CHAPTER 8

Contemporary Problems in School Communities: Critically Exploring the Power of Educational Approaches for Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education

This chapter critically explores the power of educational approaches in Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education within school communities, which relates to Curriculum, teaching and learning; Community and School implementation (cf. Figure 1.2). Three key historical and contextual themes emerge from the present national curriculum for England in PE: healthism; assumptions about sport and an awareness of the social and cultural forces of influence. The first two themes relate to the behavioural philosophy, which views the body as an object to be controlled. The third theme adopts a constructivist approach, placing a focus on "awareness'. An awareness of social and cultural forces relates to holistic education and specifically the socio-cultural approach to PE. This is supported by Pringle, Larsson and Gerdin (2019). Stirrip and Hooper argue specifically that there is a present need to "focus more closely on how the critical movement is translated from research into practice" (2022, p. I). Hence, this chapter critically investigates contemporary problems with how Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education are enacted in school communities, revealing the power of balance and awareness, when choosing educational approaches.

Stirrip and Hooper "do not contest that many young people have positive experiences within PE" however, argue that "we cannot ignore the

T. Lynch, *Physical Education and Wellbeing*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-72874-7_8

considerable evidence that many do not" (2022, p. I). It is suggested that Health Education is currently guided by obesity discourses (Quennerstedt et al., 2010) and "offers a resurgence of individualistic and instrumental notions of health" (Alfrey & Brown, 2013, p. 160). In the UK, the relationship between Health and PE is embedded within the physical dimension, "PE's relationship with health is long-standing and generally accepted, given that it provides young people with regular opportunities to engage in physical activity and learn about the health gains associated with an active way of life" (Cale & Harris, 2023, p. 2).

Having a focus on the physical dimension of health is embedded in critical pedagogy. "Critical work around the body, health and physical activity—has a long history within the subject of physical education (PE). Such work has been evident since at least the 1980s (e.g. Kirk, 1986; Kirk & Tinning, 1990; Tinning, 1985) and has (arguably) had a consistent presence since" (Stirrip & Hooper, 2022, p. I). One example is that children in the early years of primary school in England are being informed that they need to exercise or else they will get fat. Intentional or not, viewing the body as an object to be trained, places pressure on children, parents and school communities, often at the expense of enjoying movement. As described by Cale and Harris (2023, p. 5), "The pervasiveness of neoliberal agendas has also led to concerns about health promotion outcomes being unattainable for the profession". This chapter investigates why this is happening, beginning in the early years of British (English) primary schools, through exploring the educational and health approaches; in this instance, the 'dominant performance-oriented curriculum with its accompanying behaviourist inclined pedagogical approach' (Thorburn et al., 2011, p. 393). This dominant behavioural approach reveals hidden messages (discourses) beneath the surface of the physical education (PE) national curriculum for England. A deeper investigation reveals that not only does it exist in the PE curriculum but also within the regulation of wellbeing by the Department for Education (DfE); namely Ofsted inspections within schools (Jeffreys, 2023). It is argued that such discourses often exist in society without challenge and are having adverse effects on the 'healthy active lives' the curriculum purports (Cale & Harris, 2019).

Hidden Messages

Some children in Reception class in south-east England state schools are bringing home a letter stating that they are overweight. This is because in England "Children are measured and weighed for their body mass index (BMI) in Reception class and in Year 6, under the government's National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)" (Ford, 2018), even though it is widely recognised that the BMI is an imperfect measure for determining the extent of body fat (WHO, 2024). Furthermore, feedback letters associate the child's weight with dangerous diseases like cancer, and parents are advised to visit GPs to resolve child weight issues (Nnyanzi et al., 2016). This adoption of the Medical Model approach to Health is archaic and in a research study by Nnyanzi et al. was perceived as inappropriate by parents, causing controversy and anger, however, continues to this day. It is argued by the British Government that:

> Delivering the NCMP provides vital information that enables local authorities and their partners to plan for and invest in key services to tackle obesity and its wider determinants. It also provides the opportunity to raise parents' awareness of overweight and obesity, its consequences and healthy lifestyle choices. (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2024)

This use of a medical model approach to health is also an example of governmentality (cf. p. 43); "the deployment of governmental strategies that seek to shape the conduct of individuals and collectives" (Tinning, 2010, p. 147). This approach has three major criticisms (cf. Chapter 3, p. 45):

1. it supports the false notion of dualism in health, whereby biological and psychological problems are treated separately;
2. it focuses too heavily on disability and impairment rather than on individual's abilities and strengths; and
3. it encourages paternalism within medicine rather than patient empowerment (Swaine, 2011).

The findings of the study indicate that the parents are the only stakeholders challenging approaches that are wrong and outdated. This does bring into question teachers' and school leaders' knowledge about

education approaches and practices, which clearly does not appear to be sufficient.

