

PEN06367

Improving the house of cards: Productive pressures for curriculum reform in secondary physical education.

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Paper presented at the *Australian Association for Research in Education conference*, 27-30 November, Adelaide.

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Abstract

More than a decade on from Locke's (1992, p.362) claim that "replacing the dominant curriculum program model is the only course of action that can save a place for physical education in secondary schools", the physical education curriculum in the secondary years would still be regarded by many as largely, unchanged. This paper identifies this situation as increasingly problematic and arguably unsustainable amidst firstly, a growth in the prominence of discourses of lifelong learning and lifelong participation in political and policy arenas, and secondly, notable curriculum innovation in both the primary and senior school years that has sought to embrace these discourses. While we would agree with Kirk (2005) that the early years of secondary schooling may be too late as a focus for interventions underpinned by concerns for lifelong participation, this paper contends that these years remain a defining period that are, at this current time, far from guaranteed to either build upon or build towards 'surrounding' curriculum experiences. The paper focuses attention on physical education in Scotland to explore prospects and possibilities for curriculum reform in the lower secondary years that will better reflect and align with proximal developments and discourses.

Introduction

The dominant curriculum model characterising physical education in the secondary years represents a longstanding focus for debate and contestation internationally (Crum, 1983; Locke, 1992; Penney & Chandler, 2000). The debate and contestation has continued amidst acknowledgement of multiple and for some commentators, notably incompatible political and public expectations in regard to what can be achieved in and through physical education and sport in schools. The expectations have both diversified and intensified as crisis discourses relating to the activity and health of children in western nations have gathered momentum in the media, in political circles and within the physical education profession itself (Burrows & Ross, 2003; Gard, 2003), while simultaneously, educationalists have been variously charged with developing lifelong learning, learners, networks, communities and societies. As Nicholl and Edwards (2004) have highlighted, lifelong learning is a popular, powerful, persuasive contemporary political discourse. It is explicit in the policy agendas of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNESCO, the European Union, many developed and developing countries (Watson, 2003). Nicholl and Edwards (2004) point out that in engaging with the discourse of lifelong learning we can be seen to simultaneously involve ourselves in 'the spin of policy' (p.54). Yet, presenting and essentially reducing lifelong learning to spin is not advocated by Nicholl and Edwards, and nor is it our focus here. Rather, our interest is in exploring its productive potential in relation to curriculum analysis and development in physical education. We suggest that in directing attention to informal as well as formal learning and when employed to stress social and personal development alongside economic benefits, lifelong learning can be regarded as a discourse that openly challenges and arguably renders redundant much established thinking about curriculum and pedagogy. Indeed, David Hargreaves (2004) has suggested that adoption of the discourse requires us to

...re-think the purposes of education and re-work the language of curriculum...a new language of curriculum is a precondition of the innovation that will be required for lifelong learning, if the term is to mean more than continual opportunities for formal education. (p.14)

This paper is directly concerned with the re-thinking of curriculum and re-working of the language of curriculum in physical education. Our contention is that when explored and expressed in physical education, where concerns with lifelong learning are interlinked with those for lifelong activity and lifelong health (Penney & Jess, 2004; Penney, 2006a,b), the discourse of lifelong learning is instilled with complexity and potency that physical educators should be engaging with. We start with the premise that the successful realisation of any and all of the lifelong agendas that are associated with physical education requires that they consistently inform and represent a focal reference point for curriculum development in schools, from kindergarten through to the senior secondary school years. Following Hargreaves (2004) we assume 'that whether people are motivated to learn beyond the end of compulsory education, and have the capacity to do so, depends very much on what happens to them during school years' (p.1). Further, we suggest that experiences in and of physical education in schools have similar potential to encourage or discourage pursuit of learning in physical activity and sport contexts in parallel with schooling. We concur with Hargreaves' contention that getting so called 'learner-centred foundations' right is critical for individual, community and national well-being (in physical, social and economic terms) and stress the need for development of those foundations to acknowledge the 'lifewide as well as lifelong' (West, 2004, p.141) dimension of learning. Such a perspective recognises the many arenas in which teaching and learning occur and the many individuals contributing to learning.

It is the basis for reconceptualising 'curriculum' as extending beyond formal schooling in both a spatial and temporal sense.

