount and quality of PESS on offer, targeting participants specifically through seven outcomes devised by the Youth Sport Trust (YST):

1. Increased participation in high-quality PE;
2. Increased participation in high-quality informal activity (*e.g.* playground);
3. Increased participation in high-quality out of school hours learning;
4. Increased participation in high-quality competition and performance;
5. Improved attitude, behaviour and attendance in PE, sport and whole school;
6. Increased attainment and achievement in and through PE, out of hours learning and sport;
7. Increased participation in community-based sport.

(YST, 2005 cited in Flintoff, 2008: 397)

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight two areas which PESS practitioners (*e.g.* teachers, coaches and support staff), have developed over the course of the last decade. These two approaches represent key elements of what was ‘best’ about this period and which will aid the profession as it attempts to ‘move forward’ into this new era. Alongside the promotion of holistic and lifelong learning through Physical Education (PE), the period 2002-2010 witnessed a philosophic shift in the way that young people were encouraged to maintain active, healthy lifestyles. This was partly as a result of the inception of PESSCL/PESSYP initiatives, but also due to the content of the 2008 National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2007). By considering this philosophic shift in light of participant development and pedagogic literature, this chapter also provides some suggestions as to how practitioners might continue to build on the progress of the PESSCL/PESSYP era. The chapter begins with a brief outline of the key aspects of PESS-related policy development since 2002.

Policy, PESSCL/PESSYP and the future

The PESSYP 2008 strategy focussed primarily on creating a World Class PE and School Sport system (Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)/Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008) packaged within the ‘Five Hour Offer’. The Five Hour Offer was a commitment by government that all 5-16 year olds would have access to two hours of high quality curriculum PE per week and further opportunity to access an additional three hours of sporting activities, through school, voluntary and community providers (DCSF/DCMS, 2008). Data reported within the national PESSCL survey (Quick, Dalziel, Thornton, and Simon, 2009) which was drawn from annual surveys from all 450 SSPs - over 21,000 schools, indicated a consistently upward trend since the inception of PESSCL in terms of increasing participation in high quality PE and extra-curricular activities. This upward trend suggests that SSPs were, at least in part, succeeding in achieving some of their primary

goals. Following the Coalition government's comprehensive spending review of October 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that ring-fenced funding for SSPs would not continue after March 2011. After this time schools would no longer be required to operate within an SSP and despite a partial (and temporary) funding reprieve until 2013, at the time of writing their existence appears highly uncertain (Ofsted, 2011). Despite such uncertainty, the PESSCL/PESSYP era appears to have left PESS in an encouraging position. Ofsted (2009) remarked that, since 2002, schools had made the most of the opportunities that were offered as a result of national policy and strategy aimed at developing PESS provision. Such findings were in stark contrast to the bleak assessment of the World Summit on PE in 1999 when it was suggested that there had been a severe decline in the global standing of PESS (Bailey and Dismore, 2004). Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove appeared to recognize this as an encouraging platform from which to work. In December 2010 Gove stated:

It's time to ensure what was best in school sport partnerships around the country is fully embedded and move forward to a system where schools and parents are delivering on sports with competition at the heart. (Department for Education

(DfE, 2011)

The remainder of this chapter discusses two aspects of the SSP era which could be considered as 'best' elements. The first of these elements relates to the heightened prominence of fundamental movement skills as a pedagogic strategy and it is to this concept that we now turn.

Policy, Sampling and Fundamental Motor Skills

Michael Gove's assertion that competitive sport lies at the heart of a well rounded physical education (DfE, 2011), with a particular emphasis on team games, echoes the philosophy of

previous government offerings in this area, namely those of the Conservative administration of the early 1990s (Department of National Heritage [DNH], 1995). The Coalition have recently reinforced their position on such matters in their policy document *Creating a Sport Habit for Life* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 2012) which features an Olympic-style 'School Games' as the headline policy, augmented by school-club links for which the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Football, Cricket, Rugby Union, Rugby League and Tennis are cited as illustrative drivers. Gove also believes that quality provision of competitive sport will encourage lifelong sporting participation (DfE, 2011); thus the forthcoming revision of the NCPE, due for implementation from September 2014, is expected to reinforce the emphasis on traditional, competitive, sports (Fellows, 2012).