> Local authorities need to think about whether portraying the issue of child weight status as a medical problem and directing them towards GP services is the most sensible direction of travel. Evidence from this and other studies is that parents/guardians and children see child weight status much more as a social issue. Local authorities could therefore use their position to modify the broader environment—removing the health label and providing more holistic approaches to improving the weight status of their populations. (Nnyanzi et al., 2016)

In one example, a letter from Kent Community Health (NHS Foundation Trust) informed the parents that their child's measurements taken (as part of the National Child Measurement Programme) suggested they were overweight for their age, sex and height. Also, overweight children often become overweight adults (Head of School Health & Immunisation Service for Kent & East Sussex, Letter to parents, November 16, 2016).

In another example, a Dorset schoolgirl, Daisy who is eleven years of age, "lost confidence", and "was miserable and angry" after receiving the same 'fat letter'. Her mother was not notified of the programme and was unaware her daughter would be weighed at school. Daisy stated that after reading the letter she felt that "Because I was fat I didn't fit in with all of the other people that were playing cricket". Consequently, Daisy began skipping breakfast and it has taken weeks for her to return to playing cricket (Ford, 2018). Pressure on body image is also evident in advertisements for free summer school clubs in a primary school in Suffolk, listed under the West Suffolk weight management groups on the OneLife Suffolk website. The advert reads "Fun packed clubs for those children aged 4–14 years who struggle with their weight" and in 2016/2017 "over 200 children and their families successfully completed our child weight management programme" (One Life Suffolk, 2017).

While in each scenario, the messages given may be done with the best intentions, the question of what messages are being received by young minds needs to be identified and addressed by educators. Cale and Harris (2019, p. 11) assert "a key area to focus on is how recommendations for physical activity and health are promoted, interpreted and accepted

by teachers, health professionals and parents". For discourses and ideologies are not recorded in school curriculum documents, "but are traits taught and learnt through various mediums within society, often in what is termed the 'hidden curriculum'" (Lynch, 2017, p. 80). How does the child identified as 'fat' for the free summer school club feel? What impact will this label have throughout their lives? Also, it raises the question of what messages are being received by parents? For example, as a result of the letter that came home from Kent Community Health, the Reception child's mother was left distraught and unnecessarily questioned her parenting skills (personal communication, June 20, 2017). Furthermore, Daisy's mother questioned why there is not a holistic view of the child's health; "you don't get a chance to say what you are doing at home or what your child is doing regarding exercise" (Ford, 2018).

The 2012 Olympic Games held in London had a large influence on the planning of the national curriculum for England in PE. Griggs (2015) identified this occurrence as 'policy by the way' (Dery, 1998)—he further explained this connection as where 'dominant discourses and rhetoric are favoured and permitted often without understanding the appropriateness or impact that may result' (Griggs, 2015, p. 38). This chapter provides new insights and a deeper understanding of "appropriateness" and "impact" by exploring relevant literature. Hence, it can be argued that presently the national curriculum in PE for England advocates a focus on the body as an object rather than the 'whole' child. That is, the national curriculum for PE is heavily influenced by the behavioural, top-down governmental approach in education and health; being deliberate, systematic, planned attempts to change behaviour. This is supported by Leahy, O'Flynn and Wright who refer to the curriculum as a government assemblage (2013). Hence, it desperately requires a balance of approaches and preferably a predominant inclusive, socio-cultural approach (Stirrip & Hooper, 2022).

Subsequently, this chapter suggests that giving preference to a behavioural approach is having long- and short-term detrimental effects on many children's physical development and wellbeing and requires urgent change. Using critical pedagogy "inequities and injustices evident within educational systems and societies can be interrogated, exposed and challenged… serving to elucidate both how and why certain individuals might be marginalised or excluded within a given context" (Stirrip & Hooper, 2022, p. I). In exploring discourses underlying the national

curriculum for England in PE, two key historical and contextual themes/ questions emerge:

'Healthism' as an ideology
Does sport really build character in the early years of primary schools?

'Healthism' as an Ideology

Throughout history, PE has had different guiding principles or purposes which are often driven by the government or needs of society. Arthur et al., (2015, p. 429) refer to this as the philosophy of the discipline, 'beliefs and values that underpin practice'. As previously discussed, historically, PE has been influenced by two philosophies:

1. The body viewed as an object *(relating to behavioural model in education/ efficiency (top down)/ governmentality/ medical model in health and behavioural model in health)*.
2. The view of the whole person; body, mind, spirit and well-being (Lynch & Soukup, 2016) *(relating to process/ humanistic perspective/ constructivist approach/ learning across dimensions/ social model of health)*.

From the perspective where the body is viewed as an object, PE has been responsible for schooling the body; a "controlled body, one which is appropriately skilled with the capacities to meet the standards of acceptable social behaviour of any particular society and to make a productive contribution within the economic system" (Kirk, 1993, p. 13). Tinning and McCuaig share that in many countries often this has related to physical training, for the development of a certain type of citizen (2006). It is also "recognised that there is a crucial significance of the body and physical activity in relation to the exercise of power" within society (Tinning et al., 1993, p. 79).