This paper is developed with that reconceptualisation and reorientation of physical education curricula in mind. It arises amidst openly mixed emotions; of frustration in the light of curriculum seemingly fragmented and inconsistent in its orientation; of optimism in the light of developments demonstrating the scope for 'alternative' curriculum structures to be taken forward in practice; and of urgency and opportunity, driven by a recognition that certainly in Scotland, the immediate future may well prove to be a defining time for the subject and profession. Thus, we write as academics and researchers with particular interests in and for physical education policy and curriculum development. We concur with Hodgson and Spours (2006) in recognising prospective 'dangers in researchers crossing the line between 'analysis of policy' and 'analysis for policy' but also share their belief that 'they/we have a responsibility to play a role in the policy process as a whole' (p.691). We support their contention that a legitimate and important part of 'policy engagement' and research alliances with educational professionals (and we would argue, policy-makers) is the sharing of views about 'desired futures' (ibid., p.691). Accordingly, we identify the contemporary Scottish political and policy contexts as arguably ripe for exploitation by physical educationalists who share our interest and desire to pursue the expression of lifelong discourses in curriculum development. Our focus then turns to evidence of advances in the form of curriculum and pedagogical innovation. We specifically explore ways in which discourses of lifelong learning and lifelong participation have underpinned, informed and are finding expression in the physical education curriculum in the years that metaphorically, respectively represent the foundation (the early years and early primary phase), middle tier (upper primary and lower secondary years) and pinnacle (senior secondary phase) of the 'house of cards'. We critically reflect upon the relative fragility of the middle tier from a lifelong learning perspective, while also recalling that these curriculum years have long served to define the nature of physical education as internationally recognised and widely accepted. In recognition that the lower secondary years are also defining years in the lives and lifestyles of children, our discussion therefore addresses both the need and emerging opportunities for arguably long overdue curriculum reform in the lower secondary years of physical education in Scotland and internationally.

'Lifelong': Political appeal and policy rhetoric.

West (2004) has described lifelong learning as 'the flavour of the times, beloved of governments, policy makers and corporations' (p.138). The growth in its political and policy appeal has, however, been characterised by a lack of consistency in the meanings it generates. For the Lifelong Learning Foundation the vision is of 'an interconnected process of cumulative learning, extending from the 'cradle-to-grave' and having the learner at the heart of the process' (Brookes, 2004, p.vi). In Scotland, Ian Gray, speaking as Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, stressed that;

Learning - gaining new skills and new knowledge - is a lifetime opportunity and a lifetime achievement. Different types of learning help people to develop their potential in different ways...

(Forward to Scottish Executive, 2003a, p.5)

In the same year the European Lifelong Learning Initiative prompted an orientation towards application rather than merely acquisition of learning, and consideration of notions of empowerment *to* learn and *through* learning.

Lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances, and environments.

(*European Lifelong Learning Initiative*, cited in Watson, 2003, p.3)

A focus on application of acquired knowledge, values, skills and understanding seems particularly pertinent to physical education. It opens the door to the arenas of physical activity and health being acknowledged as an integral element of the policy context of physical education. As Penney (2006a,b) has discussed, lifelong discourses represent a clear basis for policy connection between learning, physical activity and health. Discourses of lifelong learning are being mobilised in various policy contexts to appeal to particular audiences (Nicholl & Edwards, 2004) such that physical education can potentially capitalise on the shared appeal and uptake of the discourse. Health policy, including that in Scotland (which is our focus here), can be seen as characterised by a notable concern with 'lifestyles' and the associated long term implications for health and the economy. In essence, lifelong learning can be seen to present physical education with a focus for enhanced curriculum coherency and secondly, notable connectivity between teaching and learning within physical education and that beyond it, in other contexts of physical activity and sport participation and the pursuit of health and wellbeing.

The scope and furthermore, political interest in these linkages from a curriculum perspective, were captured in the joint statement issued by the leaders of the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats, '*a partnership for a better Scotland*' (Scottish Executive, 2003b);

We will reform the school curriculum, to ensure that the school experience equips our young people with the skills and values they will need to live a healthy, productive and happy life in the modern world.

(p.28)

Elsewhere in the joint statement it was also noted that 'Sport, culture and the arts are integral to healthy communities and to developing self-confident individuals' (p.42).

In the discussion that follows we explore the adoption of lifelong learning as a focal discourse for curriculum development in physical education in looking specifically at recent and prospective future developments in Scotland. In pursuing this line of inquiry we are acutely aware of a need to move beyond popularist rhetoric and furthermore, of the considerable challenges inherent in seeking shifts in thinking, language, curriculum and pedagogical practices. In the forward to David Hargreaves' (2004) text, '*Learning for life. The foundations for lifelong learning*', Christopher Brookes (The Lifelong Learning Foundation) commented that 'Writing in 2004, it is difficult to find compelling evidence that there has been in England a significant and sustained move toward the creation of a coherent, engaging, accessible culture of lifelong learning' (p.v). Notably, Brookes went on to draw attention to the issues of the timing and pace of change' in relation to the creation of a culture of lifelong learning. He suggested that 'where the requirement is to introduce changes into a system as complex and deeply embedded as compulsory education in England, it is at least arguable that six years is a relatively short period' (p.vi). As commentators