The period of development under PESSCL and PESSYP saw an increase in the promotion of a wider variety of activities for young people, in some cases resulting in less curriculum time devoted to the more traditional sports (DCSF/DCMS, 2009). Indeed, it is our view that a more diverse curriculum benefits, rather than detracts from, participants' sporting competence and the likelihood of lifelong participation. The current NCPE encourages a transformation in young peoples' experiences of sport and physical activity, placing lifelong participation high on the agenda alongside the development of movement competency; a key thread running throughout (Frapwell, 2009). There is a danger that the emphasis on traditional competitive sports within current policy and the forthcoming NCPE will slow the development of PESS provision which has occurred over the last decade (Fellows, 2012; Kirk, 2012). By understanding the importance of diverse movement competence, the PESS community will be able to move forward, building on the progress and developments of the last decade, rather than taking a backwards step. Consideration of participant development frameworks can aid the understanding of the importance of diverse movement competencies and it to this subject that we now turn.

The concept of participant development remains relatively under theorised and suffers from a lack of empirical evidence (Ford *et al.*, 2011). Nevertheless, numerous models have been produced in order to aid practitioners' capability to develop young people's sporting potential. Models are commonly helpful to practitioners, providing frameworks aimed at applying empirical research which are usually easily comprehended (Bailey *et al.*, 2010). Participant development models have been structured in numerous ways from traditional pyramid approaches where mass participation is considered an antecedent to heightened elite performance, to more staged approaches which may, for example, be based on age-dependent chronological progression (Bailey, 2005). Arguably the two most prominent models in contemporary practice are Balyi and Hamilton's (2004) Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model and Côté's (1999) Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP). Numerous other models doubtless have much to offer our understanding of the development of young people, yet a comprehensive review of these frameworks is beyond the scope of this chapter. In considering the LTAD and DMSP models, a better understanding of young people's sporting development can be gained.

The first participant development concept which we wish to discuss relates to Côté's (1999) principle of sampling which features as the first step in the DMSP (Côté, Baker, and Abernethy, 2003). In the context of developing expert decision makers in and through sport, Côté (1999) suggests three distinct phases: the sampling years (6-12), the specializing years (13-15) and the investment years (16+). Within the DMSP, the sampling years are characterized by involvement in a wide variety of activities, developing a range of fundamental motor skills (FMS) and embracing the joy of sports participation. FMS are gross physical movements providing a basis for the progression to more intricate and specialised skills. FMS comprise:

- Management of the body – stability skills (*e.g.* stop, twist, turn, bend);
- Moving in different directions – locomotor skills (*e.g.* dodge, hop, skip);
- Control and manipulation of objects such as hoops and bats and balls (*e.g.* strike, kick, throw)

(Murphy and Ni Chroinin, 2011: 145)

Murphy and Ni Chroinin (2011) suggest that participants development should be focussed on the application of movement in diverse contexts in order to enhance the relevance, enjoyment and meaning of skills. Côté, Lidor, and Hackfort (2009) propose seven postulates (or requirements) concerning youth sport activities that lead to both elite performance and continued participation – the two key elements of recent government proposals on the development of school sport. Amongst these postulates is a recommendation concerning the diversification of activities and an emphasis on retaining a sense of deliberate play as the learning mechanisms valuable to a holistic developmental process. These principles of diverse sporting activities are also evident in the late specialization version of the LTAD model (Balyi and Hamilton, 2004) which underpins much of the work of the UK's National (sport) Governing Bodies with young people in the UK. Within the LTAD framework, the first stage focuses on 'FUNdamentals' where children between the ages of six to eight (for girls) or six to nine (for boys) are encouraged to sample a wide range of fun, playful, activities. It should be noted that all of the age categories cited here, within both models, are age-typical, not age-dependent – i.e., they should not be considered as absolutes; every child develops uniquely (Morley, 2009a). The emphasis for development within these stages should be on FMS, rather than sport-specific techniques (Stafford, 2005). One of the numerous packages that has emerged in the last decade which offers materials to aid the progression of FMS, (in line with development models such as DMSP and LTAD) is the concept of 'Multi-skills'.