According to Lynch and Soukup (2016), many discourses have influenced the 'body as an object' philosophy. Healthism is defined as "a belief that health can be unproblematically achieved through individual effort and discipline directed mainly at regulating the size and shape of the body" (Crawford, 1980, p. 366). Hence, health problems are perceived as individual problems, failing to recognise the social and environmental

influences—relating to the medical and behavioural models in health. Health discourses, from scenarios such as the ones described in the introduction of this chapter, and 'healthism' as an ideology (accepted beliefs within society), are underpinned by the ever-enduring crisis referred to as the 'obesity epidemic'.

> Young peoples engagement with healthism discourses may be facilitated by well-meaning but inadequately prepared teachers who themselves hold narrow, reductive views of health, fitness and physical activity. Such cases may result in schools falling well short of their potential to promote healthy, active lifestyles". (Cale & Harris, 2019, p. 13)

The obesity crisis has been growing over the last 60 years, produced by biomedical research experts; it is re-contextualised within professional and academic PE literature (and social media) to justify the importance of the discipline. Subsequently, it has been argued over the years that it often creates fear in society which involves governments and media blaming parents and schools (Gard, 2006; Gard & Wright, 2001, 2005). According to Steinbeck research in primary PE has focussed on physical inactivity and childhood obesity (2001). Gard and Wright (2001) warn that: unquestioning acceptance of obesity discourses in PE constructs anxieties about the body; creates a blame culture which takes away the pleasure of participating in physical activities, furthermore, marginalises physical activities that are not regarded to be 'fat burning'; and negatively affects the way PE is researched and taught in higher education and schools. Hence, there is "an urgent need to increase the breadth, depth and relevance of young people's learning about health in schools" (Cale & Harris, 2019, p. 13). Gard and Wright (2005, p. 13) propose that "the scientific foundations of 'obesity epidemic' thinking are far less certain than commonly assumed"; this is supported by Biddle et al. (2004) who describe the evidence as less than compelling.

Promotion of health is "greatly valued by governments responsible for costs involved with the wellness of citizens, especially considering the influence of hypokinetic diseases and the strong correlation research evidences physical activity plays" (Lynch, 2013, p. 258). However, healthism forms a belief that causes guilt for those who do not fit the 'exercise = fitness = health' triplex (Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989). Hence, physical appearance plays a leading role in healthism, underpinned by judgements being made about ideal appearances and how people conform

to society's expectations. "Like a script, bodies tell us a story about the person they embody, they convey sets of ideas and values" (Kirk, 1993, p. 7).

Healthism is associated with people's morals and with feelings of guilt. "The television program 'The Biggest Loser' is a prime example of healthism, where the body is associated with morally disciplined behaviour and people experience guilt if they are seen as undisciplined" (Lynch, 2017, p. 81). Such messages are passed onto children through what is referred to as the hidden curriculum, as in the scenarios given at the beginning of this chapter of the children in Reception and Year 6 class. It is debated that this is often unintentional and in many instances, the teacher has become so accustomed to the messages that they may be unaware of their existence (Lynch, 2017).

It can be stated that healthism is encouraged in the English national curriculum, in particular, where the 'purpose of study' states; 'It [PE] should provide opportunities for pupils to become physically confident in a way which supports their health and fitness' (Department for Education, 2013, p. 1). As the scenarios discussed in the introduction of this paper illustrate, a consequence of this PE curriculum has witnessed children in Reception and Year 6 fearing obesity, being labelled as overweight, and Headteachers permitting advocacy of 'fat' clubs in their schools. Subsequently, teachers and school leaders are required to be educated in the existence of ideologies and informed of practical ways that they can be sensitively addressed.

In relation to the obesity crisis, Gard warns of teachers' responses such as the undesirable examples identified earlier, which indicate a lack of professional thought and may even be unethical. Such practices are unlikely to have any 'detectable effect on population obesity or levels of health' (2006, p. 79). The current PE national curriculum for England has been described as a 'dominant performance-oriented curriculum with its accompanying behaviourist inclined pedagogical approach' (Thorburn et al., 2011, p. 393). A previous national curriculum draft purported a holistic approach and was suitably titled 'Understanding Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing', however was discarded in 2010 with the change of government.

Does Sport Build Character in the Early Years of Primary Schools?

As mentioned earlier, the present national curriculum for England for physical education was influenced by the 2012 Olympic Games held in London. At the close of the Olympics Prime Minister David Cameron published the following statement; "any new national Physical Education curriculum which would follow the Games will now 'require every primary school child to take part in competitive team sport like football, netball and hockey'" (Griggs, 2015, p. 38). Griggs refers to this curriculum as having a hegemonic position of sport (2015) with 'increased focus on competition and in particular competitive teams now permeates [ing] down into Key Stage 1' (2015, p. 40).