internationally have variously illustrated, 'deeply embedded' is an apt phrase to use in considering physical education curriculum and pedagogy, particularly in the secondary years. Scotland is no exception in this respect. It is a context that presents a number of prospective barriers to widespread or coherent curriculum reform with lifelong learning as a core focus. In particular, it is notable that the history of curriculum development in physical education in Scotland has lacked a clear developmental logic. Various phases of the physical education curriculum (3-5 years, 5-14 years and the senior secondary years) have been created out of sequence and furthermore, independently in terms of their respective curriculum structures. In 2004 the Minister for Education and Young People and his Deputy openly acknowledged that this situation was far from unique to physical education. They recognised that various parts of the current curriculum in Scotland 'were developed separately and, taken together, they do not now provide the best basis for an excellent education for every child' (Peacock & Robson, in Scottish Executive, 2004, p.3).

The ad hoc sequence of development is evidenced in the publication dates of key documents for physical education in preschool (Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, 1999), in the 5-14 curriculum (Scottish Office Education Department, 1992) and for the standard grade (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1977) and higher grade curriculum (Scottish Examination Board, 1993). 'Alignment' of the respective phases and a clear developmental pathway have thus both been lacking. In addition (and again mirroring experiences internationally) a clear distinction has been retained between the primary and secondary curriculum contexts. 'Transition' from primary to secondary school physical education has, not surprisingly, been identified as a key issue to be addressed (HMI, 1995; SLANoPE, 2006). In 1995 Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) noted that 'only the most effective physical education departments fully recognized the attainment of pupils in physical education at P7 [primary year 7], immediately before entering S1 [secondary year 1]' (p14). Almost a decade on, the Scottish Local Authority Network of Physical Education (SLANoPE) (2006) stated that 'whilst there are pockets of excellent practice within our authorities, there is also recognition amongst the profession that the move from P7 to S1 is an area which requires development and improvement on a national scale' (p1). Furthermore, we note that lifelong learning has historically been a marginal discourse in physical education, overshadowed by discourses of performance in sport, particularly in the secondary curriculum. The dominant curriculum model has been the multi-activity model (Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000), such that the curriculum in both primary and secondary physical education has been characteristically compartmentalised, comprising 'two sessions per week activity blocks' with a 4-8 week duration and little evidence of connective discourses finding expression (HMI 1995; HMIE, 2001).

Alongside this emphasis of an activity orientated and openly fragmented curriculum, it is also important to note the marginal status of physical education as reflected in curriculum time allocations in schools (Littlefield et al, 2003; SEED, 2006). The average allocations of 1 hour and 10 minutes of the weekly curriculum to physical education in primary schools and 1 hour 40 minutes in secondary schools, during the 2004-2005 school year (SEED, 2006; see Appendix 1) was a telling reminder of physical education's marginal status in the curriculum.

With this clearly challenging backdrop, we therefore turn attention to recent endeavours to disrupt long established curriculum contexts and foreground discourses of lifelong learning in curriculum development in physical education in Scotland. We present Scotland as a political and policy context which at the current time presents possibilities for perhaps unrivalled coherence in physical education curriculum reform from a lifelong perspective.

Changes in policy and developments in practice: establishing and maintaining lifelong agendas in and through the physical education curriculum.

We have already pointed to the prominence of lifelong learning as a policy discourse in Scotland and more specifically, for curriculum reform. Given the diverse ways in which lifelong learning is being expressed internationally, it is important to acknowledge the particular orientation that has been identified as that to be pursued in Scotland. The *Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland* clarified that;

Lifelong learning policy in Scotland is about personal fulfilment and enterprise; employability and adaptability; active citizenship and social inclusion...Lifelong learning encompasses the whole range of learning: formal and informal learning, workplace learning, and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in day-to-day experiences.

(Scottish Executive, 2003a, p.7)

The interest in lifelong learning is openly tied to social as well as economic agendas and is specifically recognised for its potential to contribute to 'improved health and wellbeing' (Scottish Executive, 2003, p.7). The stated vision for lifelong learning in Scotland has been identified as:

The best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will strengthen Scotland's economy and society.

(Scottish Executive, 2003a, p.6)

Notably for educationalists, the Scottish Executive stressed;

We want lifelong learning to be focused on delivering what learners want and need. To do this, learning providers must continue to work out new ways to design, deliver and evaluate learning which meets learners' needs. It is particularly important that they deliver learning in ways that helps learners to make transitions between learning opportunities...