Multi-skills programmes became extremely popular throughout the PESSCL/PESSYP era (Morley, 2010), focusing on the development of FMS such as balance, co-ordination, reaction and timing. Appropriate involvement with Multi-skills environments can provide the kind of sampling described by Côté *et al.* (2009) and reduce the likelihood of athlete burnout and subsequent withdrawal from a particular sport which may have become, for example, overly-pressurized or tedious (Baker, Cobley and Fraser-Thomas, 2009). The prominence of the Multi-skills phenomenon is best illustrated by the popularity of Multi-skills Clubs and Multi-skills Academies across the UK. The DCMS funded approximately 650 Multi-skills Clubs in 2005, targeting young people between the ages of 7-11. Sessions on the ‘ABCs’ (Agility, Balance and Coordination) of movement were delivered by a community coach or teacher, generally outside of normal school hours and at a wide variety of different venues (Morley, 2009a). Part of the purpose of Multi-skills clubs was to provide a pathway for appropriately talented young people to access local sports clubs (YST, 2006). Multi-skill Academies were funded through the DCSF and were aimed at children aged 10-12 being typically delivered as extra-curricular activities (Morley, 2009a). The 450 Multi-skill Academies were focused on developing children’s FMS, understanding of games principles and identifying talent to refer to NGBs (YST, 2006). This extensive network of FMS-based opportunities represents one of the developmentally-appropriate systems which, we believe, should not be lost to funding cuts or the transition to a more competitively-based PESS environment.

Another concept which has contributed to the advancement of PESS provision over the past decade, affording a better understanding of developmentally-appropriate sporting provision for young people is Physical Literacy (Ford *et al.*, 2010). Physical Literacy was conceptualised by Whitehead (2001) and is now an internationally recognised term with a working definition that provides a basis for research in a number of fields:

The motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the lifecourse.

(Whitehead, 2010: 11-12)

It is noteworthy that despite the concept of Physical Literacy being in the academic and practitioner domain for over a decade, no reference is made to it in the current NCPE at either Key Stage 3 or 4. This is somewhat surprising given that the alignment of the outcomes of curriculum entitlement for young people at school are centred on the values, concepts and, ultimately, the achievement of Physical Literacy. Whitehead (2007a) contends that a positive PESS experience can be a crucial and substantial contributor to the development of Physical Literacy, although there is relatively little empirical evidence to support such an assertion (Ford *et al.*, 2010). The concept of Physical Literacy is not intended to be in competition with, or act as a kind of replacement for PE, but is put forward as a wider concept to enable teachers and coaches to better understand their contribution to the long term development of their pupils and participants (Whitehead, 2010). Physical Literacy embraces some of the notions of transferability of FMS apparent within Multi-skills, promoting a broader role for PESS than the development of sport-specific competencies. Kirk (2006) suggests that appropriate practice by teachers should feature authentic learning experiences resulting in an increased likelihood of young people developing the confidence and competence to become involved in lifelong physical activity. Much of this is embedded within Physical Literacy, in particular the promotion of self esteem. The work by Killingbeck, Bowler, Golding, and Gammon (2007) attempts to contextualise the role of Physical Literacy in PE arguing that distinct activities are likely to make a richer contribution to the development of young people and to offer a more authentic learning experience. Whitehead (2007b) suggests that motivation to take part in PE through the development of self-esteem and confidence must be