These details suggest the latest curriculum policy may promote discourses and ideologies such as sporting, sexism and elitism and therefore need to be identified and addressed by educators. Furthermore, if there is limited education in teacher preparation it is very likely that such ideologies are influencing children now even earlier in life. Unfortunately, this is of major concern as Griggs suggests that PE in English primary schools is being delivered ineffectively (2012), thus increasing opportunities for cultivation. This is supported by Penney (2022):

> Stirrup and Damant reaffirm that education policy—and particularly policy relating to health and wellbeing—is far from neutral, in the English context, at least. It reflects dominant political and social agendas, including the advancement of neoliberal ideals, and is designed to promote those agendas through formal primary and secondary schooling and via informal education in the pre-school years.

When unpacking the national curriculum for England in PE—Key Stage 1 policy, the purpose of study suggests that the citizen being developed is ideally an Olympic champion; one who is 'inspired' to "succeed and excel in competitive sport and other physically demanding activities" (Department for Education, 2013, p. 1). The problem with this ideal is that for most boys and girls, it is not realistic and therefore becomes exclusive. Kohn clarifies, "competition is structured to produce a single champion and many more losers" (1992, p. 109). As the scenarios shared

in the introduction of this chapter illustrate, unfortunately for many children failure is being reinforced before they may have even begun the Key Stage 1 school curriculum.

This national curriculum statement is an example of a sporting discourse, "developed beliefs about physical education and sport that are not always necessarily true" (Lynch, 2017, p. 82). Furthermore, the national curriculum 'purpose of study' also states; "Opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect" (Department of Education, 2013, p. 1). Such statements need to be questioned by educators, rather than accepted.

Is it realistic to expect all children in schools, given the present problems identified with qualifications, the preparation of teachers and infrastructure for PE delivery (UNESCO, 2014), to excel in competitive sport? Does playing sport build character for every child? Are fairness and respect outcomes of playing sports for all children? Where do the ideologies of sexism, elitism and individualism sit within this rhetoric and how are they addressed?

As the National Curriculum for England in PE 'Purpose of study' accentuates, sports sits within the PE curriculum. However, there is often a misconception that PE is only sport. This becomes confusing for educators in the early years when children's motor control is not developmentally ready to combine a number of motor skills with game rules and strategies. Using the analogy of learning to read, throwing a child into a complex game is like introducing early years' children to phonics using a novel—it is not developmentally appropriate.

Curriculum statements about sport and PE, such as the ones located in the English curriculum's purpose of study for PE, are assumptions. While they may be outcomes experienced at times by some children through sport, for many they contradict experiences; exacerbated by limited teacher education. Simply put, they are not based on research evidence. According to Hickey, common assumptions about sport include:

- By being involved in sport, people naturally develop positive attitudes about healthy lifestyle;
- Friendship, teamwork, sharing and cooperation are incontestable manifestations of involvement;
- If you are prepared to work hard and make the necessary sacrifices you can achieve what you want;

- That boys and girls receive equal opportunity and recognition. (1995, p. 5)

These assumptions are ideals, which can be argued are enhanced through quality PE implementation, as the 'purpose of study' refers to a high-quality PE curriculum. Moreso, what is vital is quality implementation from quality teachers (Lynch, 2005). However, as previously mentioned, it is argued that PE as a subject can be vulnerable (Tinning et al., 2001). Quality PE is contentious within the context of England as it is well documented that most teachers are underprepared for teaching PE (Griggs, 2012, 2015; Lynch, 2015; Lynch & Soukup, 2017). Literature shares "England appears to have not experienced growth in the first of the five UNESCO pillars for quality PE, 'Teacher education, supply and development'" (Lynch & Soukup, 2017, p. 8). Furthermore, it is the only subject often taught by sports coaches; not requiring teaching qualifications, nor the presence of qualified teachers (Blair & Capel, 2011; Carney & Howells, 2008; Smith, 2013).

This gives impetus to Kohn's arguments against assumptions made by the national curriculum for PE. Conversely, "competing drags us down, devastates us psychologically, poisons our relationships and interferes with our performance" (Kohn, 1992, p. 114). Kohn positions the advocacy for sport and competition within the 'body viewed as an object' philosophy for PE, associated with schooling the body for a certain type of citizen:

> Sport does not simply build character, in other words; it builds exactly the kind of character that is most useful for the social system. From the perspective of our social (and economic) system—which is to say, from the perspective of those who benefit from and direct it—it is useful to have people regard each other as rivals. (1992, p. 85)

He asserts that competition is not enjoyable for all children, referring to competitive sports as a failure factory which not only eliminates the 'bad ones' but also turns off many of the 'good ones' (1992). This argument is of particular interest as the 2015 Wales school survey involving 110,000 Welsh school children across almost 1000 schools found that; "Making sport and physical activity enjoyable and fun is critical to boosting participation by children and young people" (SportWales, 2015).