(p.54)

While subsequent expansion in the policy document has a tendency to portray transition as a matter to be considered primarily in relation to learning opportunities and decisions upon leaving school and in later life, we contend that the comments above are equally pertinent in considering school curricula and specifically, physical education curricula. Further, it is notable that 'Learning for life', namely 'to equip pupils with the initial skills, attitudes and outlook to prosper in a changing world and to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and ambition' is a stated national priority for education (Scottish Executive, 2005, p.12). We suggest that this aim and the five goals for a lifelong learning society identified in Scotland can be seen to present educationalists with a challenging yet potentially empowering framework for curriculum development. For physical education, we see the lifelong policy discourse and five goals below as offering notable potential for productive curriculum renewal.

- A Scotland where people have the confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills they need to participate in economic, social and civic life;
- A Scotland where people demand and providers deliver a high quality learning experience;

- A Scotland where people's knowledge and skills are recognised, used and developed to best effect in their workplace;
- A Scotland where people are given the information, guidance and support they need to make effective learning decisions and transitions;
- A Scotland where people have the chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current circumstances.

(Scottish Executive, 2003a, p.6)

In important respects, the curriculum review group's report '*a curriculum for excellence*' (Scottish Executive, 2004a) can be seen to support our sentiments regarding the curriculum significance and potential of lifelong learning as a policy discourse. In fully endorsing the review group's work, the Minister for Education and Young People and his deputy identified the document as having 'profound implications for what is learnt, how it is taught and what is assessed' (Peacock & Robson, in Scottish Executive, 2004a, p.3). They added that it would 'provide an important impetus to achieving our vision for children and young people, that all children and young people should be valued by being safe, nurtured, achieving, *healthy, active*, included, respected and responsible' (ibid., p.3, our emphasis), and reaffirmed clear agendas for curriculum reform arising from the review group's work. Notably for physical education, these included commitments to a coherent 3-18 curriculum; to 'greater choice and opportunity, earlier, for young people' reflecting a concern to enable realisation of individual talent and enhance engagement; to 'young people achieving the broad outcomes that we look for from school education, both through subject teaching and more cross-subject activity'; and 'more space for sport, music, dance, drama, art, learning about health, sustainable development and enterprise, and other activities that broaden the life experiences – and life chances – of young people' (ibid., p.4).

Undoubtedly, the full significance of these policy developments from a physical education curriculum perspective is only evident when the developments are located within a broader policy context, that is, one that embraces the other policy arenas which impact upon physical education and with which it seeks to connect. In this respect, it is notable that 'Sport 21' the national strategy for sport in Scotland 2003-2007 (sportscotland, 2003) linked sport to improvement in 'physical and mental health and well-being, including basic movement patterns, co-ordination and skill', and the promotion and enhancement of education and lifelong learning (sportscotland, 2003, p.8). The strategy established development targets for sport in Scotland directly aligned with recognition of 'the need to establish and maintain healthy, active lifestyles from early life' and the prospective significance of teenage and early adult years as defining times for participation and health-related behaviour patterns. Further, the strategy reaffirmed the policy appeal and application of lifelong learning, participation and health discourses in reminding readers that;

..health is a capacity for living, not just merely the absence of disease. The social environment and personal behaviour, including physical activity, contribute to a healthy life. The policy focus on health improvement reflects a broader desire, not just for long life with minimal disease, but also good physical, mental and social functioning allied to a sense of well-being.

(sportscotland, 2003, p.38)

Finally, a key contribution to the curriculum policy landscape for physical education in Scotland came in the form of *The Report of the Review Group on Physical Education* (Scottish Executive, 2004b). The Review Group arose directly from the

recommendations of the Physical Activity Task Force (Scottish Executive, 2003c) and has been described as comprising;

a range of enthusiastic, committed and knowledgeable individuals from a variety of organisations and backgrounds with a common bond - a deep belief in the importance of PE in schools as a core activity linked to healthy lifestyles, lifelong learning, improved health, an inclusive society and yes, success in sport at a national level would be very nice!