an important consideration in curriculum planning. In reality, the attainment of physical competence might not always be immediately pleasurable and motivating; it can require considerable effort (Tinning, 2007). Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that current practices in PESS are not always successful in providing this motivation, self-belief and confidence (Bailey, 2005). Lifelong participation in physical activity relies upon an inherent self-belief concerning movement competence (Jess, Dewar and Fraser, 2003). Whitehead and Murdock (2006) suggest achieving Physical Literacy can result in high intrinsic motivation and self-confidence, both of which are key indicators in reducing the likelihood of avoidance of physical activity environments due to such considerations as poor peer acceptance, social isolation and low self-esteem (Bailey, 2005). Kirk (2005) further suggests that the development of the perception of competence is a key part of the willingness to participate in physical activity and that PESS has often been relatively ineffective in this role. The emergence of the concept of Physical Literacy can aid PESS practitioners to plan curricular models which provide a broad base of movement competence which will, in turn, underpin both elite sport talent development and physical activity throughout the lifecourse. To this end, it is our contention that the concepts of FMS, Multi-skills and Physical Literacy should remain high on the PESS practitioner's agenda regardless of the direction of future policy.

Dualism, NCPE and the future of holistic pedagogies in PESS

For many years, sport has been restricted from fulfilling its holistic developmental potential by a kind of mind-body dualism (Kirk, 2005); that is, a separation of the physical and cognitive elements in the subject notable in PE's theoretical/practical divide. However, most PESS practitioners consider competent games performance as inseparable from efficient and effective decision making (Baker, Côté, and Abernethy, 2003; Turner, 2005). As Oslin (2005: 128) has stated:

Skilfulness goes beyond the execution of a particular skill within the game; it includes other components that relate to game play, such as support, movement off the ball, defensive actions and decision making.

Participants should be enabled and encouraged to think analytically about the sensory input to which they are exposed in physical activity and sports settings, comparing it to what they already know or to other ideas that are being discussed (Barnum, 2008). These challenging pedagogic demands are currently a requirement of the NCPE (QCA, 2007), as well as being an essential component of participant development (Light and Dixon, 2007).

According to Light and Dixon (2007: 160):

Contemporary societies require professionals and citizens who are lifelong learners, problem solvers, reflective independent learners, and creative and innovative thinkers.

The argument in support of the importance of developing cognitive skills within PESS is underlined by research such as that of Blomqvist, Vääntinen, and Luhtanen's (2005) which examined secondary school students' decision making and game play ability in soccer. In Blomqvist *et al.*'s (2005) study, students aged 14–15 years participated in video-based game understanding tests as well as playing three different types of 3 vs 3 modified soccer matches for ten minutes. Findings demonstrated that participants in such settings make more tactical decisions than technical executions. Furthermore, writers such as Barnum (2008) and Light (2004) have suggested that enhancing declarative knowledge can benefit procedural application. PESS has a large part to play in helping participants to adopt such a mindset and to develop the requisite skills, whilst at the same time requiring players to think for themselves and become authors of their own learning; aspects of physical activity development which are part and parcel of the current NCPE.

The transformation of the current NCPE in terms of demanding more holistic pedagogic approaches which embrace cognitive skills alongside the well established physically-based outcomes reaches far beyond the minor revisions of 1995 and 2000 (Frapwell, 2009). Although curriculum change have traditionally failed to significantly impact the day-to-day practice of teachers (see, for example, Evans and Clarke, 1988), over the past decade there has been a much broader and deeper desire amongst PESS practitioners to transcend games-centred pedagogic models, to appreciate how and why young people participate in physical activity, and to break from traditional approaches which encourage young people to associate sport with exclusive competition and performance (Dismore and Bailey, 2010). Despite this, Frapwell (2009) suggests that curricula are still too commonly designed around what teachers want to teach, rather than what young people need to learn, suggesting that the journey to a more holistic, child-centred, pedagogic approach is far from complete.

Existing pedagogic literature points to participant-centred pedagogies as being the way forward (Jones, 2006; Kirk, 2005; Roberts, 2007). There are many participant-centred models in sport pedagogy and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe these in detail. However, there are a number of common elements and resource implications which are paramount to the success of all of these models and should be taken forward as a meaningful legacy of the last decade. In each case, the learner's role should become more active, probably working in small groups, being dependent upon one another and being cognitively and physically challenged to solve the problems presented by the environment in which they find themselves. The role of the PESS practitioner is to construct that environment in such a way as to maximally benefit the holistic development of participants. Situations need to be constructed to provide authentic sporting experiences that enable the pedagogist to step back, allowing participants the freedom to make decisions in whatever activity they are engaged.