Perhaps Kohn's argument against competition resonates with children in England, as it is affirmed in literature that PE in the UK fails to engage children in school and is unsuccessful in inspiring physical activities outside of school (Griggs & Ward, 2012; James & Brophy, 2019; Sandford & Rich, 2006). An England-wide survey from the Department of Culture Media & Sport (2016) titled 'Taking Part' researched child participation in sports for 5- to 10-year olds. Findings for 2015/16 (1096 participants) revealed that in July 2016 "there has been no significant change in the proportion of children participating in sport in any age group (5–15, 5–10 or 11–15) compared to 2008/09 or 2014/15". This indicates that the new PE national curriculum for England and the government's one billion pounds funding for Sport England to invest in grassroots sports has made no improvement (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2017). Based on these latest findings, it may be suggested a new holistic approach to PE is necessary and timely. It is recommended that unwelcomed ideologies are addressed in the early years of schools using a holistic, socio-cultural approach—which has been raised on numerous occasions throughout the book and is explored in detail in Chapter 10.

Reviewing literature reveals PE has had different purposes over the years, all driven by the needs of the government or society. At present the British national curriculum for PE was derived from a need for Olympic champions and young competitors. This is of particular significance because a deeper analysis reveals that it may be defeating its own aim of 'healthy active lives' in both the short and long terms. Educative questions are raised about possible hidden messages that are experienced by four-year-old children in their first year at primary school; messages adversely affecting the development of the 'whole' child.

This chapter offers balance to perspectives portrayed through the national curriculum in England for PE. In doing so it suggests that educators are made aware of existing social and cultural influences that influence PE and sport. Discourses and ideologies need to be identified; the position or contextual need for the discourse should be shared, as should the undesirable aspects. Children are passive consumers of discourses and ideologies; an awareness of their choices needs to be brought to their attention from the early years of school. The socio-cultural approach requires teachers to be educated about such forces and strategies for how best to manage these.

In short, the national curriculum for England in PE can and needs to be better, in design and implementation. This is supported by Cale and Harris (2019, p. 13):

> In PE, in particular, learning should challenge the narrow focus, misunderstandings and misconceptions that many young people hold [and teachers] concerning health, fitness and physical activity. Meeting this goal is likely to require us to develop alternative approaches, both in initial teacher education and in professional development related to PE-for-health pedagogies.

Developing School Community Wellbeing

To develop and optimise school community wellbeing, in reflection of recent happenings, Ofsted inspections within schools need to improve, in design and enactment. Learning should also extend to challenge the narrow focus, misunderstandings and misconceptions held concerning mental health and wellbeing in school communities, beginning at the top of the educational power hierarchy ladder with Ofsted inspectors (behavioural approach), and cascading down to Headteachers, teachers and other staff members. As addressed earlier (cf. Chapter 2 p. 32), there are many problems with teacher wellbeing in school communities at present and have been for many years. On a global scale, teachers report one of the highest levels of occupational stress and burnout in the job compared with other professions (Henebery, 2024).

Investigating the circumstances leading to the tragic death of Headteacher Ruth Perry and considering what the implications for Ofsted are going forward, it is clear that the DfE in England requires a continuation of their shift to research-informed practice (constructivist approach). This shift was identified and began in 2017 under the leadership of Amanda Spielman, the Chief Inspector at the time of Ruth Perry's death; Spielman described this as the vital role in balancing the accountability system (cf. p. 31). Thus, began the transformation of a traditional behavioural, top-down governmental approach to a more constructivist (research-informed), Ofsted regulation of 'educators'. Consequently, for this shift to continue moving in this constructivist direction, it is proposed that as a requirement, all Ofsted Inspectors be qualified in Educational Research—a Higher Degree by Research, minimally a Masters and ideally a Doctoral degree.

It has been formalised, the Ofsted inspection contributed to the death of Headteacher Ruth Perry. The Coroner report warned that there could be more deaths of this nature unless there is change; "In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths could occur unless action is taken" (Courts and Tribunal Judiciary, 2023, p. 2). It is proposed that the recommended change required, to prevent the suffering of teachers or any more deaths, will involve a continued shift towards research in education as well as practical school teaching experience. This is modelled by the Singapore education system (OECD, 2023), however, within the UK is presently absent. As it stands, all inspectors are only required to have Qualified Teaching Status (QTS), which in some Western countries is not recognised as an academic qualification (cf. p. 11).

Seven matters of concern were identified specifically for Ofsted and the Department for Education in the Coroner's report. The second of these concerns saliently states "There is almost complete absence of Ofsted training or published policy" (2023, p. 2), for inspectors looking for signs of distress in school leaders or how to deal with such concerns, pausing an inspection or having meetings during the inspection process. Subsequently, the third concern states "Parts of the Ofsted inspection were conducted in a manner which lacked fairness, respect and sensitivity" (2023, p. 2). This third concern begs the question 'How was the Ofsted inspection regulated?' If Ofsted were governed by ethical approval in the same way as educational researchers are, then their processes would be better shaped to manage inspections fairly and respectfully.