(O'Neill in Scottish Executive, 2004b, p.3)

The group openly acknowledged the scope and complexity of the policy and political significance of physical education. In its report the group endeavoured to make clear policy linkages. The 'background and context' commentary strategically identified the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000*, as presenting a 'foundation for the case for improvements in physical education', drawing attention to the duty that the act placed on education authorities, 'to provide an education aimed at developing the personality, talents, mental and physical abilities of the individual to their fullest potential' (Scottish Executive, 2004b, p.9). Physical Education was identified as having the potential to make a key contribution to the *Learning for Life National Priority 5* (namely to equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition). Attention was also drawn to the recognition in 'Sport 21' that 'quality physical education – which emphasises the movement, knowledge and behavioural skills for physical activity throughout people's lifetimes – would have a positive impact on health' (ibid.,p.11). Presenting 'the case for change' the report stated that

The physical education curriculum can make a major contribution towards improving the health and wellbeing of young people, support them in making good choices in life and setting in place good habits which they can take with them into adulthood.

(Scottish Executive, 2004b, p.17)

The Review Group identified improving the curriculum, supporting teachers and improving facilities as the prospective key drivers of change and recommended action. They 'reached the conclusion that the greatest impact in terms of potential outcomes was to be gained through improvements in the curriculum' (ibid.,p.27) and effectively advocated 'whole scale reform' in stating that 'a review of guidelines for physical education at all stages should be considered a priority area' (ibid.,p.27). It was explained that;

The Group takes the view that early education, in pre-school and primary school should focus on the development and enhancement of skills, as well as an exploration of the connection between physical activity, health and wellbeing. Secondary provision should build on that, promoting more independent involvement in physical activity and widening the range of activities to provide more choice. Without the basic movement skills, pupils will be excluded from participation in many activities, or may find their enjoyment compromised. Therefore, the development of skills is fundamental to continuing involvement and full participation in physical education.

(Scottish Executive, 2004b, p.27)

In the conclusion to the report, policy linkages were again reaffirmed and political and professional audiences left in no doubt about the driving agenda:

The recommendations are about providing the best opportunities for our young people to be involved in physical education, giving them the skills and the inclination to be active for life. We cannot force young people to be active. We can, however, help them to enjoy being active and so ensure that they do it in life and for life.

(Scottish Executive, 2004b, p.35)

In June 2004 the Minister for Education and Young People fully endorsed the Review Group's recommendations and acknowledged that physical education constituted 'an aspect of the curriculum which, exceptionally, needs greater priority to support the health and well-being of young people' and that furthermore, should 'build the foundations for healthy and active lifestyles at an early age' (Peacock cited in Jess, 2004a, p.6).

In summary, recent policy developments spanning education, sport and health in Scotland can be seen as integral aspects of an 'intersecting' and 'shifting' 'discursive political terrain' (Fataar, 2006) that serves to set a particular 'policy trajectory' (ibid, 2006) for physical education curriculum. The shifting nature has been vividly characterised with the decision in 2006 to move physical education from the Expressive Arts strand of the 'curriculum for excellence' into Health and Well-being, a curricular area now considered a core aspect of the new curriculum together with literacy and numeracy (Scottish Executive, 2006). Below, we therefore explore the extent to which a trajectory reflecting the political and policy prominence of lifelong learning has and may in the future be pursued in physical education in Scotland.

Laying lifelong foundations: The Early Years and Basic Moves

Staff at the University of Edinburgh have been proactive in seeking to exploit the policy context described above. They have established a longitudinal project to create a 'developmental' physical education programme which positions the 3-18 school curriculum as the foundation of lifelong and hub of lifewide physical education (see Jess, 2003; Jess & Collins, 2003; Jess et al., 2004). With an initial focus on physical education for the early years of schooling, the '*Basic Moves*' programme has adapted a conceptualisation of lifelong physical activity (LLPA) and lifelong learning principles presented by Penney and Jess (2004) as the reference point for curriculum reform. LLPA in the Scottish physical education curriculum reform is thus taken as comprising 'four interrelated and ever-changing 'activity' dimensions and one 'supporting' dimension' (Jess, 2004b, p.3):

- **Functional Physical Activity (FPA)**
In response to demands of everyday living, i.e. work and home life;
 - **Recreational Physical Activity (RPA)**
Physical leisure pursuits, which, for many, are socially-orientated;
 - **Health-related Physical Activity (HRPA)**
Concerned with fitness, well-being and/or rehabilitation;
 - **Performance-related Physical Activity (PRPA)**
Concerned with self-improvement and/or success in performance environments;
 - **Support Physical Activity (SPA)**
The role we play to support others' pursuit of LLPA.
- (Penney & Jess, 2004; Jess, 2004b)

Further, the program is underpinned by a set of principles for curriculum development; namely that the physical education curriculum provision must be:

- Developmentally appropriate in relation to psychomotor, cognitive, social and emotional development;
- Inclusive, ensuring all children have opportunities to learn and benefit from their experiences;
- 'Connective' and 'integrated', with a focus on coherence in learning experiences *within* physical education and *between* it and learning *beyond schools*, acknowledging and involving parents and others as members of a child's learning network and community.

(see Penney & Jess, 2004; Jess 2004b)

Adopting these principles, the Basic Moves programme has been designed 'to help all children develop their basic movement competence through the delivery of developmentally appropriate experiences by different groups of adults in a number of different settings (Jess, 2004b, p.15). 'Basic Movement Competence' is defined 'as the ability to consistently perform basic movements in a technically mature, adaptable and creative manner, **and** to apply these basic movements effectively in increasingly more complex contexts' (ibid., p.15, original emphasis).

Basic Moves are movements that 'underpin the physical activities of an active life' and are presented in three categories: travelling movements; object control movements; and balance movements (Jess, 2004b). In each case, the aim of practical learning experiences is to enable progressive development in relation to *technical performance, adaptability and creativity*. The former involves introduction of/to the movement; assessment for teaching and learning; extension to the next level of technical complexity; consolidation of technical features; and application (ibid.). The latter two elements reflect the need for children to be able to adapt to varying situational demands and to be creative in order 'to produce movement responses that are original, unexpected or novel' (ibid., p.32). Three movement concepts are identified as facilitating the development of adaptability and creativity:

- ⇒ space (where the body moves)
- ⇒ effort (how the body moves, in terms of speed, force and flow of movements)
- ⇒ relationships (with whom or what the body moves)

(Jess, 2004b)

The Basic Moves programme incorporates tasks and activities that are explicitly designed to develop children's technical performance, adaptability and creativity and increasingly, promote awareness of the key linkages between these three dimensions of movement competence. Session and programme guidance has been developed to inform curriculum design and teaching. Attention is deliberately drawn to notable contrasts if one compares a Basic Moves programme with established curriculum thinking and planning in physical education. For example, it is emphasised that the Basic Moves programmes

...are unlikely to be successful if they are included as short five- or six-week 'block' programmes. The need to be a long-term, ongoing development...basic Moves programmes offer children the opportunity to perform, consolidate and often revisit different movements in many different contexts.

(Jess, 2004b, p.92)

Significantly, they also 'integrate school PE, extra-curricular clubs, community activities and play activities' (ibid., p.95).

Amidst clearly positive initial development of Basic Moves in Scotland, we remain acutely aware that as children progress through the primary years, the issue to consider is whether and how the commitment to lifelong learning principles can be maintained in curriculum and pedagogy of physical education. Soon enough, established perceptions relating to the form and focus that physical education in a secondary school context will take seem destined to come into play, shaping both teacher and student visions and expectations. The upper primary and lower secondary years emerge as critical if the lifelong directions set are to be reaffirmed and advanced. Yet it is also important to acknowledge that the curriculum pressures felt in these years are certainly not uni-directional in nature. While a developmental approach may seem in many respects the most appropriate to consider in curriculum development, the undeniable reality is that what is on the horizon, in the form of *senior secondary school* curricula, has a significant influence upon the curriculum in preceding years. Thus, in considering the need and potential for a lifelong orientation to be retained through the upper primary and particularly, lower secondary years, it is appropriate to first look at the senior secondary curricula which teachers and students are working towards.

Looking ahead. Physical Education in the senior secondary years

In considering the physical education in the senior secondary years as an influence upon curriculum thinking and practices throughout the secondary years, we focus quite deliberately on the 'high stakes' certificate courses in Scotland and specifically, the Higher Still Physical Education (HSPE). In relation to our concern to see lifelong learning discourses informing curriculum development, we see the attention given in the HSPE and in comparable developments elsewhere (Macdonald & Brooker, 1997; Penney & Kirk, 1998) to development of 'integration' between traditionally separated theoretical and practical aspects of senior secondary physical education courses as particularly notable. Thorburn and Collins (2003) explained that certificate physical education courses in Scotland since 1988 have featured 'practical experiential rationales, in which developing levels of physical ability link to both the process of analysing performance as well as to the content of what is to be known and understood within specific performance-related concepts' (p.190). In this respect the certificate physical education courses appear to align well with Hargreaves' (2004) emphasis (from a lifelong learning perspective) that knowledge, skills and understanding need to be firmly linked as a basis for continued learning.

Much knowledge – but by no means all – that is not linked in some way to skills and understanding will tend to be forgotten over time, whereas skills and understanding become more important than ever in the age of lifelong learning, since they often underpin later learning, including the acquisition of new knowledge, some of which changes rapidly in the modern world.

(Hargreaves, 2004, p.17)

In Scotland and internationally in senior secondary physical education, there appears to be a strong commitment to exploring ways in which the dynamic relationship knowledge, skills and understanding can be embedded in curriculum requirements, learning experiences and assessment tasks that will be deemed 'authentic' from the learner/learning perspective. In 'authenticity' we have a discourse clearly aligned with 'lifewide' as well as 'lifelong' learning and participation, and that prompts curriculum linkages between school and non-school, formal and informal learning. We also have a discourse that has encouraged engagement with inclusivity in senior secondary physical education.

'Authenticity' has increasingly been critiqued in terms of personal relevance, such that the development of 'personalised' learning experiences has been regarded as critical to student engagement and learning but also, a notable pedagogic challenge for teachers (Penney & Kirk, 1998; Thorburn & Collins, 2006). Through reflections about performance, senior secondary students in Scotland are expected to review the qualities inherent in performance and define their future learning goals. In this way, constructive teaching environments based on a personalised accounts of students lived experience (supported by data) links to relevant underpinning content knowledge in ways which could feasibly develop the capacity for reflective illumination about performance. Currently, however, this potential appears largely unfulfilled (Thorburn & Collins, 2003) and prospectively dependent upon professional development together with greater recognition of the potential role of performance appreciation in enhancing student engagement, attainment and connections between school and non-school contexts of learning and participation.

In important respects, wider policy developments can be seen to be prompting such recognition. In Scotland and internationally the significance of the senior secondary years from a lifelong learning perspective is being acknowledged in political statements and in policy. Direct prompts for the senior secondary curriculum to be underpinned by discourses of lifelong learning that are instilled with commitments to inclusion and equity, have been forthcoming in various contexts of policy development. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2006) recently stated that 'The challenge for schools and education agencies responsible for student learning in the final years of school is to provide all young people with the best possible preparation for a range of post-school destinations' (p.1). The ACER report went on to clarify the 'challenges in senior secondary schooling' thus:

...increasing the proportion of the age cohort participating in the final years of school; meeting the diverse talents, needs and interests of students now involved in this phase of schooling; providing multiple pathways to higher education, training and work; ensuring that students develop a range of generic skills necessary for life and work beyond school; and providing curricula and learning opportunities of the highest standards internationally. A further challenge is to address all of these objectives simultaneously... (p.3)

From a physical education perspective, Penney (2006a) has provided a clear prompt for curriculum thinking and planning in the senior secondary years to embrace multiple lifelong agendas. Penney (2006a) commented that the senior secondary years;

...represent a time when the challenge of retaining student involvement and interest in physical education, physical activity and sport is arguably at its height. They are years that are openly acknowledged as 'high stakes' in academic and career terms. Yet they are also high stakes in relation to the prospects of young people sustaining participation and consolidating a 'healthy interest' in physical activity and sport. It is a time at which feelings generated from one's experiences in HPE settings - of 'success' and 'failure', of belonging, of having a legitimate place or in contrast, of having no place in physical activity and sport- will directly shape life choices and chances for *learning*, for *participation in physical activity and sport* and for *health*.

(p.23, original emphasis)

Yet we remain acutely aware that in Scotland and perhaps also in many other countries, labels of success, failure and/or belonging may already be firmly

established from many students' perspectives, having proceeded through a lower secondary physical education curriculum in which discourses of lifelong learning lack visibility. In the final part of our discussion we therefore direct attention back to a phase that metaphorically has every potential to secure or alternatively bring down the house of cards.

A structural flaw? Physical Education in the lower secondary years.

The preceding discussion has highlighted the potential for notably productive pressures (from the perspective of curriculum development informed by and focusing upon lifelong discourses) to simultaneously come to bear upon the lower secondary years from 'below' and 'above'. The emerging context is arguably one in which a lower secondary physical education curriculum adopting the multi-activity form and focus and featuring invariably fragmented learning experiences, stands out as lacking alignment with proximal developments and discourses. Yet as emphasised in our introduction, it is in the lower secondary years that internationally, the multi-activity model seems most entrenched and furthermore, remains representative of many political and public understandings of what constitutes a physical education curriculum. The limited extent to which the dominant, normalised physical education curriculum in the lower secondary years can be deemed to align with interests in lifelong learning, physical activity and/or health seems rarely acknowledged.

In this context, it is encouraging to report moves in Scotland to continue the momentum for curriculum reform driven by discourses of lifelong learning, physical activity and health, into reform of physical education in the upper primary and lower secondary years. Utilising the conceptualisations that have underpinned the development of Basic Moves, the staff at the University of Edinburgh have posed challenging questions as a starting point for this next, undeniably very significant and perhaps most challenging phase of reform. In pointing to the need to consider whether changes designed to support lifelong learning can be made 'in ways that nevertheless maintain a degree of continuity and coherence with past policies' Hargreaves (2004, p.91) hits upon an issue that may yet prove highly problematic for physical education curriculum development in Scotland.

Notably, developments in the upper primary and lower secondary years have been premised by questions that directly disrupt established understandings and assumptions about physical education curriculum particularly in the secondary years. Instead of specific activities, what core learning or core learning experiences could potentially connect a range of physical education experiences in these curriculum years?; and what learning contexts are most appropriate for children in the upper primary and lower secondary years to apply this core learning to continue and enhance their development of a foundation for lifelong learning, participation and health? Identifying core psychomotor, cognitive and affective learning that the upper primary / lower secondary child not only needs to develop but is also able to engage with in order to effectively participate in the range of more complex physical activities they currently encounter and will increasingly come across in the future, has therefore been a major focus of the 'curriculum re-thinking'.

The factors identified in table 1 below are seen to have the potential to help children and teachers identify crucial connections between different elements of the physical education experience. Far from being adequately addressed in the established curriculum, we would argue that the core learning identified has traditionally been notably marginalised amidst activity specific experiences. A model of provision that moves away from the traditional activity block model and replaces it with parallel

'core' and applied' sessions, is currently being piloted. The focus is upon ensuring that the learning experiences in the core session are both connected with and easily transferred to the application session, and that applications are 'authentic' such that the relevance of the core learning is apparent and appreciated.

Core Learning	
Psychomotor (Physical Skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Movement Combinations like catching and throwing; running and turning • Health-related Components: aerobic, strength, flexibility etc • Performance-related Components: Speed, strength, agility etc • Physical activity lifestyle: tracking
Cognitive (Knowledge and Understanding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce lifelong physical activity dimensions • Understanding adaptability & creativity • Principles of performance and practice • Physical Activity Health issues • Behavioural and decision making skills • Importance of physical play
Affective (Social and emotional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and team behaviours • Task and ego behaviours • Self-determination • Cooperation/competition • Winning/losing • Etiquette

Table 1: Examples of core learning in upper primary / lower secondary physical education

The pilot developments are acknowledged as presenting notable challenges for the curriculum developers and teachers in both the primary and secondary phases. Although the content of the programme is designed to developmentally cross the primary/secondary divide, it cannot ensure that children will be offered progressive physical education learning experiences, particularly as they move from generalist to specialist provision (HMI, 1995). Two recent initiatives are, however, attempting to address this long standing transitional issue. First, the Scottish Executive has commissioned the University of Edinburgh to develop and deliver a two year continuing professional development (CPD) postgraduate certificate in 3-14 physical education. In the first phase of this project (from 2006-2009) some 200 fully registered primary classroom teachers will have the opportunity to not only develop a specialism in physical education but to also become early secondary school physical education teachers. This opportunity for primary teachers in Scotland creates a context for them to teach physical education across the primary/secondary divide. Second, the University is also piloting the upper primary / lower secondary programme with a number of secondary specialist teachers who will then work in their feeder primary schools to facilitate the smooth transition of the programme across the transitional divide. Prompts and support for curriculum reform in what is acknowledged as a curriculum arena notably resistant to change, are thus being applied from various directions. Time will tell whether the programmes result in discourses of lifelong learning, physical activity and health having a notably enhanced status and profile not merely in policy, but in the enacted curriculum and pedagogic practices in physical education in Scotland.

Conclusion

In concluding it is important to reaffirm the need for critical engagement with widely popularised discourses with recognised political appeal. Albeit with reference to a different national context and phase of life (adult learning) Fejas (2006) has provided a timely reminder that;

...one needs to question the narratives of lifelong learning and try to understand what kinds of subjects are intended as the product, and what kinds of exclusionary practices this creates. How can lifelong learning be rephrased as a way of avoiding exclusionary practices? Is such a narrative possible?

(p.713)

In the curriculum developments in Scotland that this paper has focused attention upon, we contend that notable efforts are being made to develop such a narrative. We retain the view that the political appeal of lifelong discourses signals arguably unprecedented discursive possibilities for curriculum reform in physical education. The particular policy context in Scotland is one in which opportunities to pursue those possibilities are being taken up by researchers committed, as the Physical Education Review Group (Scottish Executive, 2004b), to the development of curricula that is directed towards enhancing the lives and life chances of all Scottish children. Yet it is also pertinent to note that with opportunities come recognisable risks. In choosing to take up lifelong discourses (and the funding being attached to them) the onus will be on physical education in Scotland to demonstrate the expression of the discourses not merely in curriculum, but also in the lives and lifestyles of young people in Scotland.

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APPENDIX 1

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