Participants should also be posed carefully constructed and challenging questions to assess and develop their understanding of the activities which they are undertaking. Such approaches may be considered as constructivist and are fundamentally different from the linear, technique-based models, which tend to dominate sport-based curricula (Turner, 2005). Such constructivist theories reject the mind-body dualism to which sport pedagogy has, for so long, been tied (Light and Dixon, 2007). PESS practitioners should consider the social context in which they operate, the previous experiences and knowledge of their participants (including that drawn from the extensive sporting media coverage), and the intended actions and expected outcomes of session delivery in order to gain an altogether more balanced perspective of how participant understandings are constructed. In turn, they must be careful to avoid an over reliance on formalised and linear teaching styles should the range and content of the forthcoming NCPE revert to the traditional activity areas of games, athletics *etc.*

There is some evidence that recent developments in the area of holistic pedagogies and more learner-centred approaches have begun to impact the experiences of young people in PESS (Wild, 2009). Such progress is apparent in the move away from areas of ‘activity’ such as games and gymnastics to a process of learning featuring flexible range and content such as ‘identifying and solving problems to overcome challenges’ (QCA, 2007). The NCPE requires PESS practitioners to plan a curriculum experience that is focussed on the needs of individual pupils, rather than sporting tradition. Examples of contemporary curriculum planning include pupils being taught the art of ‘outwitting opponents’ through football, handball and Rock-it-ball, whilst ‘exploring concepts, ideas and emotions’ through street dance and parkour. Although there may be a danger that some novel activities have been included in curricula for the sake of doing ‘something different’ (Fellows, 2012) and that the implementation of such activities without sufficient educational underpinning may only see a

short-term benefit (Frapwell, 2009), it is the impact of embracing the range and content of the current NCPE which represents the greatest legacy for the forthcoming generation. Ofsted (2009) noted that although most teaching in secondary school PE departments is good with outstanding elements, there is considerable room for improvement in the meeting of learners' individual needs. Garcia López, Contreras Jordán, Penney, and Chandler (2009) suggest that rather than focusing on specific activities, a thematic approach to curriculum planning should be adopted that can be transferred into a specialised context as pupils' progress through their school years.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to highlight some of the major developments in school sport provision during the PESSCL/PESSYP era. In many ways, the period from 2002 to 2010 represented a time of unprecedented change to national policy, educational reform and funding support which is unlikely to be replicated within the foreseeable future. Out of this period emerged numerous concepts built on the principles of sampling (Côté *et al.*, 2003) and FUNdamentals (Balyi and Hamilton, 2004), which allowed PESS practitioners to gain some appreciation of the importance of developing broad movement competencies. Emerging packages such as Multi-skills, and pedagogical concepts such as Physical Literacy have enhanced practitioners' ability to develop young peoples' FMS. Should the forthcoming NCPE revert to a more traditional range and content of activity areas, PESS practitioners should seek to build on the developmental work of the previous decade, confident of the value of broad movement competencies to form the foundation of sporting excellence as well as to enhance the likelihood of developing lifelong engagers in physical activity.

Contemporary pedagogic literature evidences considerable development in PESS practice. The adoption of more holistic pedagogic practices, reflecting the enhanced cognitively-

focussed content of the current NCPE is also part of the legacy which PESS practitioners should not readily abandon. Non-linear pedagogic approaches such as constructivism enhance participant understandings, further aiding skill transferability between activities. Non-linear pedagogic approaches are also well suited to developing both elite performance and a richer engagement in physical activity through the lifecourse. Whilst the considerable reduction in funding and the likely demise of the SSPs may challenge many PESS practitioners to see policy developments as a progression, it is perhaps in these two elements of practice which the legacy of the PESSCL/PESSYP era can be seen to be most evident.

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