Research Ethics Committees (REC) enable a healthy research culture. They review research proposals, ensure high ethical standards and protect research participants, while also promoting research integrity (United Kingdom Research Integrity Office, 2024). Ofsted do not have a REC and while they do have a policy paper, it clearly states that "it does not apply to anyone collecting data who has a direct legal requirement to do so, for example as part of inspection and regulation of services in Ofsted's remit" (Ofsted, 2019). In the absence of a REC, subsequently there is a missing layer of essential support and quality assurance in Ofsted's inspections of schools. This missing layer is directly aligned to the Coroner's concerns. Hence, more significance is afforded to inspectors needing deep research knowledge.

The immediate change involved replacing the chief inspector for the last seven years, Amanda Spielman with Sir Martyn Oliver. Oliver, in his first week, launched an internal inquiry into Ofsted's response to the

death of Ruth Perry. Furthermore, he addressed the issue by postponing Ofsted inspections for two weeks while inspectors participated in training for mental health awareness. This action is described by Sparkes (1991) as Level 1, surface change—however, research warns that unless there is a significant establishment of all three levels only superficial change will result.

Digging beneath the surface of Headteacher Ruth Perry Coroner's Report suggests that the education community will not improve until Ofsted and the DfE changes their approach to education from behavioural to constructivist. This requires deep change and not band-aid surface level changes such as a quick-fix training or policy documents. Fully implemented innovation or reform will "require an understanding of the process, a way of thinking that cannot be captured in any list of steps to be followed" (Fullan, 2001, p. 71). Hence, Ofsted requires reform based on knowledge of educational research and practical school teaching experience. Concerns about school inspector, headteacher and teacher training in England, the required experience and qualifications have been previously raised (cf. p. 32).

As discussed previously (cf. Chapter 2, p. 31), Ofsted have traditionally relied on quantitative data from performance tables and floor standards (e.g. SATs). This is surprising in the field of education, as it is the richer and more varied insights offered by qualitative data that is commonly used for research in schools and about curriculum. "Curriculum results from social activity. It is designed for both present and emerging purposes. Curriculum is a dynamic field" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 1). Qualitative researchers establish credibility and trustworthiness through their data gathering using member checks and triangulation, data analysis and reporting. However, Ofsted only uses terms such as validity, reliability and generalisability which sit within quantitative research (Kervin et al., 2006). Hence, if inspectors were educated in qualitative research methodologies and terms then it would be assumed that Ofsted's research methods would also develop, specifically with regards to contexts and experiences. Hence, a richer, more accurate story of a school could be offered by inspectors.

The need for a change in approach was argued by Professor Julia Waters, Ruth Perry's sister: "What we have been pushing for, is there needs to be really radical change, systemic change, cultural change at Ofsted—and this training is just the start" (Standley, 2024). Accordingly, Ofsted requires greater knowledge of educational research, ideally with

inspectors who also have teaching experience. Concerns about school inspector training, experience and qualifications were raised previously and have been at the core of Ofsted's issues for an extended period of time (Lynch, 2023).

Ofsted's tradition of issues identified by Coffield (2017; cf. p. 30) is supplemented more recently with the death of Ruth Perry. Perhaps this tragedy may have been avoided if there was a REC and all inspectors could evidence research knowledge, across both quantitative and qualitative methods. Ofsted must continue on its journey towards evidence-informed practice which began in 2017. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that they develop a REC and that inspectors are qualified in Educational Research, i.e. Masters or Doctoral degree. Hence, the underlying issue cannot be addressed with training and relates to the predominant behavioural approach adopted in education. The answer lies in a holistic approach to health and wellbeing for all school community members.

In summary of this chapter, children in Reception class should be moving for enjoyment, because it comes naturally to them, and this should be exploited by teachers (with a deep understanding of the socio-cultural influences of wellbeing) as a medium to enhance their learning across all areas. They shouldn't be exercising out of fear that they will get fat, nor should they be experiencing guilt for not meeting adult 'health' expectations. It is wrong for children to be categorised as overweight and school leaders should not be allowing this within their schools, nor should they be allowing inspectors to negatively impact the wellbeing of their school community. Hence, it is recommended that the global shift to a constructivist, holistic social-cultural approach be adopted for the national curriculum for England in PE and wellbeing across all curriculum areas, by the DfE and by Ofsted, one which has a focus on the whole person philosophy: body, mind, spirit and wellbeing.

Reflection

This chapter discusses hidden messages that are not stated explicitly in the curriculum documents. Thinking about your context, is obesity a problem and if so, how is it addressed? Are adult health expectations placed on children/students? If so, how? How does playing sport build character for every child in your context? How are fairness and respect outcomes of playing sport for all children? How are leaders aware of negative influences that impact the wellbeing of their school community members? How is

the socio-cultural approach with a focus on the whole person philosophy: body, mind, spirit and wellbeing, presented in your community's context?

References

Alfrey, L., & Brown, T. (2013). Health literacy and the Australian curriculum for health and physical education: A marriage of convenience or a process of empowerment? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education, 4*(2), 159–173.

Arthur, L., Beecher, B., Death, E., Dockett, S., & Farmer, S. (2015). *Programming and planning in early childhood settings* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Biddle, S. J., Gorely, T., Marshall, S. J., Murdey, I., & Cameron, N. (2004). Physical activity and sedentary behaviours in youth: Issues and controversies. *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, *124* (1), 29–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/146642400312400110

Blair, R., & Capel, S. (2011). Primary physical education, coaches and continuing professional development. *Sport, Education and Society, 16*(4), 485–505.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). (2017). *Olympic legacy: Did £1bn after 2012 get anymore people doing sport?* http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-40817063

Cale, L., & Harris, J. (2019). Promoting active lifestyles in schools. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Cale, L., & Harris, J. (2023). *Physical education pedagogies for health*. Routledge.

Carney, P., & Howells, K. (2008). The primary physical education specialist. *Physical Education Matters, 3*(3), 3–4.

Coffield, F. (2017, November 2). The research evidence for and against Ofsted. BERA Blog. https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/the-research-evidence-for-and-against-ofsted

Courts and Tribunals Judiciary. (2023, December 19). Ruth Perry: Prevention of future deaths report. Retrieved from Ruth Perry: Prevention of future deaths report—Courts and Tribunals Judiciary.

Crawford, R. (1980). Healthism and the medicalisation of everyday life. *International Journal of Health Services, 10*, 365–389.

Department for Culture, Media & Sport. (2016). *Taking part 2015/16 annual child report*. London: National Statistics (UK). https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539029/Taking_Part_2015_16_Child_Report_-_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 10 December 2024.

Department for Education (DfE). (2013). *National curriculum in England: physical education programmes of study*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-physical-education-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-physical-education-programmes-of-study. Accessed 10 December 2024.

Dery, D. (1998). Policy by the way: When policy is incidental to making other policies. *Journal of Public Policy, 18*, 163–176.

Ford, E. (2018). Dorset school girl 'lost confidence after fat letter'. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-england-dorset-42993144/dorset-schoolgirl-lost-confidence-after-fat-letter

Fullan, M. (2001). *The NEW meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gard, M. (2006). HPE and the 'obesity epidemic'. In R. Tinning, L. McCuaig & lisahunter (Eds.), *Teaching health and physical education in Australian schools* (pp. 78–87). Pearson.

Gard, M., & Wright, J. (2001). Managing uncertainty: Obesity discourses and physical education in a risk society. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 20*(6), 535–549.

Gard, M., & Wright, J. (2005). *The obesity epidemic: Science, morality and ideology*. Routledge.

Griggs, G. (Ed.). (2012). *An introduction to primary physical education*. Routledge.

Griggs, G. (2015). *Understanding primary physical education*. Routledge.

Griggs, G., & Ward, G. (2012). Physical education in the UK: Disconnections and reconnections. *Curriculum Journal*, *23*, 207–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2012.678500

Henebery, B. (2024, April 11). Global study highlights critical importance of teacher wellbeing. *The Educator*. https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/global-study-highlights-critical-importance-of-teacher-wellbeing/284474

Hickey, C. (1995). Can physical education be physical education? *ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal, 42*(3), 4–7.

Jeffreys, B. (2023, April 23). Halt Ofsted inspections, after Ruth Perry's death says sister. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/education-65339944

James, M., & Brophy, S. (2019). *Schools are a crucial place for physical activity programmes – here's how to make them work*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/schools-are-a-crucial-place-for-physical-activity-programmes-heres-how-to-make-them-work-110215

Kervin, L., Vialle, W., Herrington, J., & Tony, O. (2006). *Research for educators*. Thomson, Social Science Press.

Kirk, D. (1993). *The body schooling and culture – monograph*. Deakin University Press.

Kirk, D., & Colquhoun, D. (1989). Healthism and physical education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 10*, 417–434.

Kohn, A. (1992). *No contest: The case against competition*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Leahy, D., O'Flynn, G., & Wright, J. (2013). A critical 'critical inquiry' proposition in health and physical education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education, 4*(2), 175–187.

Lynch, T. (2005). *An evaluation of school responses to the introduction of the Queensland 1999 health and physical education (HPE) syllabus and policy developments in three Brisbane Catholic primary schools* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Australian Catholic University, Australia. https://researchbank.acu.edu.au/theses/128/

Lynch, T. (2013). Health and physical education (HPE) teachers in primary schools: Supplementing the debate. *Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) Active and Healthy Magazine, 20*(3/4), 10–12. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.2889.6644

Lynch, T. (2015). Health and physical education (HPE): Implementation in primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Research, 70*(c), 88–100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.02.003

Lynch, T. (2016). *The future of health, wellbeing and physical education: Optimising children's health and wellbeing through local and global community partnerships*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31667-3

Lynch, T. (2017). Physically educated: developing children's health and wellbeing through movement and motor skills (pp. 77–94). In S. Garvis & D. Pendergast (Eds.), *Health & wellbeing in childhood* (2nd ed.). Cambridge.

Lynch, T. (2023, July 31). British international schools: Are teachers and school leaders qualified? British Educational Research Association (BERA) blog post. https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/british-international-schools-are-teachers-and-school-leaders-qualified

Lynch, T., & Soukup, G. J. (2016). "Physical education", "health and physical education", "physical literacy" and "health literacy": Global nomenclature confusion. *Cogent Education, 3*(1), 1217820. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1217820

Lynch, T., & Soukup, G. J. (2017). Primary physical education (PE): School leader perceptions about classroom teacher quality implementation. *Cogent Education,* 1348925. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1348925

Nnyanzi, L. A., Summerbell, C. D., Ells, L., et al. (2016). Parental response to a letter reporting child overweight measured as part of a routine national programme in England: Results from interviews with parents. *BMC Public Health, 16*, 846. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3481-3

OECD. (2023). PISA 2022 results: factsheets. Singapore. https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/country-notes/singapore-2f72624e/

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. (2024). National child measurement programme 2023: Information for schools. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-child-measurement-programme-operational-

guidance/national-child-measurement-programme-2022-information-for-schools

Ofsted. (2019). *Policy paper: How we carry out ethical research with people*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsteds-ethical-research-policy/how-we-carry-out-ethical-research-with-people#:~:text=Those%20carrying%20out%20research%20on,information%2C%20with%20the%20people%20involved

One Life Suffolk. (2017). One life Suffolk, one year on; annual report 1st April 2016–31st March 2017. https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/uploads/Onelife_Suffolk_A4_report.pdf

Ornstein, A. C., & Hunkins, F. P. (2017). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles, and issues* (7th ed.). Pearson Educational Leadership.

Penney, D. (2022). *Introduction*. In J. Stirrip & O. Hooper (Ed.), *Critical pedagogies in physical education, physical activity and health* (Chapter 2). Routledge.

Pringle, R., Larsson, H., & Gerdin, G. (2019). *Critical research in sport, health and physical education*. Routledge.

Quennerstedt, M., Burrows, L., & Maivorsdotter, N. (2010). From teaching young people to be healthy to learning health. *Utbildning Och Demokrati, 19*(2), 97–112.

Sandford, R., & Rich, E. (2006). Learners and Popular Culture. In D. Kirk, M. O'Sullivan, & D. Macdonald (Eds.), *Handbook of Physical Education* (pp. 275–291). Sage Publications.

Sparkes, A. (1991). Curriculum change: On gaining a sense of perspective. In N. Armstrong & A. Sparkes (Eds.), *Issues in physical education* (pp. 1–19). Cassell Education.

Standley, N. (2024, January 6). Ruth Perry's sister 'reassured' by new Ofsted boss. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/education-67893382

Steinbeck, K. S. (2001). The importance of physical activity in the prevention of overweight and obesity in childhood: A review and an opinion. *Obesity Reviews, 2*, 117–130.

Stirrip, J., & Hooper, O. (2022). *Critical pedagogies in physical education, physical activity and health*. Routledge.

Smith, A. (2013). Primary school physical education and sports coaches: Evidence from a study of school sport partnerships in north-west England. *Sport, Education and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.847412

Sport Wales. (2015). *School sport survey, state of the nation: Hooked on sport*. http://sport.wales/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/school-sport-survey.aspx

Swaine, Z. (2011) Medical model. In J. S. Kreutzer, J. DeLuca & B. Caplan (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Clinical Neuropsychology*. Springer.

Thorburn, M., Jess, M., & Atencio, M. (2011). Thinking differently about curriculum: Analysing the potential contribution of physical education as part of 'health and wellbeing' during a time of revised curriculum ambitions in Scotland". *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 16*(4), 383–398.

Tinning, R. (2010). *Pedagogy and human movement: theory, practice, research. Routledge studies in physical education and youth sport*. Routledge.

Tinning, R., Kirk, D., & Evans, J. (1993). Healthism and daily physical education. In Deakin University, *Critical curriculum perspectives in physical education – Reader* (pp. 77–94). Deakin Print Services.

Tinning, R., Macdonald, D., Wright, J., & Hickey, C. (2001). *Becoming a physical education teacher: Contemporary and enduring issues*. Pearson Education/ Prentice Hall.

Tinning, R., & McCuaig, L. (2006). Making a certain citizen: Schooling and HPE. In R. Tinning, L. McCuaig, & L. Hunter (Eds.), *Teaching health and physical education in Australian schools* (pp. 3–8). Sydney: Pearson Education.

United Kingdom Research Integrity Office. (2024). *What is a research ethics committee?* https://ukrio.org/ukrio-resources/what-is-a-research-ethics-committee/

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2014). *World-wide survey of school physical education*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002293/229335e.pdf

World Health Organisation (WHO). (2024). Obesity and overweight. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight