

**Philosophies, Ideologies and the Practice of Physical Education.  
Making Sense of the Everyday 'Philosophies' of Physical Education Teachers from  
a Sociological Perspective.**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester**

**by**

**Ken Green**

**Centre for Research into Sport and Society  
University of Leicester**

**2000**

# Contents

	Acknowledgements	page ii
	Abstract	page iii
Chapter 1	Introduction	page 1
Chapter 2	Figurational Sociology and the Sociology of Knowledge	page 18
Chapter 3	Methodology	page 47
Chapter 4	Ideological and Philosophical Themes in Physical Education	page 74
Chapter 5	The Everyday 'Philosophies' of Physical Education Teachers	page 114
Chapter 6	Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: The Personal Dimension	page 186
Chapter 7	Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: The Local Dimension	page 217
Chapter 8	Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: The National Dimension	page 265
Chapter 9	Conclusion	page 336
	References	page 378

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Ivan Waddington who, as supervisor, has been a constant source of advice and inspiration. My thanks also go to the tutors and staff at the Centre for Research into Sport and Society for their unfailing support and good humour. They have been a joy to work with. I must also thank Anita Williams for her invaluable assistance in the transcribing of interview data as well as providing a jocular running commentary on the work. Last, but by no means least, my grateful thanks are also due to the teachers who gave of their time so freely, and in doing so, made the study possible.

## Abstract

This thesis examines what are referred to as the 'philosophies' of physical education (PE) teachers from a sociological perspective. It is primarily concerned with the ideas about PE held by teachers who have the practical task of teaching PE within schools. The study deploys a qualitative methodology grounded in a figurational perspective on the sociology of knowledge. It analyses data from semi-structured interviews conducted with 35 PE teachers at various occupational levels within PE departments in 17 secondary schools in the north-west of England, during June and July, 1998.

In the main, teachers' 'philosophies' revolved around a number of recognisable categories of meaning in terms of the ideological themes of 'sport', 'health', 'academic value' and, albeit to a lesser extent, 'education for leisure'. One leitmotif, in particular, emerged from the interview data and that was an overriding concern, on the part of the teachers in the study, with pupils' 'enjoyment' of PE.

In order to understand the socio-genesis of PE teachers' everyday or aphoristic 'philosophies' and, to a lesser extent, their professed practices, the study focused upon the personal, local and national dimensions of the figurations in which PE teachers were involved in an attempt to identify the more salient influences on the development of their 'philosophies' of PE. These features included the biographical experiences that provide the foundation for teachers' habituses, the day-to-day constraints of classroom management, the expectations of significant others (such as headteachers and parents) as well as the socio-political climate and developments internal (e.g. the desire for professional status) and external (government legislation and policy developments) to the profession. It was apparent that the teachers had a distinctive view of their subject. They brought to their teaching a passion for sport, combined with a range of pragmatic concerns (e.g. regarding class management and the requirements of the National Curriculum for Physical Education); the former led them to place considerable emphasis, in particular, upon enjoyment (particularly of sport) as a central plank of their 'philosophies'. In addition, it was noticeable that, notwithstanding the emergence of a variety of more or less prominent ideologies within the subject-community over the last decade or so (and particularly an ideology of health), PE teachers' 'philosophies' continued to be dominated by a sporting ideology.

By exploring the social relationships in which PE teachers are involved the study takes tentative steps towards a more adequate understanding of the socio-genesis of PE teachers' 'philosophies'. It is argued that if we wish to understand teachers' perceptions regarding the nature and purposes of PE, as well as their preferred practices, then we must study them not as abstract philosophical systems of ideas, but rather as practical, everyday 'philosophies' which provide practical guides to action as well as a justification for those actions.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In this study I intend to examine from a sociological perspective what I will refer to as the 'philosophies'<sup>1</sup> of physical education (PE) teachers; that is to say, the views of PE teachers on the nature and purposes of their subject. 'Usually', according to Kirk (1990: 43), 'debates over the content and teaching methods of physical education are contained within the profession'. However, whilst it may be true to say that matters to do with teaching pedagogy continue - for the most part - to be conducted largely within the subject-community, content and 'philosophies' are another matter. 'In the latter half of the 1980s', Kirk (1990: 43) observed, PE programmes in British schools were 'the subject of a vociferous public debate'. The relatively high public profile that PE attained in the 1980s has not substantially diminished in the late-1990s. Nearly two decades on, the role of school PE continues to excite considerable interest beyond the boundaries of the subject-community (e.g. Carvel, 1999; Godfrey and Holtham, 1999). For the most part, such interest has continued to revolve around the place of sport (and particularly 'traditional' team games) in PE and the extent to which allegedly 'progressive' PE teachers are deemed to have been guilty of 'an insidious undermining of competitive sport in schools' (Kirk, 1990: 43).

It is perhaps not surprising that the nature and purposes of school PE are often a source of contestation between physical educationalists and other interested parties (such as sports' governing bodies, coaches, government officials and parents), particularly in terms of how the latter perceive the proper aims of the former. Indeed, the history of PE appears to have been a history of struggle over particular definitions of what ought to count as PE

(Evans, 1992; Kirk, 1992a, 1992b). What may seem more surprising is the variety and range of justifications for PE (e.g. health promotion, character development, sports performance) within the subject-community itself. Particularly since the Second World War (WWII), according to Kirk (1992b: 224), PE has been 'a veritable battleground over attempts to define the subject ... with the profession riven by acrimonious debate'.

In 1988, a well-established educational philosopher argued that the subject-community of PE (incorporating academics, teacher-trainers and teachers themselves) needed a clear, consensual view of its nature and purposes:

we need a justification ... to tell ourselves what we think we are (or should be) about. If we are not clear about our values and direction, we need to think again about our justification (Parry, 1988: 108).

In 1990, Alderson and Crutchley identified what they referred to as a 'lack of conceptual clarity' among the PE profession and commented that 'there appears to be a professional consensus neither as to what being "physically educated" really means nor as to how that state is best achieved' (p. 40). They added: 'the notion of the physically educated person is vaguely defined' (p. 40) and concluded that 'there is, in large measure, a simple belief that involving children in a selection of physical activities will achieve valuable educational ends' (p. 38). Notwithstanding the various 'calls to arms' in the hope of establishing a clear and consensual conceptualisation of PE, the search has continued largely unattenuated - a point illustrated in a recent debate between several prominent figures in PE philosophy (Carr, 1997; McNamee, 1998; Parry, 1998; Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997).

Alderson and Crutchley (1990) were not alone among academics, around the turn of the decade, in hoping, even expecting, that the imminent arrival of the

National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) would offer the PE profession:

the opportunity to undertake a reappraisal, to make coherent statements about the nature of the subject and its concept of the physically educated person who should emerge from the curriculum at 16+ (Alderson and Crutchley, 1990: 39).

It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the very existence of a perceived need to establish a consensual justification in order, as Parry (1988: 108) put it, 'to defend and promote our subject', provided confirmation that PE had not achieved the kind of status and prominence in secondary school curricula enjoyed by other, more established, subjects. Indeed, even the emergence of the NCPE (with its lengthy explanatory outline of the nature of PE - Department of Education and Science/The Welsh Office (DES/WO), 1991) failed to establish a definitive or consensual definition. Nor did the official promise of a period of relative stability from further change (following the introduction of the revised NCPE in 1995) bring to an end debate about the nature and purposes of PE. If anything, NCPE appears to have stimulated, rather than subdued, debate in some quarters, especially among academics in the subject-community (e.g. Almond, 1996; Carr, 1997; Laker, 1996a, 1996b; Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). That the issue of definition has a global dimension is reflected in Alexander, Taggart and Thorpe's (1996: 28) reference to the 'confusion between what is physical education, what is sport education and what is school sport' which they claim is apparent in Australia, as well as Hardman's (1998) observation that, world-wide, PE appears to be undergoing 'reconstruction' and 'redefinition'.

In a 1996 publication, entitled *New Directions in Physical Education: Change and Innovation*, a prominent figure in PE teacher-training reflected upon the revised version of the NCPE implemented in two stages (1995 and 1996) and the



accompanying promise from the DfEE of a five year moratorium on further change (Almond, 1996). Almond (1996: 189) asked the rhetorical question:

Does this mean time for consolidation and relief from the numerous changes of recent years? Or does it give us the *opportunity to reflect critically on the aspirations that guide our actions in schools and attempt to match them with the reality of current practice?* (emphasis added).

Seemingly aware of the likely gap between the ideal and the reality, Almond concluded that it was, after all, a time for reflection in the belief that:

the *practical concerns* of the past few years have dominated our thoughts and *left us bereft of a clear direction* in which to pursue the richness and potential of PE for every child (1996: 189; emphases added).

In light of one of the themes of this thesis - the 'gap' between the *philosophy* of PE and the *practice* of PE - it is worth noting Almond's acknowledgement of the distance between philosophical and practical concerns. It is also noteworthy that despite such awareness, Almond was intent, like Parry (1988) before him, on re-establishing the putative place of philosophical reflection in the subject-community of PE.

The supposedly 'proper' aim or aims of PE evidently remains a prominent issue at the level of academic philosophising (e.g. Carr, 1997; Laker, 1996a, 1996b; McNamee, 1998; Parry, 1998; Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). In an often implicit, and occasionally explicit, form it is equally prominent at the level of PE teacher-training and pedagogy (e.g. Almond, 1996; Cale, forthcoming; Fisher, 1996; Fox, 1996; Penney and Harris, 1997). However, at the level of practice - that is to say, with the PE teacher him- or herself - it appears to be the case that everyday concerns have far less to do with philosophical debate regarding the role of PE than with practical matters related to the professional

struggle, for example, for legitimacy, resources, power and status (Hardman, 1998). Such apparent differences - between those theorising and those practising PE - make it clear that the nature and purposes of the subject are a legitimate area of interest for empirical sociological investigation as well as theoretical philosophical exploration. For, whilst sociologists cannot say what PE teachers *ought* to be doing, they can analyse and seek to understand why they think what they think and do what they do, as well as their professional debates and ideologies, and the relationship between these and the 'philosophies' (in the aphoristic sense) held by PE teachers.

This is important for several reasons. Firstly, the absence of such an understanding will inevitably mean that PE teachers, teacher trainers, academics, government ministers and other groups within what Houlihan (1991) refers to as the 'policy community' of PE, will be likely to 'misunderstand and talk past one another' (Wirth, 1960: xxvi). Secondly, the share of resources devoted to particular conceptions of PE will reflect the degree of power maintained by particular groups favouring particular conceptions.

### Developing a sociological interest

Attempts (amongst philosophers in particular) to arrive at an agreed conceptualisation of PE characterised the context in which I undertook a degree in PE and subsequently went on to do a Masters degree in Education - specialising in philosophy and PE under one of the architects of the liberal analytical tradition, Robert Dearden. As a future PE teacher, I was confronted by the prevailing philosophical view of education, and thus PE, as essentially academic<sup>2</sup>. It was apparent to me as a teacher, however, that PE in practice was frequently far removed from PE in theory: it was about doing *sport*, about *playing* sport. It was this recognition and this *involvement* that made me



particularly receptive to relatively recent developments in educational philosophy which offered an alternative justification for PE (in the form of a 'valued cultural practice').

In this manner, philosophical questions about the nature and purposes of PE have been a central interest throughout my career. What are PE teachers *thinking* about when they design curricula? How do they *justify* what they are doing with children in the name of PE? The more I reflected on these issues, the more I noticed the hiatus between the philosophy of PE, as articulated by academic philosophers (and, albeit perhaps to a lesser extent, teacher-trainers), and PE as taught in a practical way by PE teachers; an ostensible 'gap' between theory and practice memorably caricatured in the portrayal of a PE teacher in the film *Kes*.

In recent years the work of Evans (1990b, 1992) among others (Evans and Davies, 1986; Evans and Williams, 1989; Evans, Davies and Penney, 1996; Kirk, 1992a, 1992b; Kirk and Tinning, 1990; McNamee, 1998) has gradually encouraged me towards a more properly sociological - rather than philosophical - conception of the problem outlined above. Throughout my teaching career in PE, I had been able to make little sense of the range of common-sense - if one were to be unkind one might even say half-baked - 'philosophies' held by PE teachers with regard to the nature and purposes of PE; 'philosophies' which, as noted above, appeared to have little in common with the more formally articulated views of academic philosophers. My initial inclination, as I set about researching the area, had been to establish the more prominent and competing academic conceptions of the nature of PE (that is, the 'standard' and the 'valued cultural practice' conceptions), to note the distance between these academic philosophies on the one hand and the common-sense ideas of PE teachers on the other, and to assume that PE

teachers either could not, or would not, grasp these more academic philosophies, let alone try to implement them. By adopting such an approach to making sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies', I became increasingly concerned with academic PE philosophy itself; I focused entirely on the philosophical ideas themselves, abstracted from their social context, with the result that people (i.e. the PE teachers themselves) 'disappeared'. I was, in effect, trying to study the relationships between different sets of ideas almost as if ideas themselves could somehow interact with and influence other ideas; as if, as Dunning (1996: 205) has put it, 'discourses ... could be actors'.

This tendency among philosophers - a tendency which I was myself following - towards the separation of ideas from the people who hold them is, as Elias (1993: 51) has noted, somewhat 'artificial, unnecessary and deceptive'. I had in effect been seeking to understand 'philosophies' as though they were disembodied sets of ideas which could be understood without reference to the social lives of the people who generated and held those ideas. Slowly, I came to the conclusion that one cannot explain the character of teachers' 'philosophies' of PE simply - or even primarily - in terms of their failure to grasp an intellectual body of ideas which had been generated by academic philosophers who worked in a context which was very different from that of PE teachers working in schools. I came to realise the importance of identifying the personal and professional circumstances of PE teachers. If one does this, one begins to see some of the social processes associated with the formulation of practical - as opposed to academic - work-based 'philosophies'. My research had been in danger of becoming an abstract philosophical discussion of abstract philosophies - not, it should be noted, something which was without merit, but something which, whatever its merits, provided little help in making sense of what PE teachers thought about PE and why they thought it. I was beginning to understand the importance of seeing ideas not

as separate from - and not as determined by - social relationships, but as an *aspect of* social relationships, in this case the social relationships in which PE teachers have been and continue to be involved on a day-to-day basis.

### Philosophical and sociological approaches to conceptualising PE

It appears something of a truism to suggest that establishing the aims and purposes of PE (as with education generally) is a *philosophical* matter. Almond's (1996) comments seem to echo what the educational philosopher David Carr (1997) takes to be more or less self-evident; namely that, 'asking the right sort of conceptual questions about physical education' ought 'to be seen as part of business as usual', not least because:

in the context of teaching, a good professional is precisely one who continues to ask honest, intelligent and searching questions about the nature of his or her subject's contribution to general educational development (Carr, 1997: 195).

And yet, when viewed from a sociological standpoint, the very lack of a philosophical consensus regarding the nature and purposes of PE, is illustrative of a sociological truism - that particular conceptions of PE can be identified as occupying the ideological high ground among the various groups that make up the subject-community at different times and in different places. Indeed, what constitutes a conception of PE is considerably more than a technical analysis of the terms *physical* and *education* as might be conducted by analytical philosophers. When investigated empirically, it seems likely that teachers' views on the nature and purposes of PE (as well as what PE looks like in practice) will have as much to do with their habituses<sup>3</sup> and their contexts - at the micro and macro levels - as any *a priori* intellectual reflection on the nature and purposes of their subject. Teachers' 'philosophies' of PE, it seems clear, are *socially constructed*.



It is perhaps inevitable, then, that any attempt to make sense of teachers' views on the nature and purposes of their subject cannot but incorporate a *sociological* appreciation of teachers 'in the round'; not least because, as Wirth observes, perhaps 'the most elemental and important facts' in making sense of PE teachers' views about PE, 'are those that are seldom debated and generally regarded as settled' (Wirth, 1960: xxiv).

O'Hear (1981: 1) alludes to the supposedly distinctive roles of philosophy and sociology when he suggests that a function of the former is 'the systematic exposition and defence of the aims one thinks education ought to have, beyond any *social functions it actually has* or can be seen as having' (emphasis added). The latter, for O'Hear, is the role of sociology. On this view, educational philosophy can be expected to focus upon the *aims*, rather than the *reality*, of PE; that is to say, whereas a philosophical perspective on the subject would be concerned with answering the question, 'what *should* PE be about?', the sociological perspective would concentrate upon what PE actually looks like in practice or, in effect, *is*. O'Hear's views appear, then, to be representative of what might be broadly termed the philosophical perspective on education:

One's philosophy of education, then, will be distinct from a sociology of education; reflecting one's values and concept of what men (sic) ought to be, as opposed to what they might be in any particular society (O'Hear, 1981: 1).

On the face of it, sociology cannot tell us what to do but only what, in fact, we actually do do; it cannot tell us what to think about PE, but can only describe what we do think about PE. It is important to note, however, that whilst the contributions of philosophy and sociology appear quite distinctive there is, nevertheless, a good deal of potential overlap. Indeed, one might even say that there is (or, at least, needs to be) a degree of interdependence between the

two approaches. Sociology might not be able to tell us what to do but, as Weber (1949) has pointed out, it can tell us something about what it is *possible* to do. In this sense one might argue that all philosophy should be sociologically-informed if it is to be concerned with *realistic* aims. Indeed, in outlining his intention to 'show how people's general system of values and beliefs will affect what they think education should be' (1981: 3), O'Hear appears implicitly to acknowledge the inevitable (and, to some sociologists, quite proper) interrelationship between the two disciplines by encouraging an approach that might equally be characterised as sociological as (distinctly) philosophical. Yet, insofar as O'Hear merely relates thoughts to beliefs and values - that is to say, thoughts to thoughts, rather than thoughts to social position - he fails to recognise (or at least underplays) the importance of recognising and highlighting the links between ideas and social location.

Having said this, O'Hear does appear to recognise the sociological dimension of philosophising when he observes that 'what one thinks about education cannot be separated from what one thinks about life generally' (1981: 6). O'Hear's implicit acknowledgement of the potentially intimate relationship between individuals' 'philosophies' and ideology - as well as his explicit recognition of the significance of 'extremely influential assumptions'<sup>4</sup> (1981: 4) - points to one further sociological 'truth', namely, the manner in which thoughts about education, and life generally, are in some way socially constructed. Arguably, it is the socially constructed nature of PE that almost inevitably dooms to failure attempts to establish, analytically, a consensual definition of the nature and purposes of PE. As Evans and Davies (1986: 15) point out:

What passes for physical education in the school curriculum is neither arbitrary nor immutable. It is a social and cultural construct, laden with values that not all would adhere to or want to share.



In other words, what passes for PE is a socio-historical construct: what PE teachers think and what they do is more or less constrained by what *has* been done in the name of PE and what *is* done in the name of PE, by PE teachers. It is, therefore, a fundamental premise of this study that the various conceptions of the nature and purposes of PE are best understood in sociological rather than merely philosophical terms; that is to say, on the basis of an analysis of the relationships between 'philosophies', ideologies and social location. It may be useful to underscore this point by adapting the observation of Freidson (1983; cited in Macdonald, 1995) on the process of professionalization: one is not attempting to determine what PE is about in an absolute sense so much as how physical educationalists arrive at a *preferred* conception of the subject by their activities. Indeed, the kind of ideal-type constructions frequently found in analytical philosophy are of limited value. Whilst they tell us what a given social grouping might want or expect PE to become, they do not tell us what physical educationalists themselves think they are about in the process of teaching PE.

An appreciation of the ideologies underlying PE teachers' 'philosophies' (as they articulate them), as well as their perceptions of their situations, will play an important part in an appreciation of the issue. However, as the Centre for Research into Sport and Society (CRSS) (1992) has noted: 'we should not slavishly assume that the insider perspective is the highest form of knowledge' (p. xxv). Individuals' perceptions require contextualizing; they require location in a broader framework. Consequently, the study will attempt to establish how other facets of PE teachers' situations, such as pressures of a professional kind and political developments, for example, interact with prior beliefs and training to influence their 'philosophies' of PE and, indeed, why teachers in different work situations (e.g. senior or junior

members of staff - such as Heads of Department - and men or women) have varying 'philosophies'.

The approach adopted in this study is rooted in figurational sociology. It requires that teachers' 'philosophies' be set in their overall context - their configuration - rather than offering a caricature of reality by focusing upon the impact of any particular variable (e.g. academic philosophy or the NCPE) on behaviour (as if a direct causal relationship could be established between the existence of a variable, such as a particular political policy, and the prevalence of a particular 'philosophy' of PE). A figurational approach is particularly useful in this regard inasmuch as it is:

more appropriate to think not in terms of single causality, but rather in terms of multi-causality or figurations and to see so-called causes as aspects of more complex developmental processes (CRSS, 1992: xx).

Indeed, we can go one step further, by appreciating that teachers' 'philosophies' and the ideologies that underpin them are not so much caused by the social situation but, rather, they constitute an *aspect* of those situations. This Wirth (1960: xxix) refers to as 'the interconnection between being and knowing'.

### The study

The aim of this study is, then, to throw *sociological* light on the extent to which, as well as the manner in which, the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers are underpinned by particular ideologies (e.g. 'health' and 'sports performance'); ideologies that are, in turn, a reflection of wider ideological, economic and cultural forces. Thus, the central object of the study is an attempt to identify and examine PE teachers' 'philosophies' in order to *locate* these within the broader social context in which PE teachers find themselves. It is intended to

use these 'philosophies' as a basis for an understanding of how and why particular views come to dominate the ideological high ground among PE teachers. The outcome of the study should, then, be a clear portrayal of the processes at work in the development of particular 'philosophies' among teachers of PE.

In the mid-1980s, Evans and Davies (1986: 11) commented that:

If the Sociology of Education ... has achieved anything in recent years, it is to have made much more *complex* our understanding of what goes on inside schools and classrooms (emphasis added).

The study will attempt to demonstrate the benefits of a sociological approach to an ostensibly philosophical issue by making much more complex - but also much more *adequate* - our understanding of the social roots of prevailing conceptualisations of PE 'philosophies'. The study will attempt to reveal the ways in which influential ideologies, such as 'health' and 'sport' (or 'traditional' PE) are, in the words of Kirk (1992b: 226) 'constructed by people interacting at particular times, in specific locations, in response to their immediate circumstances, and infused with their interests, preoccupations and values'. In addition, the study will attempt to tease out the manner in which the ideologies underpinning teachers' 'philosophies' are impacted upon by the constraints of everyday practice in terms of teachers' working situations; that is to say, the extent to which 'philosophies' are 'part and parcel' of teachers' ordinary, everyday working lives.

In the first instance, and utilising published literature, the study will identify and trace the development of ideological themes in PE and the relationship between these and 'philosophical' justifications for PE as outlined in the academic and professional press. Focusing upon the particularly influential



ideologies of 'health' and 'sport', the ideologies that underpin contemporary academic justifications for PE will be brought to the surface. In the process, the study will compare and contrast the fortunes of what is characterised as the pre-eminent *traditional* 'philosophy' of PE (with its emphasis upon team games and sports performance) with the ideology that is seen as having risen to a prominent position on the ideological high-ground of the subject-community through the 1980s and into the early part of the 1990s: that of health (Green, 1994a).

Utilising semi-structured interviews, the empirical dimension of the study investigates the various conceptions (termed 'philosophies') of the nature and purposes of their subject held by PE teachers. In the process an attempt will be made to identify the domain assumptions (such as PE being *ipso facto* 'educational') that form the backbone of the various ideologies and are, by their very nature, implicit and thus unscrutinised.

In the process of establishing which ideologies are more or less prominent among PE teachers (as well as the subject-community as a whole) I will endeavour to identify the social bases of support for the particular ideologies and 'philosophies'. In this manner, the study will conceptualise the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers not so much in terms of the reflections of the gladiatorial combat between 'grand philosophies' of education as such, but rather - and, arguably, more adequately - as the outcome of a complex interweaving of a network of relationships at both micro and macro levels. This will necessitate identification of processes internal and external to PE that inevitably provide the context to which teachers respond. This is achieved by investigating what are characterised as three levels of PE teachers' figurations - the personal, the local and the national. At the personal level, the processes will include the sporting and career biographies that help

form teachers' habituses. At the local level, they will incorporate institutional relationships and expectations, as well as the practical day-to-day issues circumscribing teachers' thoughts and deeds. At the national level, the constraints of national legislation and policy as well as various broader social processes (such as the medicalization of life and the professionalization of work) are identified as the bases of ideological division among influential groups (e.g. academics in the PE subject-community and the Government).

### *The format of the study*

In essence, the body of the study has two phases: a descriptive phase and an explanatory phase. The former is made up of chapters 2 to 5 whilst the latter consists of chapters 6 to 9. Following the introduction in which the background to the study is outlined, Chapter 2 - 'Figurational Sociology and the Sociology of Knowledge' - will attempt to establish the theoretical framework for the study. This will involve setting out the central assumptions and salient features of figurational sociology before exploring the benefits of a sociological approach to knowledge and to PE teachers' conceptions of their subject. Chapter 3 will outline the methodology of the study and, in the process, will explore the benefits of a qualitative approach from a figurational perspective. Chapter 4 deals with the ideological themes common to PE. These will be teased out and, where applicable, related to academic philosophical conceptions of the subject. Chapter 5 presents the data from the study and in so doing presents 'The Everyday 'Philosophies' of PE Teachers'. By way of explaining how PE teachers have arrived at these everyday 'philosophies', Chapters 6 to 8 explore PE teachers' figurations at the personal, local and national levels. Chapter 9 will conclude with a summary of the 'philosophies' of PE teachers, explaining these in terms of figurational sociology and identifying connections with a sociological understanding of knowledge.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I have deliberately placed the word 'philosophies' in inverted commas because my concern is, at least in part, with the relationship between, on the one hand, philosophies which have been articulated by academic philosophers seeking to define what they consider to be the 'essential' characteristics or nature of PE and, on the other hand, ideas about PE which are held by teachers who have the practical task of teaching PE within schools. In strictly sociological terms, one might want to term these ideas, 'world views' or 'habitus' (van Krieken, 1998). However, for the following reasons, I have preferred to use the term 'philosophies':

- (i) in answer to my opening questions regarding their thoughts on what PE should be about, various PE teachers, themselves, made frequent reference to their 'philosophy' in a manner which bore close resemblance to the aphoristic use of the term that has a common currency and which will be discussed in Chapter 3;
- (ii) several authors in the broad field of the sociology of PE (e.g. Armour, 1997; Armour and Jones, 1998; Evans, 1992) make use of the term 'philosophy' when referring to teachers' ideas;
- (iii) I am attempting to ascertain the 'surface-level' or, as van Krieken (1998: 47) puts it, the 'superficial portion' of their 'consciousness' in the first instance; whilst,
- (iv) reserving the more sociological concept of 'habitus' for a more specific role in explaining PE teachers' 'philosophies';

<sup>2</sup> This is an issue that will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup> Habitus, as a concept as well as its application, will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> What might be termed, after Elias (1980; cited in van Krieken, 1998), the 'second nature' of habitus.

## Chapter 2

# Figurational Sociology and the Sociology of Knowledge

### Figurational sociology

In this chapter I want to introduce the sociological perspective that provides the theoretical framework for the study: that of figurational sociology. A brief synopsis will be offered of what might be termed the domain assumptions of the process- (or figurational) sociology of Norbert Elias, before particular features of the figurational perspective are explored in greater depth as they relate to the sociology of knowledge *per se*.

Mennell and Goudsblom identify what they claim are the 'four interrelated principles' underlying the work of Norbert Elias and thus underpinning the figurational perspective:

1. Sociology is about people in the plural - human beings who are interdependent with each other in a variety of ways, and whose lives evolve in and are significantly shaped by the social figurations they form together.
2. These figurations are continually in flux, undergoing changes of many kinds - some rapid and ephemeral, others slow but perhaps more lasting.
3. The long-term developments taking place in human figurations have been and continue to be largely unplanned and unforeseen.
4. The development of human knowledge takes place within human figurations, and is one important aspect of their overall development (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 39).

In what follows I intend to elaborate upon those aspects of these key principles of figurational sociology that are particularly germane to my own study.

According to Elias, one of the main objects of sociology is to 'enlarge our understanding of human and social processes and to acquire a growing fund of more reliable knowledge about them' (Elias, 1978: 17). At the centre of the sociological project, he suggests, are 'efforts to define social relations sociologically' (p. 22). For Elias (and figurational sociologists in general) in order to do this, one is bound to confront the very way in which sociologists conceptualise people in society. It is with the foundations of the discipline that the sociological process comes face to face with its most profound hurdle. It is the nature of the relationship between people and the society they form, whilst being a part thereof, that confounds and perplexes many students of the discipline and it is, arguably, in relation to this fundamental issue that the distinctive approach of figurational sociology offers a ground-breaking perspective on an enduring problem. For a large number of sociologists it has been, and continues to be, conventional to conceptualise society *sui generis*; that is to say, as an object that exists in its own right (Frisby and Sayer, 1986). The associated distinction between society (the 'structure') and the individual (the 'agent') continues to represent something of an orthodoxy in much sociological writing. Such a dichotomous distinction, it is argued, remains a fundamental hindrance to the development of a more adequate 'science' of society. Consequently, the problem of adequately conceptualising the relationship between people and the societies they form has remained a thorn in the side of sociological theory despite various high-profile attempts to resolve the matter (van Krieken, 1998). For figurationalists the root cause of the problem lies in the conventional conceptualisation of individual and society as distinct entities. Hence, attempts to overcome the problem by drawing 'lines of communication', so to speak, between structure and agent - in the manner implicit in Giddens's 'structuration theory' (Giddens, 1984) - only serves to reinforce and thus perpetuate an *inadequate* conceptualisation



of a relationship central to all sociological analyses. For figurationalists, adequate representations of social phenomena are more realisable to the extent that the sociologist is able to circumvent the 'misleading and unhelpful dualisms and dichotomies' (Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, forthcoming) sustained by the conventional tendency to conceptualise society, and the people who constitute society, as distinct entities (Elias, 1978).

For those favouring what is traditionally termed a 'structuralist' conception of individuals in society, people are at the mercy of more or less (and usually more) deterministic 'forces'. Society exists *sui generis* and, as such, exerts pressures on people to think and act in particular ways; ways that reflect and are dependent upon the individual's position in the social structure. Whilst figurationalists would accept that people may, under certain conditions, feel themselves to be subject to "compelling forces" (Elias, 1978: 17) there is an important distinction to be made between *feeling compelled* and *being bound*, and for figurationalists this is the nub of the dilemma. What might appear conceptual nit-picking is, in fact, fundamental to the sociological enterprise inasmuch as everything else is contingent upon a notion of people and society that represents a more adequate conceptualization than the orthodox dichotomy. Consequently, at the heart of the figurational perspective is the premise that - whilst they may nevertheless be experienced as external - 'social forces are in fact forces exerted by people over one another and over themselves' (Elias, 1978: 17).

For figurationalists, the portrayal of human beings as 'self-contained' and, thus, 'separate' individuals impacted upon by a social structure that is theorised as distinct from (almost 'above' and 'beyond') those 'individuals', distorts the sociological perspective from the outset. The conceptualisation and representation of people and society as 'static, isolated categories', rather



than 'dynamic and interdependent' networks, undermines any attempt to develop a more 'object-adequate' portrayal of social phenomena. Elias (1978: 72) comments:

the figurations of interdependent human beings cannot be explained if one studies human beings singly. In many cases the opposite procedure is advisable - one can understand many aspects of the behaviour or actions of individual people only if one sets out from the study of the pattern of their interdependence, the structure of their societies, in short from the figurations they form with each other.

Traditionally, for sociologists, the relationship between the individual and society is an *a priori* matter. For Elias, what encouraged sociologists to conceptualise the issue thus was what people actually saw or observed; that is to say, what was observed were individuals in groups. Hence the common-sense tendency towards conceptualising people as both distinct from and, at the same time, a part of, society. What marks figurational sociology out is the distinctly Eliasian understanding of that relationship. The cornerstone of a figurational approach is the conceptualization of *society* as interdependent people in the plural and *individuals* as interdependent people in the singular; as Murphy *et al.* put it, 'sociology is concerned not with *homo clausus* but with *homines aperti*, with people bonded together in dynamic constellations' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming). In this manner, a figurational perspective offers a conceptualization of the relationship between people and society which:

neither metaphysically postulates the existence in societies of supraindividual structures that are 'real', nor sees societies simply as aggregates of detached and independent individuals (Dunning, 1999: 19).

This brings me to the 'central organizing concept of figurational sociology ... the concept of "figuration" itself' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming).

## *Figurations*

For Elias, a figuration is conceived of as 'a structure of mutually oriented and dependent people' (Elias, 1978: 261). As intimated earlier, characteristic of figurational sociology is the assumption that people and their activities are best viewed in terms of the networks of social relationships of which they are always and inevitably a part. In this vein, Dunning (1995: 203) suggests that a key task of sociology is:

to shed light onto the structure and dynamics of the chains of interdependency in which, as human beings, we always find ourselves unintentionally enmeshed from birth to death.

Conceptualised in this way people are seen to be related to a large number, and wide range, of other people at one and the same time. Adopting a figurationalist perspective involves appreciating that these social relationships are 'emerging and contingent *processes*' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming; emphasis added); that is to say, the nature of the interdependency ties develop and change as the relationships between people, and groups of people, develop and change. This in turn, is dependent upon a breadth of eventualities which may be more or less under the control of those involved. In addition, the 'dynamic constellations' that constitute the networks of interdependent people may be more or less obvious to the individuals as such and, indeed, may be of greater or lesser concern to them; for these constellations will, at the same time, inevitably circumscribe power relationships. These three distinctive characteristics of figurations and figurational sociology - *interdependency*, *power* and *process* - as well as several related concepts or aspects thereof, require further examination.

## *Interdependency*

For Elias (1978: 134), the question 'What makes people bonded to and dependent on each other?' is fundamental to sociology. It follows that, for figuralists, interdependence is a central feature of the subject matter of sociology. As Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 22) observe:

In order to understand the feelings, thoughts, and action of any group of people, we have always to consider the many social needs by which these people are bonded to each other and to other people.

These 'bonds' form 'composite units' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 114) or groups of people with a particular structure and particular network of relationships. Interdependency becomes an increasingly useful way of conceptualizing relationships as the networks people are involved in grow and become ever more complex; or, to couch the point in figural terms, with the growth in 'functional interdependencies'. Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 18) have this to say:

as webs of interdependence spread, more people become more involved in more complex and more impenetrable relations. Less abstractly: more people are forced more often to pay more attention to more people, in more varying circumstances. This produces pressures towards greater consideration of the consequences of one's own action for other people on whom one is in one way or another dependent.

It is important to note, however, that the relationships of which figuralists speak are not necessarily, nor predominantly, relationships of the 'face-to-face' variety as they are conventionally conceived in Western societies. Rather, networks (or figurations) are constituted in the inevitable inter-connectedness of inter-dependent people in the plural and incorporate people (individually and in groups) and processes (such as education, politics and socialization) - past or present, recognised or unrecognised. In sum, for

figuralists, the character of social life can only be understood if people are 'conceptualised as *interdependent* ... comprising ... *figurations* and characterised by socially and historically specific forms of *habitus*, or personality structure' (van Krieken, 1998: 55; emphases in the original). In the context of the present study, it is worth saying a little more about *habitus* as a dimension of *figurations*.

### *Habitus*

For Elias, people are always and everywhere interdependent with other people and groups of people - via webs of social relationships or *figurations*. Within these various *figurations* the personality make-up or 'habitus' of people develops. Citing Camic (1986), van Krieken suggests that the concept of habit or *habitus* refers to:

the durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person's action throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life - in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mold of the personality (van Krieken, 1998: 47).

This 'second nature', or 'automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control', as Elias (1969; cited in van Krieken, 1998: 59) referred to *habitus*, has several interrelated features worthy of note:

- (i) 'the organisation of psychological make-up into a *habitus* ... (is) a continuous *process* which (begins) at birth and continue(s) throughout a person's childhood and youth' (van Krieken, 1998: 59; emphases in the original);
- (ii) whilst *habitus* develops most rapidly and tends to have greatest impact during this 'more impressionable phase', namely, during childhood and youth' (van Krieken, 1998: 59);



(iii) nevertheless, the development of habitus continues throughout a person's life: 'it never ceases entirely to be affected by his (sic) changing relations with others throughout his life' (van Krieken, 1998: 60);

(iv) finally, 'the ways in which the formation of habitus (changes) over time ... (can) only be properly understood in connection with changes in the surrounding social relations' (van Krieken, 1998: 60).

It is worth elaborating upon this final point. It is a feature of habitus that it forms and develops as an aspect of social interdependencies 'which vary as the structure of society varies'. It is noteworthy, however, that for Elias habitus might change at a slower rate than the surrounding social relations (van Krieken, 1998: 61). Hence, it is frequently the case that people's outlook on life remains to a greater or lesser extent tied to 'yesterday's social reality', as van Krieken (1998: 61) puts it. Notwithstanding this observation, it is worth reiterating the point that whilst habitus is substantially formed during early life it remains open to development as the interdependent networks people are involved in become more or less complex and more or less compelling. This leads me to a consideration of the utility of the figural 'game' model of interdependencies by way of exploring the manner in which networks can be more or less compelling and, thus, more or less likely to impact upon people's habituses.

### *Interdependencies and 'game models'*

The lengthening of chains of interdependence - and the corresponding opaqueness of the figurations to those involved - make 'game models' a complementary concept to that of interdependency. For Elias, game models utilise 'the image of people playing a game as a metaphor for people forming societies together' and, in doing so, 'serve to make certain problems about social life more accessible to scientific reflection' (Elias, 1978: 92). In

particular, game models bring out particularly clearly the ways in which interdependencies inescapably constrain people to a greater or lesser extent. This is held to occur in a manner analogous to that in which, in a game, the dependency of a player on the intentions and actions of team-mates and opponents inevitably influences the player's own intentions and actions. Games vary in terms of the number of players in the game and the number of levels or tiers on which the game is played; as the number of players and the complexity of the game increase, so it becomes increasingly difficult for those involved in the game to frame 'a mental picture of the course of the game and its figuration' (Elias, 1978: 84). The absence of an overall mental picture of the game of which s/he is a part may result, in turn, in the player becoming disoriented. In addition:

If the number of interdependent players grows, the development and direction of the game will become more and more opaque to the individual player. However strong he (sic) may be, he will become less able to control them (Elias, 1978: 85).

The upshot can be that the game *appears*, to those involved, to take on a life of its own. The potential significance of developments of this sort becomes apparent when Elias (1978: 94) observes that, '(B)eing inter-dependent with so many people will very probably compel individual people to act in a way they would not act except under compulsion'. In this manner, game models of social interdependency have the potential to 'show how the web of human relations changes when the distribution of power changes' (Elias, 1978: 80), as well as how power-ratios influence the extent to which the moves of one person or group can influence or determine the moves of another, as well as the final outcome. The more the power differential decreases the less power will the player or players on either side have to determine the outcome, and:

to the extent that the inequality in the strengths of the two players diminishes ... there will result from the interweaving ... a game process *which neither of them has planned* (Elias, 1978: 82; emphasis in the original).

Processes such as education can usefully be conceptualised as multi-player, multi-tier games. Elias describes such games, in the following terms:

All players remain interdependent, but they no longer all play directly with each other. This function is taken over by the special functionaries who co-ordinate the game - representatives ... governments ... and so forth. Together they form a smaller group, a second-tier ... These are the people who play directly with and against each other, but they are nevertheless bound in one way or another to the mass of players who make up the first storey (Elias, 1978: 86).

There are a number of inter-woven balances of power in multi-tier games. According to Elias (1978: 87), '(T)hey interlock like cogwheels, and so people who are enemies on one level may be allies on another'. Consequently:

If groups formed by weaker players do not have strong inner tensions, that is a power factor to their advantage. Conversely, if groups formed by weaker players do have strong inner tensions, that is a power factor to their opponent (Elias, 1978: 83).

The analogy of multi-tier, multi-dimensional games for the workings of social processes enables one to focus on a particularly important aspect of processes such as education: namely, the existence of 'bonds' between people who ostensibly see themselves as belonging to one side or another - bonds of which the participants themselves may be largely unaware. As alluded to earlier, a characteristic of social networks is their opacity to the people who form them by virtue of their reciprocal control and dependence (Elias, 1978). Because people are heavily involved in the processes themselves, the 'life' the



game takes on, as well its likely outcome, can often remain concealed, obscure or impervious to the thought processes of those concerned.

Conceptualising social processes in terms of the model of a game brings to the fore the centrality of power and 'the polymorphous nature of sources of power' (Elias, 1978: 92). Power is, therefore, a central dimension of interdependencies, and the many kinds of figurations or webs of interdependency of which people are a part are characterised by many different sorts of balances of power (Elias, 1978). Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 36) describe the phenomenon thus:

Throughout life, we depend on others for things we need, want, or value; and others are dependent upon us for the things *they* need. This simple fact means that power-ratios are a feature of *all* human relationships.

### *Power*

Whilst interdependencies are 'reciprocal' they are also typically *unequal* (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 22): 'usually one party in a social relationship tends, at least in certain respects, to be more dependent than the other party' with the result that an uneven balance of power - or 'power-ratio' - exists 'that directly affects the way both parties act and feel towards each other' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 22). It is important to note that power here is conceptualized as a process rather than as something static. For figuralists, 'the more relatively equal become the power-ratios among large numbers of people and groups' the more likely it is that the outcome - presumably of either thought or action - 'will be something that no single person or group has planned or anticipated' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 23). Hence, the likelihood that 'yesterday's unintended social actions' will become 'today's unintended social conditions of intended human actions' (p. 23). The structured processes which can be identified as a result of this, whilst



not having lives of their own, 'are then experienced as compelling processes by the people caught up in them' (p. 23).

However, any tendency towards conceptualising the power-struggles that groups of people find themselves involved in as broadly uni-dimensional should be resisted. For figurationalists, the lengthening chains of interdependence in modern societies has resulted in a reduction of the power differentials between people and groups of people. Alongside, and associated with, a recognition that human relationships like power balances 'are bi-polar at least, and usually multi-polar' (Elias, 1978: 74) and thus complex, is the desirability of conceptualizing relationships, institutions and social phenomena in general, as processes.

### *Processes*

From the figurational perspective many social phenomena are more satisfactorily conceptualised as (dynamic) processes rather than (static) products. From this point of departure, it becomes a central task of the sociologist to trace and identify patterns of change in processes (such as knowledge) over time (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 4). For figurationalists, integral to the notion of social processes is the realisation that, as such, they 'are not only unplanned but also unfinished' (Elias, 1986; cited in Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998: 228) and that the longer term consequences of the interweaving of the aggregate of individual actions, whilst unplanned, are nonetheless patterned (Dunning, 1995). For Dunning (1995), as with figurational sociologists as a whole, the examination of such patterns is a central task of sociology.

## The sociology of knowledge from a figurational perspective

### *Philosophical absolutism 'versus' sociological relativism*

Elias, Wilterdink (1977: 110) notes, observed 'two main traditions in the study of human knowledge'. On the one hand, there is a *philosophical* tradition which Elias (1978) refers to as a classical theory of knowledge that centres conceptually upon the notion of 'a solitary individual' who 'thinks, perceives, and performs' in isolation. On such a view, 'knowledge is seen as independent of social processes' whilst 'definite and certain knowledge' is seen as 'the ideal which can be attained by following certain rules of rationality' (Elias, 1978: 37). On the other hand, there stands a *sociological* tradition wherein, 'all knowledge is regarded as culture-bound, socially determined, and therefore *ideological*' (Wilterdink, 1977: 110; emphasis added). Menell and Goudsblom (1998: 32) summarise the differing approaches thus:

Sociological theories of knowledge, from Marx through Mannheim to modern ethnomethodological and similar approaches, have paid most attention to knowledge near the more involved pole of the involvement-detachment continuum. The tradition of philosophical epistemology, on the other hand, concentrates on knowledge toward the more detached pole. The one tradition has emphasised how knowledge of reality may be distorted, the other how undistorted knowledge of reality may be attained.

Despite the apparent polarisation of views illustrated by the phrases 'philosophical absolutism' and 'sociological relativism', they share, according to Wilterdink (1977: 111), certain assumptions. Among these is the implicit assumption that knowledge which is socially conditioned cannot be viewed as 'pure':

in 'philosophical absolutism' on the one hand, it is concluded that true knowledge has to be acquired by eliminating all socially learned prejudices ... In 'sociological relativism' on the other hand, it is

concluded that, since all knowledge is socially determined, all knowledge is relative or ideological.

For Elias, Wilterdink concludes, such views can be seen to represent a false dichotomy, 'in which knowledge can only be true or arbitrary' (1977: 111). By contrast, an Eliasian approach to knowledge, Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 28) suggest, 'undermines the static polarity between objective and subjective points of view'. Herein lies a distinctive feature of figurational sociology - and one with particular resonance for the sociology of knowledge - that is, an attempt to resolve the tendency among sociologists to talk about 'the relationship between human understanding and values' in the 'abstract, ahistorical and dichotomic terms' epitomised by 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming). From the figurational perspective, it is more accurate as well as more productive to view knowledge as lying along a continuum ranging from *involvement* to *detachment* which represent 'marginal poles between which people's thoughts and actions are normally steered' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming) both by themselves and others.

For Elias, as with figurational sociologists generally, the inherently social nature of all knowledge 'does not mean that all knowledge must be "ideological"' (Wilterdink, 1977: 111). Indeed, one might argue, recognising the 'social' nature of knowledge represents a more 'reality-congruent' conception of the socially constructed character of knowledge whilst, at the same time, serving to ensure that the sociologist remains alert to the potential for distortion (or ideology) in ostensibly 'rational' or 'scientific' claims. After all, as Wilterdink (1977: 111) notes, 'social knowledge, which may be regarded as relatively adequate, is eminently social'. Indeed, from such a perspective one might learn to see knowledge as neither true or false but rather, as Wilterdink (1997: 111) puts it, 'relatively adequate or inadequate in variable



degrees'. He adds, '(R)elatively inadequate knowledge may be called mythical, relatively adequate knowledge scientific'.

It is important to note, at this point, that (whilst Elias himself might have been inclined towards doing so) a figurational sociology of knowledge would not advocate wholesale dismissal of a philosophical perspective. Nor would it dismiss (even though some would claim that Elias did, indeed, do so) claims for the usefulness of philosophical speculation *per se*. It would, nonetheless, suggest a need for a 'redefined' philosophy that would, Wilterdink (1977: 122) argues, 'be less pretentious and better integrated with related fields.'

### *The social nature of human knowledge*

Goudsblom and Mennell (1998: 182) observe that human beings 'are entirely incapable of orientating themselves without learned knowledge'. For figurationalists, then, 'the vital necessity of knowledge as a means of orientation for human beings, and ... its inherently social nature' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 27) mean that the study of 'knowledge' is inextricable from the study of sociology. Elias (1978: 37-38) develops the point thus:

the way in which an individual person goes about thinking, perceiving, or performing ... is grounded in the thought processes of previous generations ... In order to understand and explain how people set about these activities, we must therefore also examine this long-term social process of the development of thought and knowledge. The transition from a philosophical to a sociological theory of knowledge ... is chiefly apparent in the replacement of the individual person by human society as the 'subject' of knowledge.

It follows, therefore, that for figurationalists, knowledge is a central aspect of the overall development of human societies (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998). Indeed, because the development of human knowledge takes place *within* the network of interdependent human relations that make up figurations, the



nature of knowledge can only be made sense of in *social* terms. Hence, knowledge can only be adequately understood from a sociological perspective. This is a crucial point, for what follows from this is that much philosophical debate remains inadequate whilst it perpetuates the misguided notion that establishing the nature and purposes of social phenomena must begin with an abstract conceptual debate.

### *Towards a sociological epistemology*

Elias describes the 'philosophical image' of humans as premised on the idea that they are 'static being(s)' whose previous life, let alone their contemporary context, are not thought relevant to an appreciation of their thoughts. For Elias, 'the omission of the process in which each person is constantly engaged, is one of the reasons for the dead-end that epistemology constantly comes up against' (Elias, 1986; cited in Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998: 234). 'Another reason', he adds, 'is a forgetting of the constant meetings of the individual with other people and the intermeshing of his (sic) life with those of others in the course of this process' (Elias, 1986; cited in Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998: 234). Kilminster and Wouters (1995: 83) view Elias' resistance to the assumption that where epistemology is concerned, philosophy is the 'leader' and sociology the 'follower' (p. 84) as a crucial contribution towards a 'sociological epistemology'. Elias had, they argue, managed in sociological terms to identify 'the connection between spurious claims to universal knowledge and social power' (Kilminster and Wouters, 1995: 91): 'philosophy ... Elias felt, leant itself to the smuggling into its analyses of undeclared prejudices, values and political convictions'.

A figurational sociology of knowledge is concerned, then, with building a sociological epistemology. In this regard it is worth re-iterating two key points. Firstly, it is important to recognize, along with Mannheim (1960), that

the sociology of knowledge is not concerned with abstract ideas as such. It does not set out to 'criticize thought *on the level of the assertions themselves*' (p. 238; emphasis added); i.e. the coherence of the ideas themselves or what Mannheim (1960: 255) refers to as the 'truth-value' of an assertion (e.g. the relationship between the concept of education and knowledge). Secondly, knowledge and ideas should not be seen as the product of an individual's thinking (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998). Rather, 'intellectual history' is more adequately explained 'in terms of "chains" of generation ... of people in the plural, not of the individual in the singular'.

Consequently, because of its centrality to an adequate appreciation of the *social* nature of knowledge, sociology teases out the inevitably human dimension of knowledge on the premise that: 'a large part of thinking ... cannot be correctly understood, as long as its connection with the existence of the social implications of human life are not taken into account' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 241). As Outhwaite (1983: 185; summarising Scheler, 1924) puts it: 'systems of ideas have an internal logic of their own, but ... "real factors" in the outside world determine the rate of development and the influence of these ideas'. Outhwaite's philosophical perspective requires qualification in order to underline the figurational point that not only the 'rate' and 'influence' but more fundamentally, the *generation* of these ideas is intimately related to 'real factors' in the outside world. Indeed, it requires additional qualification insofar as it is more accurate to conceptualise ideas as an *aspect* of the 'real world' rather than separate from it. Of particular interest to the sociologist, then, are the 'existential factors' (Mannheim, 1960: 240) associated with 'the social position of the assertor' (p. 255). For figurationalists, the intellectual sphere is *part* of the social process and any attempt to separate the two threatens to perpetuate a false dichotomy.

A sociology of knowledge is, then, concerned primarily with the 'situational relativity' of knowledge (Mannheim, 1960: 244). It is worth restating the point, however, that an account of the social construction of knowledge is not preferred to, or intended to replace, a philosophical approach, which raises different but equally legitimate problems. Neither, for that matter, does a sociologically-informed epistemology invalidate particular justificatory arguments for particular 'truths'; that is to say, their validity. Rather, the claim is that knowledge, 'besides being a proper subject matter for logic and psychology, becomes fully comprehensible only if it is viewed sociologically' (Wirth, 1960: xxvii). Indeed, as Mannheim adds (1960: 264):

epistemology is not supplanted by the sociology of knowledge but a new kind of epistemology is called for which will reckon with the facts brought to life by the sociology of knowledge.

For Mannheim (1960: 279), a sociological approach represents an attempt to 'integrate the sociology of knowledge into the structure of a philosophical world-view'. However, whilst for Mannheim (1960: 258) 'the nature of the genesis of an assertion may become relevant to its truth' it may be more accurate to suggest that whilst the genesis of an assertion may not be germane to its truth-value *per se* it will help us understand why particular people in particular circumstances *believe* it to be true.

Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 28; summarising Elias, 1971) point out that neither sociological nor philosophical theories of knowledge tend to attain such an inclusive perspective. Mennell and Goudsblom identify Elias's model of an 'involvement-detachment continuum' as a means of 'steering the ship between the Scylla of philosophical absolutism and the Charybdis of sociological relativism' (Elias, 1971; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 32). It is important to note, they add, that the 'balance between the



“subjective” and “objective” elements (of knowledge) may, however, vary considerably’ (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 28).

*Mannheim and Eliasian approaches to the sociology of knowledge*

Norbert Elias was a student and colleague of Karl Mannheim’s during the period that Mannheim was writing his seminal work, *Ideology and Utopia*, regarding the sociology of knowledge. However, Elias’ views on the nature of knowledge can be seen to have differed substantively from those of Mannheim regarding the issue of the social construction of knowledge. From a figurational perspective, there appears a tendency in Mannheim’s work to perpetuate something of the structure-agency dichotomy - to talk of the social or structural *position* of people as if such a thing could be isolated as a more-or-less *determining* factor for the thinking of all those in a particular group. Whilst a sociology of knowledge is, as Mannheim (1960: 256) puts it, concerned with how ‘certain views have been derived from a certain milieu’, for figurationalists (and one would imagine for Elias at the time) it would be exceeding the evidence to claim that, ‘currents of thought ... must be traced back to the social forces *determining* them’ (p. 276; emphasis added) as Mannheim is inclined to do.

Whilst, for Mannheim, ‘(N)ew forms of knowledge grow out of the conditions of collective life’ (1960: 259), for figurationalists, knowledge - whether *new* in any meaningful sense or not - is more than simply a *reflection* of particular conditions. To be sure, it will inevitably be constrained, or rather circumscribed, by such conditions (e.g. in the case of early PE, the concern with fitness for military purposes or reasons of hygiene), but it will be a complex of conditions, desires, the backgrounds of the ‘knowers’ and so forth. Boronski (1987: 19) points up the shadow of determinism in Mannheim’s thought, observing that, in his sociology of knowledge ‘all ideas and



knowledge are seen to be determined by history'. With Mannheim (1960), the emphasis is on 'when and where social structures come to express themselves in the structure of assertions, and in what sense the former concretely determine the latter' (p. 239). Thus, when Mannheim (1960) suggests that, 'social backgrounds emerge and become recognisable as the *invisible forces* underlying knowledge' (p. 241; emphasis added) he appears to reveal traces of an implicit determinism in his conceptualisation of knowledge.

Although figurationalists would concur with the broad sentiment of Mannheim's (1960: 246) claim that 'people in different social positions think differently', they would be at pains to point out that this would represent an empirically observed *tendency*; for knowledge is not merely determined or constrained by social position, rather it is an *aspect of* social relations. In addition, there would be a fundamental point of divergence regarding whether this is best viewed as a *determining* or a *constraining* factor. Whilst, for figurationalists, a reality-congruent sociology of knowledge will be bound, like Mannheim, to focus upon the perspective of the thinker and specifically, 'the ways in which social relationships ... influence thought', they would not, as Mannheim appears to do, accept what he refers to as 'the social or existential determination of actual thinking' (p. 239). And although what one takes to be 'true' will undoubtedly reflect one's social position, social position itself is made up of a complex of roles and relationships. Consequently, knowledge is better viewed as more than merely the 'function of a certain social position' (Mannheim, 1960: 239). A crucial advantage of a figurational perspective appears, then, to be the way in which it resists the kind of reductionism to which other sociological accounts of human behaviour (e.g. some strands of Marxist and feminist sociology) may be prone.

For figurational sociologists, such as Goudsblom and Mennell (1998), the sociology of knowledge 'has never quite recovered from the curse put upon it by Marx', who, they claim, 'attributed to it the ontological status of mere superstructure' (Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998: 181) insofar as knowledge was largely viewed as a reflection of material circumstances. According to Boronski (1987), for Mannheim, unlike Marx, *all* ideas - with the exception of natural science and mathematics - are ideological ideas and beliefs 'are determined by the social existence of those who hold them' (p. 19). For figurationalists, in as much as all people are prone, to a greater or lesser degree, to fantasy-laden thinking, *all* ideas might be more-or-less ideological. At the same time, however, it is worth noting that from a figurational perspective some social relations, for example those involving the scientific process, actively constrain people towards a relatively *detached* approach to gathering knowledge in the process of abiding by the conventional scientific methodologies. Consequently, from a figurational point of view, it would not make sense to describe all knowledge as straightforwardly and simply ideological; not least because if it were, it would beg the question 'how is it possible to talk of any social phenomena sociologically?'. Hence, for figurationalists, knowledge is neither necessarily *determined* by, nor *relative* to, one's social position (for this would imply the existence of as many 'truths' as there are people occupying differing circumstances) as implied by Mannheim's position. Nor, on the other hand, is knowledge some kind of absolute, transcendental state that awaits discovery by epistemologists of analytical philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, the relationship between philosophy and sociology, as with the relationship between individuals and society, can be said to be an enduring theme in Eliasian sociology. Indeed, according to Goudsblom and Mennell (1998: 5-6) the issue of 'whether there are any grounds for

postulating a notion of truth that is transcendental and independent of human experience and human history' was ostensibly the key issue in the delay between the completion and award of Elias' Ph.D. in 1924. An abiding theme of Elias' sociology, and figurational sociology as a whole, can be seen to be resistance to 'a philosophical vocabulary pertaining to a one-dimensional world of "the mind" rather than the world of "five-dimensional people of flesh and blood"' (Goudsblom and Mennell, 1998: 6; citing Elias, 1994). Thus, for figurationalists, an adequate appreciation of any aspect of people's social existence requires them to be located within the figurations of which they are always and inevitably a part.

It seems more satisfactory, then, to characterise knowledge in Eliasian terms as a 'structured flux'; that is to say, as a process that tends to be more or less congruent with reality to the extent that people manage to attain the appropriate blend between involvement and detachment corresponding to the topic under investigation. The task for figurational sociologists attempting to develop a sociological epistemology is to make sense of the ways in which people's 'knowledge' may be seen as an aspect of the figurations of which they are a part.

### The application of a figurational sociology of knowledge to PE

It is apparent that, from the perspective of figurational sociology, PE teachers' thoughts - their everyday 'philosophies' - cannot be satisfactorily *understood* in terms of purely intellectual or technical processes that become complete when they no longer bear the traces of their human or social genesis (Mannheim, 1960). Nor, for that matter, can they be adequately *explained* in a context that attempts to detach the ideas from the people or groups holding them. In contrast to the largely (if not entirely) technical or 'analytical' approach to *ideas* associated with PE philosophy since the 1970s, for sociologists,



conceptions of PE inevitably reflect, 'the penetration of the social process into the intellectual sphere' (Mannheim, 1960: 240) at the differing levels of the teachers' figurations. PE teachers' views inevitably bear witness to what *has* happened at a personal level (for example, in their lives and career thus far) as well as what *is* happening at the local (e.g. the school) and national (e.g. governmental) levels. Hence, the sociology of knowledge is, according to Mannheim (1960), 'an *empirical* theory of the actual relations of knowledge to the social situation' (p. 257; emphasis added); that is to say, an investigation of the relationship between what is claimed and the *circumstances* of the claimer.

The ways PE teachers view their subject, and their work as teachers, can only be adequately understood if one contextualizes their views within their particular configuration of experiences and relationships - at what will be termed the personal, local and national levels - whilst, at the same time locating these within wider social processes such as professionalization, sportization and medicalization. As practitioners, PE teachers are no more likely than any other teacher or 'professional' person, for that matter, to engage, as Waddington (1975: 48) puts it, in 'the consideration of abstract philosophical principles'. Insofar as PE teachers consider the nature and purposes of PE, their concern is likely to arise from, and be shaped by, their predispositions in association with the day-to-day practice of their profession, such as writing curricula, justifying aims and objectives to colleagues, external agencies and so forth. It may well be their orientation to the mundanities of their 'practical' positions as much as, if not more than, their perspective on any 'theoretical' positions on the nature and purposes of PE (as outlined either by the state or educational philosophers) that has the more significant impact on PE teachers' views of their subject; this will be one of the problems to be investigated in this thesis.



The interdependencies that are a feature of figurations take a variety of forms. Some interdependencies, for example, between PE teachers and their departmental and school colleagues or, for that matter, the children in their charge, are easily identifiable. More opaque, but potentially every bit as significant for teachers' thoughts and actions, are the ties that bind PE teachers to parents, government departments, professional bodies, head teachers and so forth. The bonds between PE teachers and those near or far, so to speak, who form their figurations, both enable and constrain (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming); that is to say, the relationships between a teacher and other teachers, parents, pupils or other groups of teachers or educationalists, for example, may encourage or inhibit the development of particular views or practices, directly or indirectly. PE teachers are, of necessity, frequently found in a variety of composite units including departments, professional bodies and sporting communities. This is a significant point. For, in making sense of the 'philosophies' of teachers and the penetration of particular ideologies into their thoughts regarding the nature and purposes of PE, it is crucial to recognise the centrality of the interdependency of people to the process of thinking.

Interdependency is a pivotal concept in figurational sociology and making sense of the network of interdependencies in which people, such as PE teachers, are involved helps one appreciate the centrality of power in these networks. Of particular pertinence to this study is Mennell and Goudsblom's (1998: 125) observation that there is 'a limit to the span of the web of interdependence within which an individual can orientate himself (sic) suitably and plan his personal strategy over a series of moves'. PE teachers are compelled to orientate themselves outwith as well as within the secondary school setting. As parents, for example, become increasingly powerful and influential, it becomes correspondingly difficult for teachers to resist their

claims for information about, and involvement in, their children's education, even if they are inclined to do so. Thus teachers' ideas as well as their practices can only be adequately explained when one takes into account the 'compelling forces' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 118) and power-ratios impacting upon them through the interdependencies in which they are inescapably involved; interdependencies with not only other teachers at higher or lower levels in the occupational hierarchy but also a variety of influential groups within and beyond education. Changing interdependencies and 'the interweaving of ... aims and activities' as well as the 'immanent dynamics' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 120) of potentially conflict-ridden relationships are central to PE teachers' thoughts and deeds. Relationships of power may be more or less clear-cut and have a more or less direct bearing upon the ideas and practices of teachers, depending upon their position amidst the plethora of hierarchies that exist within any occupational grouping. It is also important to bear in mind that power balances 'are dynamic and continually in flux' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming). Teachers' positions within departments, within schools, even within professional bodies, frequently change. Indeed, the position and influence of teachers as an occupational grouping can be seen to change over time in relation to the sports lobby, government and even the medical profession, for example. The point is, then, that noting the relational character of power and the 'various constellations in the balance of power' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 123) helps one understand how, in what circumstances, as well as in which directions, the influence of ideologies in the thinking of individuals and/or groups of PE teachers is likely to change.

In one sense, the study of PE teachers' 'philosophies' is a study of power-ratios and power balances; that is, of the constraints surrounding PE teachers by virtue of their professional roles. The concepts of power-ratios and power

balances help make sense of the tendency, highlighted by Elias, for specific groups to utilise knowledge for practical purposes (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998). The fortune of particular ideologies may well vary or fluctuate with the professional and political fortune of the group adhering to them (Mannheim, 1960). In this vein, it may be useful to see PE teachers in a similar light to that which Elias (1993) throws upon Mozart; that is to say, as more or less dependent outsiders in political and professional contexts. Thus, PE teachers are tied to the views of the day whether they want wholeheartedly to endorse them or not, and, at least in order to 'get on', so to speak, PE teachers are more or less 'obliged' to adopt the ideology(ies) of the day.

The figurations that PE teachers are enmeshed in can be expected to have ramifications for the way in which PE teachers conceptualise their subject. Consequently, it is a key objective of this study to uncover how PE teachers' 'philosophies' might be understood as part of the *structure and dynamics* of the *chains of interdependency* in which PE teachers find themselves. For, as intimated earlier, it is likely that 'philosophies' at the level of practice have far more to do with habituses and the contexts of practice than, for example, root meanings of PE *as a concept*, as traced by educational philosophers; and, as much to do with pragmatism as the influence of ideologies of PE inherited over the last half-century or so.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have suggested that a figurational sociological approach to making sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies' holds out more promise than a (traditional) philosophical perspective. Characteristic of analytical philosophy, McNamee (1998: 81) observes, is the tendency to proceed in argumentation 'as if the logic of (the) analysis carries itself forward to a conclusion in the minds of any *reasonable* person' (emphasis added). These



'reasonable' people include, of course, PE teachers - regardless of their practical context, e.g. their newness, the management style of their Heads of Department, the traditions of the department and the school, and so on. It is apparent that a philosophical approach to epistemology contains within it a tendency to reduce the search for definitions of the nature and purposes of PE to ideal-types. Those who adopt this approach thus engage in debate at the level of abstract ideas alone: as if ideas interact with each other. Philosophers of PE are, then, prone to 'the pervasive tendency to reduce processes conceptually to states' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 37). From such a perspective social phenomena, such as PE, are inevitably treated as being static; as something that has evolved into its final form with the task being to establish the defining features of that final form. From a philosophical perspective, it is argued, there is an in-built tendency towards conceptualising PE in terms of an identifiable essence rather than a shifting set of practices more or less favoured by PE teachers who, in turn, hold more or less ideological conceptions of PE inevitably circumscribed by context. In portraying themselves as completely detached pursuers of abstract knowledge, philosophers of education might intentionally or otherwise be guilty of camouflaging what, in fact, amount to normative accounts of education. The ideal-type philosophies of professional philosophers of PE may themselves be more adequately viewed as lying on a continuum of detachment which, at the negative pole, would amount to nothing more or less than what might be termed justificatory ideologies.

Interestingly, Mannheim (1960: 251) might be describing the relationship between academic philosophy of PE and the 'philosophies' of PE teachers when he describes the common-place tendency toward 'talking past one another':

although they are more or less aware that the person with whom they are discussing the matter represents another group, and that it is likely that his (sic) mental structure as a whole is quite different when a concrete thing is being discussed, they speak as if their differences were confined to the specific question at issue around which their present disagreement crystallized. They overlook the fact that their antagonist differs from them in his whole outlook, and not merely in his opinion about the point under discussion.

However, in the case of PE philosophy, it is not simply a matter of academics and teachers 'talking past one another', not least because in one sense PE teachers are not *talking* (in the sense of philosophising) about PE much at all. This point is central; most teachers simply *do* PE. To the extent that they can be identified, PE teachers' 'philosophies' are identified implicitly in the practice of PE teaching. The extent to which PE teachers' 'philosophies' bear any resemblance to academic philosophies of PE is an empirical question.

There is a second reason why it would be an over-simplification to talk about PE academics and teachers as 'talking past one another', for educational philosophers *are* dealing with substantive issues. The point is that they are debating the substantive issue of what PE is at an abstract level - PE as a concept - rather than engaging with the reality of PE as practice. It is not so much that they talk past but that they simply are not talking on the same wavelength as PE teachers. Thus, it only becomes possible to make sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies' if analysis is not restricted simply to ideas themselves or to the dictats of PE policy makers as reflected, for example, in the NCPE.

The figurational conception of people and their thinking is a conception of people diametrically opposed to that which has come to dominate intellectual history and epistemology since the Renaissance (Mennell and Goudsblom,

1988). The latter might be characterized, as Elias puts it, as a conception of a human being as a 'We-less I'. This is a conception of people in relation to knowledge as 'a single thinking mind inside a sealed container from which one looks out and struggles to fish for knowledge of the objects in the "external worlds"' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 33). It is important to acknowledge in passing, however (and especially in a sociological study of people's 'philosophies') that 'this sense of the self inside its container looking out *is very real as a mode of self-experience* in modern societies' (p. 33; emphasis added). In a nutshell, this is why PE teachers 'philosophies' cannot be reduced to philosophy *per se*, nor, for that matter, to psychology. The knowledge and ideas of PE teachers cannot be explained by studying either the ideas themselves or the teacher (him or herself) in isolation. Knowledge, for figurationalists, needs to be conceptualised as an *aspect* of interdependencies. Thus, PE teachers thoughts, as well as their teaching behaviours, can only be fully understood when located in the figurations they form with each other - as inescapably *interdependent* people.

The outline of figurational sociology and the sociology of knowledge offered in this chapter is intended to explain why the approach adopted in this study will be in the vein of what Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 28) describe as 'Elias's characteristic trick'; that is, 'to turn what have traditionally been regarded as philosophical problems into sociological questions susceptible to theoretical-empirical investigation'.



# Chapter 3

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative<sup>1</sup> approach to understanding the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers. It seeks to make sense of PE teachers' conceptions of their subject by investigating the interrelationships between the various features of their figurations - notably, their habituses and their working lives - 'in the round', so to speak, rather than by isolating particular facets, such as the abstracted 'philosophies'. Adopting a qualitative approach, it is argued, fits neatly with the figural perspective insofar as the latter articulates with the 'holistic approach which stresses processes, relationships, connections and interdependency among the component parts' (Denscombe, 1998: 69) said to be characteristic of the former.

In what follows I offer some preliminary thoughts on the utility of a qualitative approach - in the form of semi-structured interviews<sup>2</sup> - for a figural perspective on the task of making sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies'.

### Ethnography from a figural perspective

Writing in the mid-1980s, Evans and Davies (1986: 11) commented that, despite the growth of sociological research into education generally, the physical was an area largely neglected - 'especially by qualitative sociological research'. In the intervening years several publications have incorporated qualitative elements, usually in the form of interviews (e.g. Mason, 1995) and several authors - notable among whom has been Andrew Sparkes (1992) - have utilised qualitative approaches to exploring the world of PE. A growing body of literature (e.g. Dowling-Naess, 1996; Armour, 1997; Armour and

Jones, 1998; Dévis-Dévis and Sparkes, 1998) suggests that qualitative procedures are prospering as a research methodology in PE. It is worth noting, however, that many of these studies appear to take for granted a view of qualitative research in the ethnographic tradition as limited to what Denscombe (1998) terms an *idiographic* approach - a stand alone snapshot of a particular person or group of people at a particular place and time, which possesses little or no generalizability. Indeed, such a perception may have been reinforced by claims of a similar nature from researchers themselves (e.g. Armour and Jones, 1998; Dowling-Naess, 1996).

From a figurational perspective, however, such qualitative research can be viewed as having more potential for extrapolation from the particular to the general than is sometimes acknowledged, not least in terms of consideration of how findings compare with those of other studies in the ethnographic tradition. In this vein, Denscombe (1998: 70; emphasis added) claims that '(ethnography) *thrives* on being able to compare and contrast lifestyles, understandings and beliefs within a society'. Whilst Denscombe may be overstating the case, what makes studies such as my own of *sociological* - as well as *psychological* - interest is the identification of 'public' as well as 'private' issues, and the articulation between them. Sociologists, it might be said, endeavour to recognise patterns and processes that characterise groups of individuals in their particular social networks and to tease out the potential significance of these for our understanding of people's - in my case, of PE teachers' - thoughts and practices. In a recent study, Armour and Jones (1998) have argued that, whilst common themes emerge from their case-studies, '(E)ach story is unique' (p. 4) and is 'informative as a case-study in its own right' (p. 4). Yet, if each teacher's story really were unique it would seem of little or no interest to sociologists because one would be unable to generalise from it. One of the main benefits of a sociological approach is

precisely that one stands to learn something that *may* be generalised to many, if not all, PE teachers, regarding the way in which the networks of which they are a part enable or constrain, to a greater or lesser extent, what they *think* and what they *do*. In a nutshell, there appear grounds for thinking that a figurational view of qualitative case-study work has the potential to make a more substantial contribution to our grasp of the lives, 'philosophies' and practices of PE teachers.

With these issues in mind, my own study has attempted to take what Woods (cited in Denscombe, 1998) refers to as a *nomothetic* approach; that is to say, an approach that forms the basis for comparison, generalising and theorising. Such a view of qualitative work in the ethnographic tradition dovetails with an Eliasian or figurational perspective in its emphasis upon the importance of 'theory grounded in the detailed observation undertaken' (Denscombe, 1998: 72) - in Eliasian terms, the 'two-way traffic' between theory and evidence - which encourages the researcher to monitor the adequacy and applicability of theory to empirical reality in an attempt to test and even develop theory. A process-sociological (or figurational) approach, it is claimed, is particularly well-suited to realising the potential of qualitative research and, as a consequence, to making a substantial contribution to our grasp of the 'philosophies' and practices of teachers. Working from a figurational perspective enables the utilisation of a number of key 'sensitising' concepts which articulate with the aims and methods of interviewing as a dimension of ethnographic research. These key concepts, it is suggested, are the concept of figuration itself, the relationship between involvement and detachment, the 'two-way' traffic between theory and evidence and the 'object-adequacy' of interview data. I want, now, to say a little more about each of these concepts, in turn.



## Key figural concepts for qualitative research

### *Figurations*

It became clear during my research that, far from being the outcome of a process of isolated reasoning, PE teachers' 'philosophies' do not develop in isolation from other people such as their own childhood teachers, their sporting peers, their PE teaching colleagues or even parents and pupils. Neither, for that matter, do their 'philosophies' develop without reference to considerations of a more practical nature such as resource constraints, sporting preferences and expertise or the requirements of NCPE. A recognition of the significance of people's situations for their thinking highlights the importance of exploring the networks in which PE teachers have been, and are, involved. In this respect, semi-structured interviews provided a particularly suitable means of eliciting data on PE teachers' figurations. The basic structure or skeleton provided by semi-structured interviews enabled investigation of particular aspects of teachers' figurations (e.g. their biographies, departmental dynamics, resource constraints). At the same time, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews permitted the pursuit of potentially interesting lines of enquiry as and when they presented themselves (e.g. regarding examinations in PE). In this manner, semi-structured interviews enabled combined coverage of those aspects of teachers' figurations more or less common to all teachers (e.g. NCPE and government legislation) together with the personal and local dimensions of their figurations (e.g. the situation in their particular schools). In particular, semi-structured interviews offer a very useful means of exploring the interrelationships between past and present - the networks in which PE teachers have been involved in the past as well as those in which they are currently involved, since both may affect their views on the nature and purposes of PE.

In this regard, the potential for adaptation as they unfold make semi-structured interviews a particularly useful tool for getting beyond the 'superficial' aspects of people's consciousness. 'What must be reached', in a sociological study (especially of the figurational kind), are according to Camic (1986; cited in van Krieken, 1998: 47), people's habits (or habitus) for 'these are the real forces which govern us'. This is particularly so, if one accepts the Eliasian premise that the ideas which people express, which come to the surface so to speak, are by no means necessarily the ones which have most influence on their conduct (van Krieken, 1998).

Thus, an additional potential benefit of the flexibility of semi-structured interviews to the figurational sociologist is the way in which they allow the researcher - if s/he is attuned to such moments - to exploit suitable opportunities for probing respondents' perceptions of their figurations. This is where, in my case at least, semi-structured interviews proved an invaluable tool for exploring figurations. Simple observation of PE teachers would be likely to indicate, for example, that they abide by much of the outward requirements, for example, of NCPE (e.g. covering the required activity areas at each Key Stage). Interviewing teachers, on the other hand, allowed me - from the platform of questions on key themes of investigation, such as NCPE - to explore interesting avenues of enquiry and to gain a feel, in this case, for the sense of unease many teachers felt with regard to NCPE, the manner in which they perceived themselves as constrained to deliver it and the ways in which they circumnavigate or even ignore aspects of NCPE that they do not like (e.g. dance) or prefer not to practice in the manner recommended (e.g. planning and evaluation). Whereas *unstructured* interviews, by their very nature, cannot guarantee coverage of particular topics of interest to the researcher, at the other end of the spectrum *tightly* structured interviews prevent the researcher adapting to the interview as it develops. Semi-

structured interviews, in contrast, are more likely to shed light on the complexity of people's thoughts and experiences precisely because they allow adaptation of questions - around a basic structure - to meet the particular circumstances, re-ordering of questions to coincide with the data revealed and/or the insertion of additional questions to tease out or probe issues or revelations.

It is worth noting that labelling these interviews as 'semi-structured' should not obscure the realisation that, as a process, interviewing can move backwards and forwards along a continuum between being tightly or loosely structured. Semi-structured interviews, in particular, appear well-placed to incorporate greater or lesser degrees of structure as circumstances warrant.

Whilst the combination of structure with flexibility was a significant 'benefit' of semi-structured interviews, the 'separateness' of the interviewing process was a potential 'cost'. As if to exacerbate the inherent difficulties of the interviewing process, I was meeting teachers in isolation from their practical context - from the concrete aspects of their network (e.g. the gym, the changing room and so on). It was in this regard that the concept of figuration provided a useful reminder during the interview process of the need to contextualise teachers' responses, and to tease out the dispositions that suffused them (van Krieken, 1998), by locating them in their broader practical context; for example, by exploring the day-to-day constraints of their workplace.

### *Involvement and detachment*

There are two ways in which involvement and detachment is a key sensitising concept for a study of this nature. In the first place, and with regard to the PE teachers themselves, involvement-detachment is a particularly useful way of



making sense of, and explaining, the continuum of more or less mythical or reality-congruent, more-or-less involved or detached, knowledge (Elias, 1956, 1978) reflected in their 'philosophies' and the ideologies underpinning these. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly with regard to the process of interviewing, involvement-detachment as an explanatory concept was particularly pertinent inasmuch as my study involved a physical educationalist investigating the 'philosophies' of other physical educationalists. As the researcher, I had chosen to investigate something with which I was more or less involved. Unavoidably 'involved', I was bound to acknowledge, along with Denscombe, that:

the ethnographer's final account of the culture or group being studied is more than just a description - it is a *construction*. It is not a direct 'reproduction', a literal photograph of the situation. It is rather a crafted construction which employs particular writing skills (rhetoric) and which invariably owes something to the ethnographer's own experiences (Denscombe, 1998: 69; emphasis in the original).

Perceptions regarding the usefulness and nature of the research problem are inevitably grounded in values and beliefs acquired by the researcher during his/her life-course. This is a particular problem when researching PE given the particularly deep attachments to sport and physical activity that physical educationalists (including myself) are likely to have developed and the resultant bonds with PE that this is likely to have encouraged. Whilst, for Maguire (1988: 189), 'an attitude of detachment' is 'the hallmark of scientific enquiry', it is worth remembering that as far as figuralists are concerned, it is not possible to obtain complete detachment. It might, therefore, be more accurate to say that movement of this kind - along the involvement-detachment continuum *towards a greater degree of detachment* - is a desirable feature of any systematic study and particularly a sociological study which incorporate interviews as a research tool. Maguire acknowledges the fact that

it is impossible for the investigator to be completely detached since s/he is part of the patterns which are the subject of investigation. He continues:

As such it is more difficult for a sociologist to perform the mental operation of detaching himself or herself from the role of immediate participant and from the limited vista that it offers. *But it is not a question of discarding an involved position for a completely detached role.* As social actors, sociologists cannot cease to take part. In fact, their very participation and involvement is itself one of the conditions for comprehending the problem that they try to solve as scientists ... sociologists must, if they are to understand the figurations which bind people together, probe from the inside how human beings experience such an existence (Elias, 1956) ... Sociologists must, therefore, be both relatively involved *and* detached (1988: 189; emphasis in the original).

This, then, is the point for figuralists: *complete* detachment on the part of the researcher is neither achievable nor, for that matter, is it desirable. One of the benefits of possessing 'insider' knowledge and experience - what Dunning (1999: 9) refers to as 'motivating and familiarity-conferring' involvement<sup>3</sup> - may well be a deepened appreciation of relevant issues as well as a heightened sensitivity towards the perceptions of those under scrutiny; that is to say, the kind of empathetic understanding that underlies Weber's (1949) conception of 'verstehen' and which Denscombe (1998: 69) refers to as seeing 'things from the point of view of those involved' - including the meaning and significance of what might be termed 'insider language' or terminology (e.g. 'health-related exercise'). In addition, thinking in terms of fluid and complex balances between involvement and detachment (Dunning, 1992) enables the researcher to be on his or her 'guard' for fluctuating responses - from both the interviewer and interviewee - to topics and questions to which they may have more or less emotional orientations, such as the relatively marginal status of their subject or the place of games in the PE curriculum. Consequently, the process of considering the issue of what might constitute an appropriate

blend of involvement-detachment holds out the promise to the researcher of gaining greater control over his/her emotional involvement which might, in turn, be expected to lead to the development of a more realistic or adequate analysis of the processes under investigation.

*The 'object-adequacy' of semi-structured interview data*

Recognising - as the researcher - the significance and potentially distorting impact of involvement may, then, also offer the possibility of a more adequate analysis, subsequently; that is to say, one more congruent with reality. The concept of involvement-detachment has the propensity to sensitise the researcher to the need to keep interpretations of data tentative and balanced, to avoid straining too hard to make a preconceived point; for there are, as one might expect, risks associated with involvement and these are neatly illustrated in the recent work of Armour and Jones (1998).

Prior to penning their self-portraits, Armour and Jones identify themselves as 'integral to the work and, therefore, omnipresent in the text' (1998: 10). Thus, from the outset Armour and Jones declare their *involvement* in their ostensibly sociological study of PE teachers' lives and careers. As human beings, researchers are - as we have seen - prone to '*degrees of involvement and detachment*' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming; emphasis in the original). The problem for Armour and Jones - as physical educationalists - is that they appear not to have recognised this. Consequently, they seem reluctant to detach themselves to the extent necessary to obtain the kind of 'judicious balance' (Dunning, 1999) between involvement and detachment that would enable them to offer a more adequate account of their subject-matter, at least in sociological terms. Throughout the work, the authors appear, as Elias (1978) might have put it, too deeply involved with PE to look at it from a sufficiently detached perspective. Consequently, it is a feature of a study of



this kind that the authors persistently demonstrate a tendency towards over-involvement on one side or the other of the debates which, in turn, vitiates their analysis. At numerous points, Armour and Jones appear to eschew any degree of detachment they might have achieved and allow their ideological preferences to show: they talk, for example, of 'the unique educational potential of their subject (PE)' (p. 140), of getting 'our message across' (p. 107); claim that 'we need to be sure that we can deliver a consistent message' (p. 107); argue for 'the need to return to the central activities of physical education' (p. 139); and exhort teachers to "'believe in ourselves'" (p. 139) and 'trust their instincts' (p. 139): 'surely the way forward', they add, 'is to provide *proof* ... of the broad educational potential of sporting activities' (p. 139; emphasis in the original).

On the whole, and in terms of the adequacy of data produced, a qualitative approach - in the form of semi-structured interviews - to the issue of PE teachers' 'philosophies' seemed to be a particularly useful way of investigating the interrelationships between the various features of PE teachers' habituses as well as their working lives; that is to say, their figurations. It is deemed a more adequate means of making sense of PE teachers 'in the round', so to speak, inasmuch as it incorporates an attempt to locate them at the centre of their figurations rather than isolating facets of their lives, such as their biographies.

It is worth noting, however, the common misconception that one can interpret data wholly objectively - a particularly pertinent issue for data generated by semi-structured interviews. As Roberts and Brodie (1992: 95) point out, 'findings do not speak for themselves but require intelligent interpretation'. Acknowledging that the whole of the research process, and particularly interpreting data, will inevitably mean a degree of involvement on the part of

the researcher enables one to conceptualise the data or 'knowledge' one's research throws up more satisfactorily and to minimise 'perceptual distortion' (Dunning, 1999: 244); that is to say, in terms of *degrees* of adequacy rather than absolutely. In trying to comprehend the configuration of circumstances that influence PE teachers thinking, one has to be on one's guard for the point at which plausible assumptions shade into speculation: where the researcher's comments have a tendency to exceed the evidence. In this regard, reflecting upon each teacher's comments prior to subsequent interviews (where feasible) was reinforced by keeping in view the reciprocal relationship between theory and evidence as recommended by figurational sociologists. This brings me to the final key sensitising concept - that of the 'two-way' traffic between theory and evidence.

*Theory and evidence: 'two-way traffic'*

At the heart of figurational sociology is the issue of the relationship between theory and evidence (Elias, 1978). 'Simply put', Maguire argues, 'figurational sociology rejects both the imposition of a "grand theory" onto evidence and "abstracted empiricism" uninformed by theoretical insight'. He continues: 'Rather, the processes of theory formation and empirical enquiry are seen as interwoven and indivisible' (Maguire, 1988: 188).

A more satisfactory conceptualisation of the relationship between theory and data might be to regard them as interdependent; that is, to recognize, and make use of, the 'two-way traffic' between theory and empirical evidence (Elias, 1956) in what Dunning (1999: 8) refers to as 'theory-guided research'. Dunning advises the following approach:

always relate your observations to a body of theory and your theories to a body of observations ... uninterrupted two-way traffic between two layers of knowledge; that of general ideas, theories or models and

that of observations and perceptions of specific events. The latter, if not sufficiently informed by the former, remains unorganised and diffuse; the former, if not sufficiently informed by the latter, remains dominated by feelings and imaginings (Dunning, 1993: 187).

Given that the aim of this study is, broadly speaking, to *describe* PE teachers' 'philosophies' before attempting to *explain* these in relation to common ideological themes and the networks in which they are involved, it will be worthwhile briefly outlining two other central concepts - namely 'philosophy' and 'ideology' - and one related concept - that of 'discourse' - as well as indicating how these will be utilised in this study.

### Philosophy, ideology and discourse

In line with the figurational approach adopted in this study it is claimed that concepts are best employed, not as a preliminary to research, but 'as "sensitising concepts" in guiding investigation' (CRSS, 1998: 1). Whilst ideal-type definitions are reflected in lexicographic and stipulative terms (and, moreover, in philosophising about PE), as far as this study is concerned, more value will be placed upon 'the detailed investigation of ... real type(s) or case stud(ies)' (CRSS, 1998: 2). This notwithstanding, in the first instance, the ideological themes more or less prominent in the PE subject-community will be outlined and explored, including - where applicable - the more properly philosophical aspects associated with these ideologies.

To begin with, then, it is worth offering a brief sketch of the differing uses of the term philosophy employed in this study before taking a more detailed look at the nature of ideology.



## *Philosophy*

The term 'philosophy' has a lexicographic sense which broadly centres upon the rational principles underlying a putative knowledge base (Chambers English Dictionary, 1990) and it will be the academic sense of philosophy that is utilised when describing educational *philosophy* in the section on academic ideology. It is important to note, however, that use of the term philosophy in this study shares more in common with its taken-for-granted, everyday usage as one's view of 'how things should be': as might be illustrated at a conversational level by a phrase such as 'my philosophy of PE is ...'. When describing the views of PE teachers, this represents, as the philosopher Anthony Flew (1984: vii) indicates, use of the term 'philosophy' 'in a perfectly reputable and *useful* sense' (emphasis added):

In this sense philosophy is a matter of standing back a little from the ephemeral urgencies to take an aphoristic overview that usually embraces both value-commitments and beliefs about the general nature of things.

Indeed, as indicated earlier (Note 1, Chapter 1), and as this study will endeavour to demonstrate, it would be more appropriate, sociologically-speaking, to utilise the term 'habitus', in preference to that of 'philosophy', precisely because PE teachers' thoughts on the nature and purposes of PE tend not to be *constructed* in any substantial sense. Rather, they frequently appear as sub-conscious, slowly developing, predispositions that are revealed as *intuitions* more than conscious constructions *per se*. Nonetheless, and notwithstanding this caveat, the term 'philosophy' will suffice here for the reasons already alluded to in Chapter One. In the case of PE teachers, their 'philosophies' of PE may well - indeed are more likely to - be constructed as much in the midst of 'ephemeral urgencies' as when stood back or 'detached' from the hurly-burly of the day-to-day realities of teaching.

Thus, whilst it will incorporate a summary of genuine philosophical attempts to make sense of the nature and purposes of PE, the study will, for the most part, utilise the term 'philosophy' in its more 'everyday' sense to describe the concise and pithy (Chambers English Dictionary, 1990) but, nevertheless, frequently intuitive overviews of the nature and purposes of PE held by teachers.

Although a precise picture of the conception of PE that each teacher wants to defend might not be readily identifiable, nor clear-cut, nor specific, the (ideological) contours are likely to be more-or-less visible. Particularly salient may be the most visible dimension of teachers' views on PE, namely what they *take-for-granted*: what appears to them as self-evident. In this regard, their early sporting and PE experiences, their undergraduate and post-graduate training, but also the circumstances in which they find themselves teaching (both at the macro and micro levels of their figurations) as well as the constraints imposed upon them by the National Curriculum, might all combine to encourage a particular orientation, or view, towards PE and may well be reflected in the common-sense or taken-for-granted aspects of their 'philosophies'.

### *Ideology*

Through the twentieth century, sociological uses of the term *ideology* have developed away from what have been termed (Mann, 1983) evaluatively *neutral* conceptions - characteristic of lexicographic definitions such as 'a body or system of *ideas*' (Chambers English Dictionary, 1990) - towards definitions that incorporate pejorative and thus evaluatively *negative* connotations, 'implying false or mistaken notions' (Mann, 1983: 164). Hence, standard sociological usages of the term have tended to qualify the concept of ideology (as 'a general system of ideas') to incorporate notions of 'falsehood and

distortion generated by more or less unconscious motivations' (Flew, 1984: 162). Specifically figurational uses of the term ideology can be taken to embrace the habits and dispositions characteristic of *habitus*.

It is a central tenet of this thesis that much of the 'knowledge' incorporated into, and thus constituent of, PE teachers' 'philosophies' is, in fact, ideological; that is to say, it is by degrees more or less mythical (Dunning, 1999), more or less false, more or less distorted. Whilst in the late twentieth century ideologies *per se* may be said to 'have absorbed a good deal of *factual* ... knowledge' (Elias, 1971; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 32; emphasis added) they are, nonetheless, best viewed as located along a continuum between involvement and detachment (Elias, 1971; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998). From this perspective, Dunning (1992: 178) observes that whilst ideologies 'differ in their degrees of reality-congruence ... they always ... contain a mythical component', making them what Elias would have termed 'an amalgam of realistic observations and collective fantasies' (Elias, 1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 227). From such a perspective, it is argued in this thesis that when PE teachers reveal their thoughts on the purposes of PE they 'bear the stamp of higher ... (or) lesser detachment or involvement' (Elias, 1987; in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 218) and in the process reveal degrees of 'reality-congruence'.

The distortions characteristic of ideological thinking range, for Mannheim (1960: 49), 'all the way from conscious lies to half-conscious and unwitting disguises; from calculated attempts to dupe others to self-deception'. What marks out differing views about the nature and purposes of PE as ideology - rather than as deception - is that they are not seen as 'calculated lies' but, for the most part, as a consequence of the social situation teachers find themselves in (Mannheim, 1960); that is to say, on a continuum 'between a



simple lie at one pole, and an error, which is the result of a distorted and faulty conceptual apparatus, at the other' (Mannheim, 1960: 54).

It is important to note that ideologies, as Dunning (1992: 187) says of theories in general, 'become fashionable for a greater or lesser period of time for extra-scientific reasons' and frequently this leads to an 'uncritical submission to the authority and prestige of the dominant standards' (Elias, 1987; in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 231). Mannheim (1960) draws our attention to the empirical tendency for ideologies to develop in conflict situations as a defence of, or attack on, something - hence their propensity to distort. In this vein, Elias (1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 227) points out that people:

work and live in a world in which almost everywhere groups, small and great, including their own groups, are engaged in a struggle for position and often enough for survival, some trying to rise and better themselves in the teeth of strong opposition, some who have risen before trying to hold on to what they have, and some going down.

Given that diverse and multi-faceted societies contain a plurality of ideologies, education and PE might be expected to contain a range of ideologies and vested interests expressed through a variety of discourses (Penney and Evans, 1997). In the case of this study, the significance of discourse as a manifestation of ideology is made apparent in Elias' observation that the 'ways in which individuals of a group experience whatever affects their senses, the meaning which it has for them, depends on the standard forms for dealing with, and of thinking and speaking about, these phenomena' (Elias, 1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 218).

### *Discourse*

The crucial distinction between the concepts of ideology and discourse merits elaboration. According to Kirk (1992a: 23), discourse 'refers to the ways in

which people communicate their understanding of their own and others' activities, and of events in the world around them'. This, for Johns, Gilbert and Shuttleworth (1994: 11), constitutes, 'the tacitly and explicitly governed pattern of language (employed) to portray what we view as our social reality'. In a nutshell, then, discourses in PE are the multiplicity of ways in which those involved with the subject communicate something of what - for their part - PE *means* or *is about*: its nature and its purposes. Discourses are aspects of the processes by which ideologies are not only *articulated* but also *developed*. Discourse not only *reveals* the user's fundamental beliefs and values - about the nature and purposes of PE - it also serves to filter and form his/her thought processes at the same time; it does not simply reflect thinking, *it is part of thinking itself*. Although, as indicated earlier, several writers view discourse as reflecting *ideology* and as the embodiment of ideological work (Kirk, 1992a; Johns *et al.*, 1994), for figurationalists it is more precise to view discourse as the work of 'doing' ideology. On this view discourse is best conceptualised as an *aspect* of the ideologies found among particular groups rather than in the reified terms suggested by the claim that discourse embodies ideology. Conceptualising discourse thus overcomes any tendency to view discourse and ideology as separate entities.

It can readily be seen, then, that in order for any study to make sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies' it becomes necessary to identify and make overt the ideological underpinnings of PE teachers' discourse, especially those practices that 'involve the exercise of power to maintain the status quo' (Prain and Hickey, 1995: 78). To make sense of teachers' 'philosophies', ideologies and the discourses that manifest them, their 'philosophies' need to be viewed in context: that is to say, in the particular figurations which make *particular* interpretations of PE more likely than others.

## **The study**

### *Literature review*

In the first instance, and as a background to investigating PE teachers' 'philosophies', I have sought - via a review of relevant academic and professional literature - to establish the conceptions of PE most prominent and influential among the academic communities (e.g. philosophers of PE and teacher-trainers). I have then attempted to tease out and bring to the surface the ideological underpinnings for these typically theoretical conceptions of PE, as they have emerged and developed over time.

### *The working hypothesis*

Working from a figurational perspective, it was tentatively hypothesised that PE teachers' 'philosophies' can best be understood not so much as the consequence of abstract philosophical thought, but as an aspect of the figurations of which they are a part. Salient features of these networks would be the practical concerns of teachers' work as well as their personal habituses (experiences and background and associated values, attitudes and ideologies to which they subscribe). Thus, the study will attempt to bring out the affective and value-laden aspects of PE teachers' 'philosophies' whilst at the same time, offering insights into the significance of contextual influences in the construction of these 'philosophies'.

### *The interviews*

In order to be clear about how the data resulting from the interviews were expected to relate to the research problem, I have, after each sample interview question (see below), offered a brief outline explaining:

- (i) why the question was asked and the data the question sought to obtain;
- (ii) why the data are required: i.e. how they relate to the research problem;



(iii) examples of what the data generated looked like (in terms of responses from the teachers to the questions asked).

Not being as unfocused as unstructured interviews nor as rigidly constrained as the structured variety, with semi-structured interviews the researcher has a clear list of issues to be addressed. Denscombe (1998: 113) summarises the approach thus:

the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. The answers are open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest.

In reality, as Denscombe notes, semi- and unstructured interviews are on a continuum along which the interviewer slides back and forth as and when deemed appropriate, for:

allowing interviewees to 'speak their minds' is a better way of discovering things about complex issues ... they lend themselves to in-depth investigations, particularly those which explore personal accounts of experiences and feelings (Denscombe, 1998: 113).

The sampling frame for the study was all male and female PE teachers within schools in the state education system in the county of Cheshire. This included all those in mainstream secondary schools, all grades of the profession and positions of responsibility, differing types of secondary school (i.e. local authority and grant-maintained). Whilst most PE was conducted in single-sex lessons, virtually all of the schools were ostensibly 'co-educational'.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 35 PE teachers from two unitary authorities (formerly one County Council) in the north-west of

England in late June/early July of the summer 1998 term. The 35 teachers taught PE in 17 schools. 10 teachers taught in five Chester schools, 11 in five Runcorn schools, 3 in one Vale Royal school, 4 in two Widnes schools, 3 in two Ellesmere Port schools, 2 in one Malpas school and 2 in one school in Tarporley. The sample consisted of 15 male and 20 female teachers. Fifteen (8 male/7 female) of these were heads of PE departments (HoD) and 20 (7 male/13 female) were main grade teachers of PE. Thirteen of the teachers (of whom three were HoDs) were 30 years of age or younger. Six (two HoDs) were between 31 and 40. Fifteen were between 41 and 50 years (9 HoDs) and one (HoD) was over 50.

The local education authority Chief Adviser for secondary schools and the (acting) Adviser for PE gave written or verbal agreement regarding the suitability of the research and permission for me to contact the schools and teachers. Covering letters - outlining the basis of the research - were then sent to headteachers at 26 schools asking them to forward enclosed letters to all the PE teachers in their school. These letters - to the PE teachers themselves - repeated the brief outline of the research and asked them to sign and return a 'permission' slip if they were agreeable to being interviewed. All but one of the teachers interviewed had given their written consent to voluntary participation and verbally agreed at the time of interview to having the interview recorded on audio-tape and transcribed at a later date. The additional teacher gave permission 'on-site'.

Interviews were scheduled for 30 minutes. Many, however, extended beyond the time allocated and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. This was, for the most part, due to the willingness of teachers to continue talking. In addition, on a number of occasions, interviewees allowed me to keep the tape running

after the core elements of the interview had been concluded and whilst we discussed related topics more informally.

The interviews opened with a short explanation of the nature of the research and of the interview, in an attempt to reassure the interviewees that the study was interesting and relevant to the world of PE as well as, at the same time, allaying any suspicions the interviewees might have about the use to which the information may be put, their anonymity and issues of confidentiality.

The interviews focused upon PE teachers' 'philosophies'. The following broad areas provided the structure for questioning:

1. Teachers' views regarding what PE should be about.

These opening questions were intended to obtain teachers' 'philosophies', in a nutshell, prior to further questioning in response to, and built around, the nature of their responses:

Interviewer (KG): Can I start by asking you what you think PE should be about?

Teacher: PE should be about enjoyment. PE should be about getting children involved in physical activity and teaching them about physical activities.

Follow-up questions were aimed at probing the reasons for the stated view:

KG: Why?/ Why do you think that's particularly important?

Teacher: Well, that's what sport's all about isn't it?

2. The relationship between teachers' 'philosophies' and their practice.

This theme of questioning was incorporated in an attempt to establish, amongst other things, whether teachers perceived what they *thought* and what they *did* as related:

KG: Is that what you do in practice?



Teacher(s): I don't know / Yes, I think so.

Follow-up questions usually took the form of a request for illustrations:

KG: For example ...

Teacher: (hesitation) Well, in ...

### 3. Teachers' perceptions of NCPE.

This theme of questioning strove to examine teachers' perceptions of NCPE and how these related to their own 'philosophies' and practices:

KG: How does that match with the expectations of National Curriculum Physical Education?

Teacher(s): Not very well / That every child gets a broad and balanced curriculum.

Follow-up questions sought to probe teachers' thoughts on the topic:

KG: If I asked you to summarise the 'pros' and 'cons' of NCPE, as you see them, what would they be?

Teacher: Well, hopefully, it's supposed to ensure that all schools teach roughly the same ... thing ... it's the government's way of trying to make sure that every school does.

### 4. Teachers' perceptions of contextual constraints.

Under this theme, questions were aimed towards teachers' perceptions of things that 'got in the way' of realising their ideal view of PE, including constraints surrounding the delivery of PE in general and NCPE in particular:

KG: Can you say a little now about what you do *in practice*?

Teacher: In my lessons ... short-term aims are that pupils learn individual skills within a sport.

Follow-up questions were focused upon particular examples of constraints mentioned in response to the initial question:

KG: You mentioned 'the shortage of staff'. Can you elaborate a little?

Teacher: I mean, the main problem is the staffing (available) at the time.

## 5. Teachers' biographies.

The final theme concerned teachers' habituses and was aimed at establishing teachers' perceptions of the things that stood out in their biographies as influential, in terms of their future careers and views:

KG: Can I ask you a few questions about your autobiography; can you tell me something about your early life?

Teacher(s): I've been competitive throughout my life/ I was good at sport ... 'jack of all trades, master of none'.

Follow-up questions were aimed at encouraging teachers to reflect upon the differing 'stages' of their biographies, such as school and higher education:

KG: What about your own experiences of PE at school?

Teacher(s): I loved it!/ It gave me a negative impression of gymnastics.

It is important to point out, however, that due to the nature of the semi-structured interviewing process, in practice, interviews rarely dealt with each of the themes in quite the same way each time nor, for that matter, in the aforesaid order.

### *Recording and transcription of interviews*

Interviews were recorded on a small tape-recorder for later transcription. At the same time, hand-written notes were taken on the skeleton outline (consisting of the key areas for discussion including a key question and one or more supplementary questions) which acted as a prompt. Frequently, follow-up questions took the form of 'Why do you think ... ?' as this appeared most useful in teasing out respondents underlying thoughts and assumptions.

### *Content analysis: categories of meaning*

Content analysis is the relatively detached and systematic deconstruction of texts whether in the form of the printed or spoken word. Texts can be interpreted on a number of levels but an over-riding concern is to try to comprehend the perspective of the interviewee. The interview data from the study were arranged into what might be termed 'common clusters' or 'categories of meaning' based upon the core themes of the interviews - such as teachers' 'philosophies', their biographies, their views on NCPE and so on. These categories were, in turn, amended to incorporate the emerging areas of concern in the interviews, such as 'enjoyment' and examinations in PE. Grouping teachers' comments together in this way - under themes adapted or amended during the research process to match topics that appeared most common in their responses - enabled extraction of 'the essential features from an otherwise overwhelming stream of talk or/and behaviour' (Evans and Davies, 1986: 13).

The notion of 'two-way' traffic between evidence-gathering and theory formation is one that consorts readily with qualitative research (in the ethnographic tradition) in the form of semi-structured interviews. It allows the identification of themes in the data and the subsequent adaptation or supplementation of succeeding interviews to, as it were, 'check out' the researcher's impressions and tentative explanations as they develop. In my study, examinable PE provided a case in point. What started out as a minor supplementary area of concern on the interview schedule rapidly became a substantial area for discussion as it became increasingly apparent that this was perceived by teachers as a crucial constraint. Identifying it as an emerging issue from the comments of teachers interviewed in the early stages



of the research enabled me to 'test' it out by incorporating it into later interviews as a supplementary question held, so to speak, 'at the ready'.

## Conclusion

At the heart of the research process is the researcher and this, at first glance, appears inimical to the production of worthwhile data. However, from a figurational perspective, it has the potential to offer insights that are unlikely to be gleaned in any other way. All methodologies can be viewed in terms of a 'cost-benefit' analysis. The most salient potential 'cost' of a qualitative approach utilising semi-structured interviews is the risk that involvement might lead to distortion. The most likely 'benefit' of such an approach is that the research will produce the kind of rich and detailed data that help locate the respondents at the centre of the dynamic interdependency networks they inhabit and, as a consequence, what they think and what they do can be viewed 'in the round'.

One particular 'cost' or, rather, potential weakness of a qualitative procedure deserves particular mention at this juncture. It is important to recognise that, notwithstanding their relatively frequent use of the term, the 'philosophies' of PE teachers are not in fact articulated as such - for the most part they are implicit in what the teachers are saying. Thus, there is a risk that in trying to make sense of these one begins to impose a rationality upon them that they do not in fact possess.

Let me say a little more about this significant point. Frequently teachers' responses to questions involved, in the first instance, somewhat surprised or 'glazed' or 'dawning' looks in their eyes and lengthy pauses in response to relatively straightforward questions. These began to suggest to me that in acting in effect to 'shine a light', so to speak, on these otherwise hidden

'thoughts' one is in danger of portraying them 'in the light', as it were; with the concomitant risk that in doing so one gives them a shape or meaning that in reality they do not actually warrant. In truth, it might be argued, the natural state of these thoughts *is* darkness! The statements produced by teachers give the appearance on occasions of being produced mechanically and culled from a common *fund* of everyday ideas. It may be argued that as such they do not have real meaning; they are taken from a fund of shared understandings that the teachers cannot rise above, as it were. Nonetheless, it seems to me that this is a somewhat exaggerated picture. Whilst it may be true that teachers, in common with many working people, pluck their *post hoc* justifications from a stream of taken-for-granted common-sense assumptions, the process of interviewing does allow for degrees of exploration of such views.

Notwithstanding the claim that such interviewees may then simply resort to further attempts to plunder common-sense justifications in order to bolster their initial responses, it remains an inevitable dimension of qualitative research that the researcher is bound to engage in interpretation of the data. It then becomes a matter of how adequate the attempted explanation is as a representation of the phenomena as it is perceived. Thus, the benefits of a qualitative approach from a figurational perspective seem to be the opportunity provided by semi-structured interviews to take to the heart of the research several key facets of the figurational approach in such a way that one is more likely to arrive at what one considers a more adequate portrayal of the 'what' and 'why' of people's thoughts.

## Notes

1 The term 'qualitative' is being used to indicate a research methodology which attempts to explore the subjects' (in this case, PE teachers') worlds from their perspective and is primarily concerned with understanding the meaning individuals attach to their world (Bowling, 1997) (in the form of PE teachers' 'philosophies' in the present study). It is in this sense - of gaining a feel for the subjects' worlds as it is perceived from the 'inside', so to speak - that qualitative work can be seen as a dimension of ethnography (taken to mean the study of peoples or cultures) (Denscombe, 1998) and thus as being in the ethnographic tradition.

2 I am defining semi-structured interviews as interviews that are structured around several key areas of investigation but that incorporate a high degree of flexibility - allowing the interviewer to explore areas of particular interest, as they emerge in the interview.

3 In this case, my claim for 'familiarity-conferring involvement' is based upon several facets of my own biography:

(i) several years of teaching PE in a fairly large number of schools in four education authorities in the south-east, midlands and north-west of England;

(ii) coupled with the fact that, during an eighteen-month period in the early-1990s, I had taught with or observed several of the subjects teach; in addition to which I had reasonably extensive anecdotal evidence regarding several other teachers' approaches to PE as well as the practice of PE in their schools. It is suggested, therefore, that this lends another dimension to the research process in the form of what might be termed 'anthropological insights' into the 'life-worlds' of PE teachers.



## Chapter 4

### Ideological and Philosophical Themes in Physical Education

In this chapter I want to provide an outline of the ideological and, where relevant, the associated philosophical themes that have been more or less prominent among various groups at the differing levels of the PE subject-community (from PE teachers, themselves, through teacher-trainers to academics).

#### Prominent ideological themes in PE

Whilst there appear to be as many 'philosophies' of PE as there are PE teachers, two ideological themes dominate the history of PE: the pre-World War II (WWII) ideology of fitness and health and the post-war sporting (or 'traditional games') ideology. Contemporarily, 'Many debates about the nature and future direction of physical education' continue, according to Penney (1998: 117), to revolve around these two allegedly 'distinct and competing sets of interests'. Nonetheless, other ideologies besides those of sport and health have been discernible over the last 30 or so years, including those that might be termed 'education for leisure' and the 'academic' ideology. Both of these ideologies, but especially the latter, can be said to have become sufficiently prominent to begin to rival the more salient ideologies of sport and health. Since the late-1960s/early-1970s, in particular, an 'academic' ideology has become increasingly discernible and influential (Carroll, 1994, 1998; Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) to the extent that, for Reid (1996a), it shows all the signs of becoming a 'new orthodoxy' within PE, particularly at secondary school level. Latterly (from roughly the 1970s onwards), however, a substantially amended version of the health ideology

has resurfaced (in the form of 'health-related exercise' (HRE)) to vie with a renewed emphasis upon sport and team games (e.g. the revised NCPE of 1995), as well as the academic ideology, for ideological ascendancy in PE. It is worth noting, however, that whilst the growth of HRE and examinations in PE offered a significant challenge to the pre-eminence of sport and 'traditional games', recent developments suggest that the former (the health and academic ideologies) have been unable to depose, let alone displace, the latter (the sporting ideology). Indeed, political intervention in the mid-1990s has encouraged a re-emphasis upon 'traditional games' as the core of PE. This notwithstanding, it is a moot point whether a further shift in the turbulent history of ideologies within PE is about to be signalled by the 1999 review of NCPE. This is a matter I will return to in Chapter 9.

At this juncture, it is worth re-iterating the point that particular ideologies can be expected to have established varying degrees of ascendancy at the differing levels of PE - from teachers themselves through to academic philosophers of PE. This is particularly germane to the present study inasmuch as it is hypothesised that particular ideologies - especially those rooted in academic philosophy - are likely to be less rather than more prominent at the level of the day-to-day school practice of PE teachers. In addition, it is hypothesised that what educational philosophers such as Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997) and others (Carr, 1997; Parry, 1998) view as the 'standard' definition of PE (i.e. which in this study is referred to as the academic ideology) is not as influential at the level of practice as the rapid growth of examinable PE is taken by Reid, amongst others, to confirm. Indeed, it is probable that the academic ideology is unlikely to be as influential as ideologies that PE teachers either have a prior commitment to - such as the sporting ideology (a phrase used to encompass views that take sport and its inherently competitive nature as the core and main function of PE) - or are more constrained to

emphasise - such as health (a term intended to indicate views focusing upon the role of PE in increasing the health consciousness and aptitudes of individuals). A crucial pointer, then, to the subject matter of this study, is recognition of the gap between debate about the competing strengths of ideas at the conceptual level of educational philosophy, as conducted by educational philosophers, and the largely implicit 'philosophies' articulated by PE teachers, albeit frequently in an awkward and rudimentary manner (see Chapter 3).

Before examining the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers (in Chapter 5) I want to deal with each of the ideologies in greater depth. For the sake of clarity these will, in broad terms, be presented in order of their chronological emergence.

### **The ideology of health**

Despite the fact that many of the sons of the middle classes were revelling in the increasingly central position sport was coming to occupy in the public school education of young gentlemen towards the end of the nineteenth century, the lot of the children of the masses was wholly different. Although elementary schoolchildren could be instructed in drill (following the 1870 *Education Act*) this was permissible rather than mandatory. Indeed, '(W)orking-class boys had little enough physical education in school, working-class girls usually had none at all' (Holt, 1989: 118). This rudimentary physical training, that formed the developmental origins of a nascent PE in the state system (in the form of drill for the most part), initiated what was to be a long association between PE and concern for health and fitness. Thus, in the shape of physical 'training', PE became a significant element of the curriculum of state elementary schools in the early years of the twentieth century: a form of therapy intended to remedy the physical



ailments and defects of young children (a significant public issue around the turn of the century) through disciplined exercise (Bray, 1991; Holt, 1989; Williams, 1988).

The publication of several syllabi, between the years of 1909 and 1933, confirmed the role of PE as 'an arm of the School Medical service' (Kirk, 1992a: 129). In ideological, as well as practical terms, little of significance appeared to change between the wars. The 1933 *Syllabus*, despite including games, swimming and dancing as well as gymnastics (Bray, 1991), reiterated a medico-health rationale for PE as a form of training to remedy physical defects. As such, the *Syllabus* was a 'confirmation of the past, with its roots deeply embedded in the attitudes of the late-1800s' (Kirk, 1992a: 130), emphasising 'physical education's *de facto* status as health education' (p. 131; emphasis in the original) in schools.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the fledgling PE appears to have functioned as an adjunct to the medical profession. Its emphasis upon remedial exercise assisted the work of School Medical Officers by aiming to inculcate healthy habits and healthy pursuits in young children. What amounted in the Elementary schools to 'gym for the masses' constituted 'an after-the-event cure, or at least treatment, for particular manifestations of poor health' (Kirk, 1992a: 18). At the same time, PE was also expected to ensure a healthier and more disciplined male workforce and potential army, as well as stronger, healthier mothers for future generations. As a result, 'military drill fleshed out with some general exercise' (Holt, 1989: 139), together with a little therapeutic gymnastics, was considered to be all that working-class boys and girls required.

The 'rational recreation' movement (preachers, teachers and philanthropists: 'dedicated improvers of the young' (Holt, 1989: 139)) had sought, since the 1880s, to involve working-class boys and youths in games (such as football), which they believed would have similarly beneficial moral and spiritual effects to those claimed for the sons of the middle-classes. Despite this, the roots of the remedial, body conditioning strand of school PE remained well and truly in place by the First World War. Consequently, a more restricted physical fitness-oriented and therapeutic concept and ideology of health (with a clear emphasis upon the remedial 'health' function of physical activity) prevailed and dominated PE within the state school system until after WWII.

Despite growing encouragement from various groups (including the Board of Education) for the inclusion of a broad range of activities, in addition to gymnastics, in physical 'education', the underlying reality was less encouraging. Although the emerging modern sporting forms had taken hold in public schools by the latter stages of the nineteenth century, the majority of youngsters were receiving instruction in repetitive gymnastic drill-type activities in elementary schools until WWII. General exercises, rather than games, were the staple diet of working-class children. Thus, to the extent that physical training was included in the education of lower-class youngsters, the aim was merely to minimise or remedy economic and military deficiencies caused by an unhealthy and unfit population (Alderson and Crutchley, 1990). Indeed, the kinds of exercise recommended were those 'defined by medical practitioners in medical terms' (Kirk, 1992a: 129) - thereby illustrating the roots of a process of medicalization (that was already well under way in wider society) taking hold in PE in the early part of the twentieth century (Waddington and Murphy, 1992).

## The sporting ideology

After WWII, and alongside the introduction of compulsory schooling, the paramedical role - characteristic of the kind of physical *training* that PE had remained in practice - was gradually undermined by the rapid growth and burgeoning influence of games in PE. This was largely due to the large influx of games-oriented male teachers (keen to duplicate the alleged character benefits of games playing in the public schools) into the newly emerging secondary schools (Kirk, 1992a) and, particularly, the grammar schools (who frequently looked to the public school system for their academic and social models). This significant move towards concern with physical *education*, rather than merely physical *training*, encompassed a broader concern for moral and spiritual development (Kirk, 1992a) and the alleged character benefits of games-playing. Consequently, the main challenge to 'the early biologically oriented physical training model' became 'the attractiveness of the play movement and a dedication to teaching social values through games and sports' (Park, 1994: 64).

Despite the existence of a public school 'games' tradition, as well as the well-established popularity of competitive sports among adult participants and spectators alike, the competitive team games and sports (that 'had been part of the cultural fabric of British life' (Kirk, 1992a: 84) for almost one hundred years by the end of WWII) 'did not form a substantial part of PE programmes in the state sector until the introduction of mass secondary schooling in the late 1940s' (Kirk, 1992a: 84). Nonetheless, from the 1950s onwards, the popularity of games (and sport) within state schools increased rapidly, coming to occupy the ideological high ground of the subject as both 'the core of physical education and the largest part of the programme' (Kirk, 1992a: 84). In the process, sport (and particularly team games) attained the epithet of 'traditional' PE. As Houlihan (1991) points out, the dominant ideology within



PE since the 1944 *Education Act* has been "traditional" physical education and its central concern (and justification) the enhancement of sports performance' (Houlihan, 1991: 234).

It is worth noting, however, that in reality, the epithet of 'traditional' PE would, when viewed over the century of PE's existence, be more appropriately applied to exercise for health than games and sport for character development. Despite this, the somewhat mythical<sup>1</sup> epithet 'traditional' has nevertheless formed a taken-for-granted aspect of much discourse surrounding PE ever since; resurfacing frequently in contemporary debate (e.g. Department of National Heritage (DNH), 1995).

It is also worthy of note that, in marked contrast to what was happening in boys' PE, the early years of the twentieth century witnessed the development of a quite distinctive female tradition for privately educated middle-class girls. The combination of health-enhancing therapeutic gymnastics, with the character training and all-round physical vigour believed to characterise team games, were to be found increasingly in the new and more exclusive girls schools, staffed with games mistresses from the growing and celebrated colleges of Madame Bergman-Osterberg (Holt, 1989). Nonetheless, a number of girls' public boarding schools closely modelled themselves on the boys' public schools of the period and it is noteworthy that 'it was in the emphasis on games where the imitation of boys' public schools became most slavish' (Hargreaves, 1994: 65). The second-tier, relatively status-inferior, girls' public schools had replicated developments in boys' grammar schools of the mid-nineteenth century and imitated the boys' 'superior' education in a manner not dissimilar to that of boys' PE in the new secondary schools.

As the 'traditional' games-based curriculum developed within post-WWII boys' PE, the paramedical, restorative role of PE rescinded. Gradually, it was undermined by a combination of the influx of games-oriented men (who, as previously mentioned, were keen to duplicate the alleged character benefits of games playing in the public schools) into the newly emerging secondary schools and the growth in popularity of educational gymnastics favoured and championed by the girls' PE tradition (Kirk, 1992a). As a consequence, the period after WWII, particularly from 1950 onwards, saw competitive team games and sports emerge at the mass level to form the core of both boys and girls secondary PE (Kirk, 1992a). That this was a widespread development is reflected in Macdonald and Kirk's (1996: 63) observation that:

Since the end of World War II, school PE programmes have been grounded in the development of sports skills and participation in competitive team games.

Although this comment was made in relation to the situation in Australia it appears equally apposite for PE in the United Kingdom during this period. School PE programmes in the second-half of the twentieth century have gradually become very similar (revolving around team sports, games and a skill-based pedagogy); so much so, that they can justifiably be said to represent what Placek *et al.* (1995) have identified in the USA as 'an unplanned and unrecognised national physical education curriculum', tantamount to a kind of *de facto* national curriculum.

Whilst an explicit and, as Kirk (1992a) terms it, 'direct' concern for fitness for health was relegated to the margins of PE during this period, this development in fact represented a re-orientation of fitness (towards sports performance) rather than an abandonment of concern for fitness as such. The armed forces physical training instructors (PTIs), and (from the 1950s) men

returning from National Service, brought with them a concern for (functional) fitness interpreted as the capacity to perform work based on strength and stamina and, thus, in terms of its application to sports performance. The approach of these PTIs, who formed the backbone of PE after WWII, was grounded in a medical view of the function of exercise for health, in the form of an application of the new scientific knowledge derived primarily from the fields of exercise physiology and bio-mechanics (Bray, 1991; Kirk, 1992a). Where they persisted, the compensatory or remedial forms of exercise (recommended in Ministry of Education publications in the early 1950s) were concerned more with the all-round development of children through a broad range of activities (Bray, 1991) than with the 'traditional para-medical, remedial role' of physical training of the elementary school period (Kirk, 1992a: 135). Thus, by the middle of the 1950s, the games ideology (increasingly incorporating a concern for the utilisation of scientific principles in the improvement of sporting performance) was in the process of dominating PE in the nascent secondary system. Hence, despite the emerging pre-eminence of games, within this tradition lay a strong theme of concern for functional fitness: concern for fitness in terms of strength and stamina and its application to sports performance rather than health. As Kirk (1992a: 144) observed:

the defining aim of any programme that deserved the label physical education was the improvement of the physical and physiological performance of an individual.

The 'traditional' model of PE - involving physical activities such as gymnastics but dominated by sport and team games - became the convention in the grammar and secondary schools of the 1960s and the comprehensive schools of the 1970s and beyond. Nevertheless, whilst the shape of PE appeared very much like a continuation of the 'traditional' model, the subject,



as it has developed in the last thirty or so years, cannot be understood purely in terms of the triumph of a sporting ideology over a health (and fitness) ideology. Not only is it necessary to note the re-emergence of a health ideology, it is also crucial to chart the impact of other ideologies and particularly those inherent in liberal educational philosophy. What might be termed the academicization of secondary education - a process that gathered pace in the 1960s - can be seen to have had profound consequences for PE, not least in terms of the process of review and reconstruction required by physical educationalists in order to justify the inclusion of their subject in the increasingly academic secondary school curriculum.

Thus, alongside the two central ideologies of health and fitness and sport the emergence of several more or less marginal ideologies can be discerned over the last thirty or so years. The most prominent of these developments has been the appearance and consolidation (Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) of an academic ideology.

### The academic ideology

The growth in educational theory after WWII was associated with the introduction of compulsory secondary education and the concomitant development of teacher training. From the 1960s onwards the pre-eminent form of theorising about the nature and purposes of education came to be that of liberal educational philosophy. This post-war philosophical tradition in Britain - associated, particularly, with the work of Richard Peters and Paul Hirst in the 1960s and 1970s - provided the template for much subsequent *academic* reflection upon, analysis of, and justification for, PE vis-à-vis the remainder of the formal school curriculum (O'Hear, 1981; Reid 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Arnold, 1997; Carr, 1997). The 'Peters-Hirst' approach (Carr, 1997) to philosophising about education is based upon the premise that education has

fundamentally to do with *knowledge* and that knowledge, in turn, is essentially theoretical or intellectual. On this view what distinguishes education 'from other forms of socialization, formation and training' is its concern with the 'initiation of pupils into a broad range ... of forms of rational knowledge and enquiry' (Carr, 1997: 196) which, it is claimed, are inevitably intellectual. A corollary of this perspective is that the acquisition of (theoretical) knowledge can only be manifested, and its acquisition assessed, in written or spoken form (Reid, 1996a, 1996b). On this conceptualisation, education is interpreted as being 'essentially *academic*' (Reid, 1996b: 95; emphasis in the original).

The widespread pre-eminence of this perspective within academia - and teacher training especially - appeared to leave physical educationalists at all levels with two options:

first, to acknowledge its (PE) traditionally non-academic and therefore non-educational (or, at best, marginal) status; or, secondly, to argue that despite appearances, the physical activities which comprise the familiar physical education curriculum can somehow be shown to have academic significance and thus educational worth (Reid, 1996b: 95).

Thus, the dominance from the 1960s (Reid, 1996b, 1997; Carr, 1997; Parry, 1998; MacNamee, 1998) of the analytical (Peters-Hirst) conception of education in theory and, at least in terms of curricular documents, practice, presented those teachers and academics who favoured the 'traditional' *de facto* PE curriculum - in the games-oriented form in which it had developed - with a profound dilemma. PE had either to 'undergo a radical change of identity and redefine itself as an academic subject in the school curriculum, or else acknowledge its incorrigibly marginal status' (Reid, 1997: 6). The liberal educational tradition has remained a more or less pre-eminent influence in educational theory since that period and consequently PE teachers have - notwithstanding their own experiences of school PE as a practical subject -

been professionally socialized (via teacher training as well as official and semi-official publications) into the 'standard', academic ideology ever since.

In relation to the theme of this study, it is worth noting that for Peters, Hirst and others at the academic level, the debate has been about the *nature* and *value* of knowledge and education. However, it is far more likely that from the perspective of the PE teacher, the focus of concern has not been the nature of knowledge as such but rather about the implications of the dominance of an academic ideology for the status of PE (and, by association, PE teachers), the struggle for resources, and for their job security. This is a theme to which I will return in greater detail in Chapter 8.

To many physical educationalists - at all levels but particularly among PE academics and teacher-trainers - it has appeared evident that, 'if the possession of academic credentials is a condition of entry to the mainstream' curriculum, then physical educationalists were and, for that matter remain, obliged to direct their subject away from 'the familiar idea of the teaching and learning of practical physical activities' (Reid, 1996b: 95) and towards 'academic' aspects of PE. In other words, PE would have to be re-oriented towards intellectual and moral development *through* sport (particularly the allegedly scientific dimensions of the study of sport) rather than the *practice* of sport. According to Reid, a consequence of the broad acceptance of the 'orthodox' liberal educational view of PE has been repeated calls for a greater emphasis upon 'theory' within the subject at the expense of unreflective practice or 'playing'. The 'new orthodoxy', as Reid (1996b: 102) terms it, has sought to 'redefine physical education in terms of the opportunities which it provides for theoretical study' and, in doing so, has implicitly accepted the superiority of the kinds of knowledge that are expressed predominantly in written or verbal forms rather than by practical demonstration. If PE is not



concerned with the acquisition and mastery of theoretical knowledge, the argument goes, it is - by the very nature of education - non-academic and thus non-educational.

The growing influence of the 'academic' conceptualisation of education created a context in which physical educationalists were (and, indeed, continue to be) confronted by the kind of questions posed by Carr in 1979: 'What is the *educational* value or significance of physical activity?' and 'What part, if any, has physical education to play in the general education of a person?' (Carr, 1979: 91; emphasis added). It appears evident that physical educationalists, caught in the glare of the prevailing 'academic' view of education, have been constrained - in order to continue to claim a place for their subject on the curriculum - to recognise the distinction between 'the practical performance of physical activities and the propositional or theoretical knowledge which is related to them' (Reid, 1996b: 95) and then to assert the academic character of the knowledge promoted within PE.

Whether or not it is justifiable to claim that the 'academic' option - i.e. demonstrating the academic or intellectual significance of PE (what Reid labels the 'standard' view of PE and what we might call the 'academic ideology') - has acquired the status of a 'new orthodoxy' in PE, it seems undeniable that a process of academicization is underway as evidenced by several developments in PE. These developments are, firstly, the dramatic growth of examinable PE (Carroll, 1998) - the corresponding academic means of assessing knowledge in PE; secondly, the proliferation of PE/ sports science degrees (Carroll, 1998); and thirdly, the widespread acceptance and adoption of the academicization of PE in current curriculum and assessment policy (Reid, 1996a). It is also clear that the trend towards the academicization of PE in the UK, a trend that Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997)

identifies as being exemplified by the rapid development of examinable PE, is a trend in other countries also. Regarding Australia, Macdonald, Kirk and Braiuka (1999: 38) observe:

In the school sector, perhaps the most significant development in recent years has been the emergence and consolidation of examinable ... physical education. By the end of the 1980s in Australia, many school syllabuses projected a version of physical education consisting of biophysical knowledge and physical activities ... these school programmes were often 'watered down' tertiary courses.

Such attempts to establish the academic credibility of PE are recognisable in a range of official and semi-official definitions over the last 20 or so years, as well as in debates within various groups among the subject-community. Indeed, they are epitomised by the conceptualisation of PE, prominent in the 1970s and 1980s and built into the template for NCPE, *Physical Education for Ages 5 to 16* (DES/ WO, 1991: 5), as the education of young people '*in and through* the use and knowledge of the body and its movement' (emphasis added). In this definition, the requisite theoretical or intellectual component has two discernible dimensions: firstly, knowledge, in the form of underlying principles, *about* the performance of physical activities ('*in* the use and knowledge of the body'); and, secondly, knowledge about other areas of allegedly valuable knowledge, such as morality and aesthetics ('*through* the use and knowledge of the body') that PE is held to be well placed (according to some, uniquely) to deliver. Such an acceptance of the 'standard' approach to justifying PE lay at the heart of a seminal book in early academic thought on the subject by the Director of the first university PE degree programme in PE<sup>2</sup>: David Munrow's *Physical Education: A Discussion of Principles* (1972). Two of the book's main sections were entitled 'Education *of* the Physical' and 'Education *through* the Physical' (emphases added). The existence of such a text on the reading list of the 'new' PE undergraduates suggests the

emergence of a process of academicization - well under way within education generally - beginning to encompass PE.

Thus, over the last quarter of a century or so (Carr, 1997), the standard view of PE has been mobilised to justify both the use of physical activities to teach principles of moral or aesthetic education and also to teach the theoretical principles (such as the acquisition of skill or the contribution of exercise to health) upon which *practical* ability and performance in sport is claimed to be founded.

In practice, physical educationalists have sought, in particular, to utilise one of the traditional moral justifications for physical activity - that of character development - as the main plank of 'educational' justification for the subject. According to Evans and Davies (1986: 18):

the Physical Education profession has both historically and contemporaneously paraded its social objectives and socialising functions publicly among its professional aims.

What marks the academic, or 'standard', view of the contribution of PE to personal and social education (PSE) out, and sets it apart from the pre-Peters-Hirst position, is the emphasis upon initiation into the alleged intellectual components of moral behaviour and character development via physical activities. This stands in opposition to the osmotic view of moral education, as simply permeating the character of young boys, that was associated with the public school games tradition dominant in secondary PE immediately after WWII. The continuing influence of these two strands of thought can be readily identified in the titles of articles such as *Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in physical education* (Blake, 1996), *Learning to teach through the physical as well as of the physical* (Laker, 1996b) and *The aims of physical*



*education within the revised national curriculum: lip service to the affective?* (Laker, 1996a) as well as claims therein that such an emphasis is required to ensure 'a balanced view about its (PE) place and contribution to the overall education of our young people' (Blake, 1996: 6-7).

With the above points in mind, what I have termed the 'academic' ideology - i.e. the belief among teachers that PE aids pupils' intellectual as well as their personal, social and moral development - can, for explanatory purposes, be further sub-divided into two aspects: that which I will label PSE because it fits neatly with the school subject of that name<sup>3</sup>; and, intellectual development which, according to at least one commentator (Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997), is rapidly acquiring the mantle of a 'new orthodoxy' among physical educationalists. One aspect of the alleged role of PE in intellectual development is worthy of particular attention: that of examinable PE.

#### *The academic ideology and examinable PE*

One of the more dramatic developments in secondary PE over the last 30 years has been the rapid growth of examinations; particularly at (General Certificate of Education (GCSE) and Advanced ('A') level (Carr, 1997; Reid, 1996a). GCSE PE, for example, had more than doubled in terms of the number of examinees in the five year period up to 1997 (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 1998). Indeed, OFSTED's quinquennial report on secondary PE between 1993 and 1997 describes 'the rapid expansion of GCSE PE' during that period as 'a strong feature of secondary PE' (1998: 1).

The rapid growth of examinations in PE (Carroll, 1998) lends weight, on the face of it, to the claim that the academic (or 'standard') view of education, which has flourished in education at all levels since the 1960s, is in the ascendancy, not least insofar as contemporary justifications for PE among

academics, teacher-trainers and even teachers commonly utilise academic rationale, at least in part, in support of the subject.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the 'academic' ideology, for a sociology of knowledge, has been the way in which it has become intertwined with other ideologies and has, in turn, impacted upon them. This development is neatly illustrated in the re-emergence within PE discourse of the health ideology.

### **The re-emergence of the health ideology**

The pre-eminence of the 'games tradition' in secondary schooling after WWII meant that, by the 1960s, games had become established as the dominant influence within PE (Kirk, 1992a; Tinning, 1991). Nonetheless, what Parks (1994: 64) referred to as the 'rhetoric of "health"' - advocating the health promoting benefits of exercise - continued to be a regular and significant inclusion in the objectives of PE (Bray, 1991; Tinning, 1991). What Kirk (1992a: 138) terms this 'lingering but residual influence in physical education discourse' was enhanced by broader developments within the PE subject-community, in the international sporting arena and throughout Western societies at large, during the second half of the twentieth century.

Around the same period that 'games' were becoming firmly established upon the ideological high ground of secondary PE, developments beyond education - a dramatic growth in the allegedly preventable and 'self-inflicted' illnesses that were said to reflect contemporary lifestyles and were perceived as having replaced the conquered 'infectious' diseases as the *bete noire* of the medical professions (Crawford, 1980; cited in Colquhoun, 1991) - were facilitating the re-emergence and re-establishment of the 'health' ideology in the PE subject-community. Growing concern in the 1960s and 1970s with the

dramatic rise in so-called 'lifestyle diseases' (e.g. cancer and heart disease) coupled with an increased awareness of, and concern regarding, the issue of health-related fitness, had the effect of focusing the attention of 'scientists' among the emergent PE profession on the potential preventative role of PE in relation to the so-called hypokinetic (under-exercising) diseases. By the 1970s, the idea was well-established - emanating primarily from medical discourse - that people living in modern, highly urbanised and industrial societies were in greater need of regular exercise than previous generations (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), 1980; Kirk, 1992a) and that physical activity together with modifications in lifestyles could act as an effective preventative tool (Colquhoun, 1991, 1992; Colquhoun and Kirk, 1987).

By the 1980s, concern - especially among 'professional' bodies with a vested interest (e.g. AAHPERD in the U.S.A and the Physical Education Authority (PEA) in the United Kingdom) - began to focus upon levels of exercise that were sufficient to increase levels of fitness and, allegedly, improve health. The upshot of this process of amplification of the alleged 'health-crisis' by the medical profession was the development of an orthodoxy that came to dominate much PE discourse, at least in the form of academic and professional utterances. Subsequently, a relatively straightforward and taken-for-granted, medically-oriented, analysis came to prevail in health and exercise discourse. In short, the 'health crisis' provided a 'medico-health' context for PE intervention (Kirk, 1992a; Tinning, 1991). According to Fox (1993), the extensive research literature available by the early-1990s contained a clear message for PE, namely, the necessity of establishing 'the goal of promoting exercise for public health' as a main priority (Fox, 1993: 36). Indeed, not only was regular exercise presented as being self-evidently important in the fight against the so-called risk factors associated with



coronary heart disease (Kirk, 1992a), it was also made clear that this commitment to exercise had to be of a type likely to be continued into adult life (Green, 1994b). If exercise was to impact upon the health of the nation it had to be married to a lifelong commitment to participation (e.g. Almond, 1983; Armstrong, 1987; Fox 1983a, 1983b).

The move towards HRE gathered momentum within PE throughout the 1970s, and represented not only a growth in influence of the health-related fitness (HRF) (or, as it has come to be referred to in academic circles more recently, Health-Related Exercise (HRE)) movement but also a movement - notably among academics but also among some teachers - away from organised games. The 'traditional games' based curriculum came under increased pressure from several directions. The 1960s witnessed growing criticism of the alleged failure of PE to bring about the kinds of moral and spiritual development in young people upon which it was premised. In addition, 'traditional' PE, based around competitive team-games, was alleged to have also failed to check, let alone reverse, the 'drop-out' from leisure-sport during mid-to-late adolescence (with the concomitant consequences for the physical and moral well-being of an allegedly increasingly delinquent youth population) highlighted by the Wolfenden Report (Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR), 1960). Included in this attack on the 'functions' of PE was a continuation of earlier criticism regarding the demise of Britain's sporting success, linked analogously with Britain's diminishing world-wide political influence (Kirk, 1992a).

Consequently, since the 1980s, 'one of the major innovations', in PE has been the rise of the health-based PE (HBPE) movement (Tinning, 1991), the most significant manifestation of which was HRF/ HRE. An influential lobby has developed within the PE subject-community (and particularly at the level of

academia) promulgating the supposed health benefits of regular exercise (e.g. Almond, 1983, 1989; Armstrong, 1990; Armstrong and Welsman, 1997; Arnold, 1991; Biddle, 1987; Cale, forthcoming; Fox, 1983a, 1983b, Harris and Cale, 1997). Thus, claims for a role for PE in the process of *educating* children about *health* and lifestyles lay at the end of a chain of connections emanating from the apparent growth of hypokinetic or 'lifestyle diseases' of the late twentieth century (Corbin, Metal-Corbin and Biddle, 1989; Armstrong, 1990; McGeorge, 1992).

During the last decade or so, HRE (under various names but most typically HRF) has become an integral part of PE curricula (Underwood, Bird and Farmiloe, 1993; Cale, forthcoming) and has assumed increasing prominence in PE discourse (Colquhoun, 1992; Kirk, 1992a). HRE 'has become a prominent feature of most physical education college training courses' (Caldecott, 1992: 36) and is to be found in an ever-increasing majority of secondary school PE curricula (Harris, 1994a). By the end of the 1980s, the PE subject-community was characterised by an ever-increasing interest in the exercise levels, and attendant life styles, of school-age children (Armstrong, 1990; Armstrong and Welsman, 1997; Colquhoun, 1992; Fox, 1993). Almond (1989) pointed up the virtual tenfold rise between 1985 and 1988 in the incorporation of a health-based approach in PE curricula. Harris suggested that the inclusion of 'blocks' of HRE work in approximately two-thirds of secondary schools by 1994, together with the fact that HRE had become a priority for in-service training, provided strong indication of the 'success' of HRE and underscored findings suggesting that most heads of PE departments 'viewed health-related exercise positively' (Harris, 1994a: 6).

Despite the clear evidence that HRE as a component of school PE programmes, and 'health' as an underpinning justification, were becoming

increasingly prevalent throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (Almond, 1989; Harris, 1994a), it is interesting to note the continued existence of claims regarding continued confusion about the purposes of PE on the part of eminent academics in PE (e.g. Alderson and Crutchley, 1990; Almond, 1989; Kirk, 1992a). These cast some doubt on the actual ascendancy of the 'health' justification. With this ongoing uncertainty in mind, Almond (1989; 1996) continued to offer HRE as the most suitable 'core' of the subject.

It is worth noting, however, that despite the growing significance of HRE in PE theory and HRF in PE practice (hereafter referred to as HRE), games continued to occupy a major role in, as well as proportion of, the amount of total PE time. Indeed, the amount of time given over to HRE blocks constituted, at best, 6.5% (Harris, 1994a). Notwithstanding this observation, a growing acceptance of HRE (albeit with an emphasis upon *fitness*) on the part of teachers, as well as academics, was evident. Indeed, additional figures, such as the fact that in approximately 75% of the schools in Harris' (1994a) study, HRE was taught by *all* members of staff, appeared to confirm the ascendancy of the 'health' ideology at the level of PE practice as well as theory. The impression of a shift in teachers' orientations towards health concerns was underlined by Harris' claim regarding the impact of HRE on teachers, as well as the content of PE:

most heads of physical education departments were positive about the place of health related exercise within the physical education curriculum and ... *for many, it had involved major changes in terms of curriculum balance and content* (1994a: 9; emphasis added).

Thus, the last two decades appear to have seen a sea-change in the teaching of PE (Park, 1994); a sea-change in the direction of an ideology of health on the part of academics, teacher-trainers and even, to a large extent, PE teachers themselves.



Whilst not readily discernible, nor perhaps as salient, as the ideological themes of health, sport and education, two other ideologies - those of 'education for leisure' / 'sport for all' and what I will refer to (after Siedentop, 1994) as 'sport education' - are worthy of mention. Whilst these might be seen as relatively marginal ideologies, it is claimed that 'education for leisure' has been an often unrecognised but nonetheless significant dimension of PE teachers' 'philosophies' and practices over the last 20 or so years claims (e.g. Scraton, 1992; Roberts, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). By the same token, in the case of sport education, it is claimed that this conception of PE may come to form a significant part of ideologies of the next decade or so (Almond, 1996; Siedentop, 1994).

#### **Education for leisure/ 'sport for all'**

At the same time that the process of medicalization (associated with claims for HRE) was taking hold in the discourse of PE, growing concern at governmental level with the ramifications of economic and social changes (Hendry, 1986; Scraton, 1995) - involving 'shifts in the work-leisure balance in society' and a 'spectacular increase in unemployment, particularly among young people' (Hendry, 1986: 52) - was, it is claimed, having a significant impact on the perceptions of many PE teachers regarding their aims (Hendry, 1986; Scraton, 1995). Roberts (1996b) describes how, since the 1960s, there have been major changes in young people's leisure styles which have reflected their changed economic and social circumstances. By the mid-1980s, 'preparation for leisure' was stated as a primary aim of PE teaching by every secondary school in Scraton's (1995) research. The emphasis in much of this teaching of PE, Scraton adds, 'was on enjoyment and preparation for participation in post-school leisure time' (Scraton, 1995: 113). Indeed, according to Scraton, most teachers 'recognised this as a changed emphasis

throughout the 1970s and early 1980s'; a fact that she viewed as attributable to the increased leisure time associated with economic changes of the period. Thus:

Over the past 20 years Britain's schools have increasingly been using lesson time to introduce pupils ... to a wide variety of sports and have made it possible for pupils to play their favoured games out of lessons also (Scruton, 1995: 113).

Roberts' (1996b) observations are in line with the claims of Scruton regarding a shift of emphasis among PE teachers in the 1970s and 1980s towards so-called 'education for leisure'. Such developments in PE teachers' practices, it is suggested, were underscored by a prevailing view that sport and physical activity offered a suitable means of combating allegedly emerging social 'problems' such as youth vandalism, crime, urban vandalism.

Collectively, the developing interest in HRE and a further, related development of the 1980s (the so-called 'Teaching Games for Understanding' (TGFU) (Waring and Almond, 1995)), in conjunction with the general concern for the encouragement of lifelong participation, became known during this period as the 'new PE'. For its part, TGFU was ostensibly a reaction against the domination not only of games in 'traditional' PE curricula but also the allegedly didactic, skill-development approaches and emphases of 'traditional' games-based PE. More particularly, it was presented by particular academics involved in teacher-training as a response rooted in the perceived failure of traditional-games teaching to secure wider participation among youngsters in games after school age and the relative failure to bring about marked improvement in their sporting abilities and thus likely continued participation.

The process of broadening the traditional curricula to meet the perceived 'leisure' needs of young people ran alongside, and worked in the same direction as, concern with HRE. Growing interest among academics and teacher-trainers within the PE subject-community with the role of PE in promoting 'health' articulated with notions of 'education for leisure'. This served to heighten residual concern with the drop-out rates from sport of young people on leaving school, a trend noted by the CCPR (1960) and one which continued unabated into the 1970s and 1980s (Evans and Davies, 1986).

Thus, the 'new PE' of the 1980s appears to have been of a piece with the broadening of the PE curriculum that increasingly manifested itself in 'options' (or 'activity choice' as OFSTED (1998) refer to it) within upper-school PE (15-16 year olds) in the 1970s and the 'sport for all' policies of the Sports Council around the same time. Roberts (1995, 1996a) identified what might be seen as changing 'philosophies' and practices of PE teachers around this time. He observed that, whereas in the 1950s and 1960s 'the physical education teachers who were in post had been literally trained to "drill" pupils and offer a limited range of games' (Roberts, 1996b: 16), in the last 20 years teachers have been more likely to respond to youth trends (Roberts, 1995, 1996a, 1996b) and to adapt school sport 'to young people's changing leisure styles' (Roberts, 1996b: 20). By extending the traditional games-oriented curriculum to incorporate individual and small group activities, offering so-called 'option PE' for older pupils and by utilising the new sports centres being developed in the 1970s and 1980s (that would provide the venues and opportunities for children's' later participation), PE teachers have, according to Roberts (1995, 1996a), placed 'sport for all' ahead of competitive team sport. When measured in terms of encouraging recruitment into sport among young people, what Roberts (1995, 1996a, 1996b) terms the 'success' of school sport over the last two decades, was grounded in PE teachers'



sensitivities to 'youth's new social condition' and the concomitant changes in their leisure patterns (Roberts, 1996b).

Notwithstanding the accuracy of Roberts' claims regarding the reorientation of PE towards what I am calling 'education for leisure', it is worth adding a caveat. As Evans (1992: 241-2) observed, changes in underlying ideologies as reflected in the emergence and development of the so-called 'new PE' philosophies in the 1980s, 'reflected a radical *shift in* rather than a *rejection of* certain priorities in these teachers' philosophy of PE' (emphasis added). Nonetheless, and despite this note of caution, it was indeed the case, according to Evans (1992), that the priorities of those teachers engaging in change:

lay not so much with the identification and sponsorship of sport skills amongst the physically able children but rather with cultivating the physical well being, the talent, enjoyment and interest in sport of all the children in their care (Evans, 1992: 242).

He added:

The curriculum initiatives which these teachers had effected had involved substantial (radical) changes in their way of working and in what might be termed their operational ideology and some significant shifts in the priorities within their fundamental ideologies (p. 242).

It is worth adding two further caveats at this point. Firstly, one might reasonably question the extent to which Evans is justified in claiming a *radical* shift in teachers' priorities, let alone whether this shift was commonplace across the broad range of PE teachers. At the same time, however, it is necessary to acknowledge that several prominent authors' underscore the claim that many PE teachers did become concerned with, what might broadly be termed, education for leisure and 'sport for all' from the 1970s onwards.

Secondly, with the previous point in mind and notwithstanding the relative success of the 'new PE' and, in particular, its defining development over the last decade (Kirk, 1992a) - HRE - it would be a mistake to suggest that it had fatally undermined (or even radically shifted) the place of games and sport in 'traditional' PE. In this regard, Roberts (1995, 1996a, 1996b) notes that games have maintained their prominent place on virtually all secondary PE curricula. Using Mason's (1995) Sports Council study into *Young People and Sport*, Roberts points out that in 1994, 'team games and other competitive sports were alive and well in England's schools' (Roberts, 1995: 339). Notwithstanding the growth of popularity of HRE in secondary PE, traditional team games and sports remained at the heart of the curriculum in the mid-1990s: 'Neither PE teachers nor their colleagues had turned against Britain's traditional team sports' (Roberts, 1995: 339). Despite claims to the contrary by the Government of the day (see DNH, 1995; Roberts, 1996a, 1996b), young people were continuing to experience a substantial amount of sport and team games in secondary PE - both in absolute terms and as a proportion of total curricular (as well as extra-curricular) time devoted to PE (Sports Council for Wales (SCW), 1995; Mason, 1995; Roberts, 1996a, 1996b). Thus, Roberts suggests, contrary to claims that there has been an unchecked decline in school sport (DNH, 1995) it has, in fact, been a 'success story' when viewed over the period of time since WWII and measured in terms of levels of participation. School sport has adapted (by broadening the PE curricula) to the broader trends in youth cultures since the 1970s, Roberts argues, because teachers 'have been responsive and innovative, have known "what works" with their pupils, and have ranked "sport for all" ahead of producing winning teams' (1996b: 113). Roberts' final point is worthy of particular note in relation to claims regarding shifting or changing priorities among PE teachers: 'The situation was not', Roberts (1996a: 339) adds:

that team games had been dropped but rather that they had been *joined* by other activities in broader sports curricula than the traditional team games regime (emphasis added).

Whilst there is a clear sense in which both education for leisure/ 'sport for all' and the health ideology could be said to share similar goals - i.e. in terms of the purported desire to encourage in young people lifelong participation in physical activity - there was always a strand of thought in the former that might set it against the latter. Education for leisure can be seen, at least in part, as a forerunner of the contemporary ideology of 'sport education' - initiation into sports, to be enjoyed for their own sake as a valued cultural practice, rather than as a means of promoting health.

#### **'Sport education' and PE as initiation into the 'valued cultural practice'<sup>4</sup> of sport**

An increasingly prominent marginal ideology - at least in the academic and professional press - since the 1980s has been what might be termed 'sport education' (Siedentop, 1994), a term that has emerged from the USA to describe the notion that the 'educational' function of PE should be seen as that of developing young people's knowledge and understanding of a valued aspect of their culture, namely sport, rather than intellectual development *per se*. In the terms of the academic ideology, this would amount to education *in* and *about* rather than *through* sport. It is important to note, then, that whilst the valued cultural practices and standard conceptions of PE share a belief in the centrality of knowledge, as far as the former is concerned this is only knowledge in or *about* sport and not the inculcation of knowledge about other aspects of human practice (such as morality and aesthetics) *through* sport.

Ironically, given his pivotal role in establishing the academic view of education that has underpinned the 'standard' view of PE, the educational



philosopher Paul Hirst has, in recent years, made clear to the subject-community his 'change of mind' (Hirst, 1994a, 1994b). Hirst has come to view education not so much as the initiation of young people into 'forms of knowledge' as such, but rather as initiation into 'valued cultural practices'. On this view, PE becomes the vehicle for the initiation of young people into sporting practices: cultural practices, or patterns of involvement, that incorporate forms of behaviour, values and relationships which, according to Arnold (1992: 237), are, 'distinctive forms of activity worthwhile in life'. Sport, on this view, is considered a socially significant and culturally valued aspect of contemporary society:

sport, like science or medicine, is a particular type of human practice that has its own integrity and is governed and characterised by its own rules and ethos. Such practices are distinctive forms of activity worthwhile in life (Arnold, 1992: 237).

Arnold adds:

sport ... is a culturally valued practice that embodies some of humankind's highest ideals and most cherished traditions. When sport is pursued for its own sake, its rules willingly followed, its finest conventions upheld, *sport becomes an ennobling and worthwhile form of life* (1992: 239; emphasis added).

The view of sport as a valued cultural practice shares common ground with the ideology of sport education. In the opinion of a number of contemporary PE academics world-wide, PE should focus upon initiation into the 'rituals, values and traditions of a sport' (Siedentop, 1994: 7) as well as the skills of sport themselves. A growing list of publications in the PE subject-community appear to mark sport education out as an increasingly popular view of the nature and purposes of PE.

For Siedentop (1994), the primary goals of PE, as sport education, are threefold: competency (skills, knowledge, understanding); literacy (e.g. rules, rituals and traditions); and enthusiasm (protects and preserves sports culture). According to Siedentop (1994: 4), “sport education” seeks to educate students to be *players* in the fullest sense and to help them develop as competent, literate, and enthusiastic sports people’ (emphasis in the original). In Britain, academics and teacher-trainers, such as Alderson and Crutchley (1990: 54), have articulated conceptions of PE very similar to that which Siedentop labels ‘sport education’:

the essential focus for physical education in schools should be sport, defined in the widest possible terms. Our role should be to prepare children for sport culture within our society so that they may make best use of it in relation to their personal development, their effective use of leisure time and their physical and psychological well-being.

It is particularly interesting to note that the influence of the valued cultural practices philosophy - and its manifestation as sport education on contemporary thinking in the UK (at least among academics) - can be seen in the writing of an influential figure in teacher-training and a particularly prominent advocate of HRE over the last two decades. In his *New Vision for Physical Education*, Len Almond (1996) attempts to weave what he sees as ‘three central strands’, including sport education and HRE, together in a manner which he suggests ‘represent a useful heuristic to focus our attention’ (Almond, 1996: 189) on the purposes of PE. It is worth re-iterating the point that the views espoused by Alderson and Crutchley (1990) and Almond (1996) interpret ‘sports education’ in far more utilitarian terms than (and are, therefore, somewhat at odds with) the purely intrinsic justification that Arnold (1992, 1997), as a philosopher, favours. The seemingly extrinsically-oriented view of physical activities of Almond implies an attempt to

incorporate more conventional, instrumental, views of PE typically associated with the academic or health ideologies.

Almond is not content with what might be termed the 'pure' or 'restricted' conception of PE as an initiation into the valued cultural practice of sport through sports education. He appears to want not merely education *in* sport but to incorporate education *through* sport, in particular via the introduction of youngsters to 'interpersonal competencies' through PE (p. 194). In this regard, it is noteworthy that even Siedentop adds the caveat that he does not 'advocate that physical education should be transformed totally into sport education' (1994: 6). He adds that sport education '*is not meant to replace physical education*' nor 'reduce or eliminate attention to physical fitness, dance, leisure pursuits, and adventure education' (p. 6; emphasis added). Thus, more in line with what appears to be Almond's view, Siedentop argues that sport education is, 'one part of the physical education programme'. For Siedentop, sport education involves more than 'typical PE sport', that is to say:

students not only learn more completely how to play sports but also to co-ordinate and manage their sport experiences. They also learn individual responsibility and effective group membership skills (Siedentop, 1994: 3).

This interpretation of sport education, when coupled with its avowed objectives (see Siedentop, 1994: 4-5), creates a picture of an approach that appears to share two things with the health and academic ideologies, as well as NCPE: firstly, concern with more than merely the performance of sport; and, secondly, an associated concern for the utilization of sport and physical activity and sport to achieve broader educational goals, whether they relate to health or intellectual development.



Alexander *et al.* (1996), on the other hand, clearly do not view sport education as a compromise between intrinsically and extrinsically valued perspectives. They describe sport education as '*curriculum replacement* rather than repair' (p. 27; emphasis added) and refer to Sparkes' (1990) characterisation of 'ideological change' of this kind, 'involving lasting changes to the values, beliefs and commitments underpinning teachers' pedagogies' (p. 27). Indeed, somewhat confusingly (given his earlier claim that it is meant to supplement rather than replace PE), Siedentop himself says that sport education 'is not business as usual ... (but) has the potential to revolutionise PE' (1994: 3).

In the light of the seemingly profound influence of changing philosophical justifications for PE in the curriculum that sport education appears to represent, it is interesting to note Alexander *et al.*'s (1996) suggestion that sport education represents a political rather than a philosophical basis for the re-evaluation of the concept of PE. In this context, they see sport education as a response to 'failure' and 'marginality'. Alexander *et al.* (1996) describe sport education as 'a response to the marginality of physical education' in the school curriculum. They point to Locke's (cited in Alexander *et al.*, 1996: 26) 'admonition that replacing the dominant programme model was the only thing which could rescue secondary physical education from marginality and demise'. Alexander *et al.* summarise the position thus:

if the profession was to deal with 'disturbing levels of alienation, programme marginality in school curricula (and) deep and destructive role conflicts within those who teach' ... then the change would have to be so deep ... that it could only be referred to as curricular replacement rather than repair (1996: 27).

It is worthy of note that Alexander *et al.* (1996) outline their study of the development of the sport education movement in Australia 'against a

backdrop of subject marginality' (p. 23), a process which appears increasingly common throughout the developed world (Hardman, 1998). Whilst, nevertheless, offering what might be seen as a somewhat rhetorical or ideological claim for both the 'cultural significance and educational potential of sport' (p. 24), Alexander *et al.* are keen to stress their claim that the kind of curriculum innovation that they see sport education as representing, might be 'the only thing which could rescue secondary PE from marginality and demise' (1996: 26).

It is clear, then, that the decade or so around the 1980s was not simply a period of changing ideologies. Continuities existed alongside the changes that were evidently taking place. Whilst the balance may have been shifting towards an ideology of health, the sporting ideology remained strong as variations on the theme began to emerge among academics and, to a lesser extent, teacher-trainers. This position of relative strength has been reinforced by a further sea-change in the 1990s in the form of the introduction of the NCPE in 1992, followed by the first revision of NCPE in 1995.

### The re-surfacing of the sporting ideology

Several developments in the 1980s demonstrated that the sporting ideology, in one form or another, remained alive and well at various levels of the PE occupational groupings (or subject-community) and within the public at large, as well as other key players in the policy process, such as central Government. In 1995, the recently formed DNH published a policy statement - *Sport: Raising the Game* - setting out the Government's intention to bring about 'a seachange in the prospects of British sport'. Central to this was to be the 'renaissance' of sport in schools. The then Prime Minister, John Major, made clear his determination 'to put sport back at the heart of weekly life in every school' (DNH, 1995: Foreword; emphasis in the original). *Raising the*

*Game* emphasised sport as the most significant element of the PE curriculum and identified an alleged need for extra sporting provision in schools.

As a consequence of *Raising the Game*, schools have been expected to provide more opportunities for sport beyond the curriculum and to view extra-curricula sport as forming a continuum with the formal PE curriculum - a policy underlined by recent policy pronouncements of the Labour Government (Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999). For their part, OFSTED is required to survey 'the state of school sport to identify good practice' and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) is required to 'report annually on the state of PE and sport in schools'. In addition, teacher training is expected to involve student teachers in gaining more sporting qualifications and in conjunction with this is a requirement that there be an increase in coaching courses made available to teachers, as well as more out-of-hours sport (which teachers might be paid for) and the award of a 'Sportsmark' for those schools meeting a minimum number of hours of extra-curricular sport, together with the encouragement of volunteers to support coaches involvement in the PE curriculum.

The follow-up *First Year Report* re-inforced the messages contained in *Raising the Game*, describing it as a 'blueprint for the revitalisation of British Sport at all levels, from the first experiences of organised games in primary schools to the Olympic podium' (DNH, 1996: Foreword). The Foreword included 'the introduction ... of a revised physical education curriculum with greater emphasis upon team games' as well as OFSTED inspectors' 'reports on games, including competitive team games, offered as part of the physical education curriculum (and) extra-curricular sporting provision'. The Prime Minister's introduction to the document renewed 'the invitation to teachers, parents ... clubs and coaches, sports administrators, the governing bodies of



sport ... to work together in *promoting sport in schools* and beyond' (1996; emphasis added). In addition, the 'Action Agenda' of the 1996 update referred to increased investment in coaching courses from the Sports Council to enable established teachers and teacher trainees to obtain coaching qualifications and to the fact that the National Coaching Foundation (NCF) was piloting Coaching Weeks for Teachers. The 'Agenda' also proposed that 'coaching support be targeted on schools where sporting commitment is below average' (DNH, 1996: 5).

The Conservative Government was evidently of the opinion that its preferred view of PE was shared by the PE profession (or, at least, *teachers* of PE) - claiming that the Prime-Minister's 'objective of putting sport back', in his words, "'at the heart of school life'" continued to be a 'commitment ... shared ... by the *great majority* of the *teaching profession*' (DNH, 1996: Foreword; emphases added).

It is worthy of note that Government pronouncements such as *Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995, 1996) include a complex of intrinsic and extrinsic justifications for their preferred view of PE. Whilst their primary concern appears to be the re-positioning of sport within PE, their justificatory comments lean more or less heavily on the 'standard' justification for PE: intellectual (including moral) education through traditional team games and competitive sports. In addition to the more overt moral and political concerns of *Raising the Game* - with character development as well as sporting excellence and international sporting success - there is clear evidence that messages about the contribution of PE to health promotion have filtered through to influence *Raising the Game*.

However, it is not merely beyond PE that potentially conflicting or oversimplified 'philosophies' of PE are to be found (e.g. Cooke, 1996). Complex and contradictory views are also found within the subject-community. Rose (1996) appears implicitly to view his perspective as representative of a significant body of teaching opinion when describing John Major's introduction to *Raising the Game* as having 'given school sport a much needed boost' (p. 15). Indeed, he added that the then Prime-Minister's statements 'support what many teachers, particularly physical education teachers, have been doing well for a number of years' (p. 15) and he went on to observe, with apparent approval, that *Raising the Game* 'placed sport firmly in the political arena' (p. 15). For Rose, PE 'provides the bed rock from which the great majority of sport in this country is developed' (p. 16). Thus, for many members of the subject-community, the renewed concern with sport, and especially initiatives such as *Raising the Game*, made the mid- to late-1990s 'an exciting time for physical educationists' to work together with coaches, sports development officers and governing bodies, 'to shape our sporting future' (Burgess, 1996: 14). Burgess (1996: 12) recognised, however, that whilst *Raising the Game* 'was broadly welcomed as an important Government policy statement on sport', some of the terminology - notably 'school sport/sports education rather than physical education' - as well as 'the over-emphasis on traditional team games', 'raised hackles in some quarters'.

The role of PE in identifying and nurturing 'talent' is an aspect of sporting ideologies that appears to find willing advocacy at all levels of the PE subject-community. An established academic and teacher-trainer, for example, suggests that talent identification and promotion are legitimate and long-standing concerns within education and particularly PE (Fisher, 1996). In support of his argument, Fisher points to the Interim Report for the NCPE (DES/WO, 1991) and the recommendation it makes for schools to develop

partnerships with agencies for sport beyond school, not least in order to provide opportunities for the development of gifted youngsters. He points to 'the intertwined, but distinctive, fields of PE and sport' (pp. 131-132) and asserts that '(U)ltimately, contributing to the successful realisation of a sporting talent is one of the most uplifting experiences for most PE teachers' (Fisher, 1996: 142).

Notwithstanding Fisher's commitment to a sporting ideology, a complex intermingling of ideologies lies very near the surface of his 'philosophy'. He acknowledges that emphasis upon the sporting performance development of 'gifted children' might not 'sit easily with our (physical educationalists') expressed beliefs for PE' (1996: 132) and later adds that concerning 'oneself with the extent to which we should change current practice ... is to raise some fairly fundamental issues for PE' (p. 140). At the same time, however, Fisher comments that 'PE might do well to examine further the ways in which it promotes school sport in relation to the development of the talented' (Fisher, 1996: 141). In warning that concern among physical educationalists for 'all-round development at the expense of specialization' - whilst serving educational goals of PE teachers - would meet with mixed reaction from (sports) agencies outside the school, Fisher implicitly accepts the need for physical educationalists to be particularly sensitive to the desires of the sports lobby. In this regard, it is particularly noteworthy that recent Government pronouncements (Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999; Leisure Opportunities, 1999) appear to confirm the suspicion of many (e.g. Houlihan, 1999a, 1999b) that the current Labour administration intends to continue to implement measures that will, in effect, constrain teachers to continue to orient PE towards sport, and particularly competitive team games, notwithstanding the proposed 'loosening' of the games emphasis at Key Stage 4 of the revised NCPE for 2000 (Carvell, 1999).



## Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered an outline of the ideological themes that, it is argued, have been more or less prominent within PE from the emergence of the subject in its nascent form, around the turn of the century, through to the established subject of the present day.

On occasions (e.g. with HRE), it has been possible to identify connections, however tenuous or speculative, direct or indirect, between these ideological themes and academic philosophising about PE and the ideological discourse to be found in the subject-community. At times (e.g. with the sporting ideologies identified after WWII and then again in the 1990s) it is far more difficult to identify anything other than a tangential, one might say serendipitous, overlap between ideology and philosophy. This illustrates several important points about the nature of ideologies. Ideologies tend to be more or less fashionable. At the same time, they inevitably reflect, more or less, individuals' habituses; habituses that may be more or less shared among the members who constitute groups who subscribe to particular ideologies. The upshot of this is frequently that members of such groups are constrained towards '(an) uncritical submission to the authority and prestige of the dominant standards' (Elias, 1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 231).

PE teachers' practices and, therefore, their ideologies have been constrained by wider social processes; these range from concern with the fitness of workers and potential warriors, through moral panic related to emergent youth cultures, to the social costs of ill-health and national sporting success. Whilst the ideologies associated with emerging social trends will be likely, at least in part, to incorporate elements of factual knowledge (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998) this does not preclude 'believers' preferring particular

ideologies to others based, largely, upon their habituses and their circumstances.

Mannheim (1960) draws attention to the empirical tendency for ideologies to develop in conflict situations as a defence of, or attack on, something, and hence their propensity to distort. In this vein, Elias (1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 227) points out that people:

work and live in a world in which almost everywhere groups, small and great, including their own groups, are engaged in a struggle for position and often enough for survival, some trying to rise and better themselves in the teeth of strong opposition, some who have risen before trying to hold on to what they have, and some going down.

In addition, the relationship between ideologies of PE and philosophising (or theorising) about PE has become closer as theorising - about social as well as scientific phenomena - has become an increasingly prominent feature of society and, alongside this, of education. Educationalists at all levels have increasingly been expected, even required, to provide justification for their practices and PE has not been isolated from these developments by its ostensibly practical orientation.

Given that diverse and multi-faceted societies contain a plurality of ideologies, education and PE might be expected to contain a range of ideologies and vested interests expressed through a variety of discourses (Penney and Evans, 1997). In the case of this study, the significance of discourse as a manifestation of ideology is made apparent in Elias' observation that:

The ways in which individuals of a group experience whatever affects their senses, the meaning which it has for them, depends on the

standard forms for dealing with, and of thinking and speaking about, these phenomena (Elias, 1987; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 218).

The apparent ease with which the sporting ideology has been rehabilitated within PE discourse suggests that a multiplicity of ideologies, sometimes overlapping, frequently contradictory, are submerged beneath apparently consensual definitions, such as that encapsulated in the 1995 revised NCPE. It also suggests that the habituses of PE teachers, if changing at all, have been changing more slowly (in the direction of HRE, for example) than the surrounding social relations. It might also indicate that the relatively conservative nature of PE as practised is likely to reinforce a sporting ideology among future generations of PE teachers insofar as their predispositions towards sport are more or less reaffirmed by their experiences of PE.

In the following chapters I intend to explore the views and perceptions of PE teachers in order to establish the extent to which their 'philosophies' are suffused with ideological orientations whilst, at the same time, examining the relationship between these ideologies and teachers' habituses and contexts.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For figurationalists, mythical thinking is typically a central feature of ideologies *per se*.

<sup>2</sup> At Birmingham University in 1947.

<sup>3</sup> PSE has, in Government documents and professional publications in recent years, been extended to incorporate 'health' issues and, consequently,



has been retitled 'Personal, Social and Health Education' (PSHE) (see the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Department for Education and Employment (QCA & DfEE) (1999)).

<sup>4</sup> Although they are more commonly referred to as 'valued human practices' in the academic literature, I will continue to use the term 'valued *cultural* practices' because of its more sociological associations and implications.

## Chapter 5

### The Everyday 'Philosophies' of Physical Education Teachers

This chapter reports on the data produced by the semi-structured interviews, that formed the empirical aspect of the study, and offers a synopsis of the broad themes identifiable from the teachers' responses. Much of the data fit neatly into 'clusters' or 'categories of meaning' that reflect the ideological themes, and aspects thereof, identified in Chapter 4. Several additional themes were identifiable, however, and these are incorporated where appropriate. Before dealing with each of the main ideological themes in turn, it is worth referring to one particularly prominent leitmotif of teachers' responses, namely the emphasis they tended to place on 'enjoyment'.

#### Enjoyment

In almost all responses to the question 'What do you think PE should be about?' the word 'enjoyment' featured prominently and, for the most part, explicitly. Enjoyment was a primary consideration for the teachers; it tended to be the first thing they mentioned and was something they returned to time and time again: '(PE) should be about fun, it should be about engaging pupils'.

Typically, enjoyment formed an initial and immediate response, upon which teachers then elaborated, usually of their own volition but occasionally after prompting. Prompting usually took the form of two broad supplementary questions: enjoyment of *what* and/or *why*? That is to say, *what* was it the pupils were expected to enjoy and *why* was enjoyment an issue for the teacher?

The emphasis upon enjoyment is worthy of note for several reasons. Firstly, enjoyment is not commonly expressed as a goal of education. Secondly, the emphasis on enjoyment suggested that even teachers of PE perceived their subject as somehow 'less serious' than other subjects. Indeed, one could not imagine teachers of other subjects placing the same emphasis upon enjoyment. To the contrary, one would expect to find little sympathy amongst educationalists for enjoyment as an educational goal, for what is education, one might add, if not the antithesis of 'fun'? Thirdly, the teachers appeared to have a distinctive view of their own subject: one that was less instrumental and more particular. The implicit idea appeared to be that PE was a less serious subject and not really 'educational' in the academic sense. Indeed, some teachers appeared to view PE 'as nothing more than a physical interlude to the more serious business of academic subjects' (Brooker, Kirk, Braiuka and Bransgrove, forthcoming).

### *Enjoyment as an end in itself*

For some teachers, enjoyment was seen as being an end in itself:

some sort of success and enjoyment. Success might just mean enjoyment ... to me that's as good as being an Olympic champion.

Frequently, however, enjoyment was implicitly or explicitly linked with ideas resembling a justification based upon a cathartic role for PE; that is to say, as a release from the intellectual demands being made on the children during the remainder of the school curriculum. In this sense, PE seemed to be seen not as part of the academic content of education, but as a *release from* the academic aspects of school:



I think, essentially, it should be about enjoyment ... getting children to do something physical - because in school they're just sitting down and working.

it's my job to get them active, release a bit of tension, get some energy out of their systems so they are ready for the rest of the school day. And one of the main priorities is that they enjoy themselves.

### *Enjoyment as a 'means'*

Whilst for some teachers enjoyment was spoken of as an end in itself, more typically, enjoyment was seen either as a *precondition* and / or a *vehicle* for other outcomes; that is to say, enjoyment was seen as necessary as well as desirable. It was deemed necessary for *pragmatic* reasons (e.g. class management) and desirable for '*philosophical*' reasons. For purely pragmatic reasons some teachers felt the need to veer towards enjoyment in the lesson as a vehicle for *greater control* over the pupils:

One of the things would be enjoyment - otherwise you've got a problem straight away, you know, if they won't do it.

control ... if somebody is not happy with doing something ... they're not likely to turn round and say, 'Well, it's good this!'. If I allow them to play the game in a constructive manner and they feel as they're doing something ... that's positive and that will work - the control will be much better.

The HoD who offered the latter comment, also observed that this was not the way he had taught before, nor the way he wanted to teach. He added, 'it's just so very foreign to me. It's a totally different way of doing things for me'. He concluded,

so, it's a bit of give and take. I've still got my 'skill development' and they (the pupils) have got what they perceived was theirs. So, rather than have the confrontation all the time ... because at the end of the day they lose out.

Interestingly, this HoD appeared acutely aware that this kind of pragmatic 'trade-off', in the form of an *implicit negotiation* with the pupils, might appear as some kind of betrayal of the process of teaching 'traditional' PE to other teachers. He added:

I think people would view what I did this year (as) perhaps either a 'kop-out' or negative, not 'traditional' PE ... you know ... you can see a few people saying that.

It is also interesting to note that being aware of (one might say, interdependent with) this 'generalized other' appeared to have a bearing on this teacher's view of what he was doing: he felt uneasy having to 'trade-off' his perception of an ideal-type PE lesson with the constraints of the situation as he perceived them. This is an issue that will be returned to at a later stage.

Not only was enjoyment a vehicle for achieving practical objectives, for many teachers enjoyment was an *aid to the process of learning* the requisite physical skills and personal habits that they also took to be a feature of PE:

I think if they are enjoying things they ... will have a go at things. In the gym, for example, if you can make gym lessons a bit more lively and entertaining you'll get kids losing that sense of fear ... it is just a way of doing the activity in the most productive way, really. If you can get them really involved and enjoying it then they will get more out of it, and they'll take more 'on board' as well. They will listen more to what you've got to say and they will see that it leads to an end-product which they are going to like.

as long as they are getting stuck in to whatever they are doing, and they come off (having worked up) a bit of a sweat and they have enjoyed it ... they will almost certainly learn something from the lesson as well ... They have got to learn more if they are enjoying it. They will

come looking forward to the lesson. They're going to make more of an effort and be more receptive to what you do.

Once again, the views of teachers of PE appear particularly interesting when one considers other subjects on the curriculum. One would wonder whether enjoyment is generally seen as necessary (rather than merely desirable) to the process of learning, for example, English grammar, algebra, geography or history.

One HoD articulated her conception of the developmental process and the way in which *enjoyment*, *class control* and *learning* were frequently associated (explicitly and implicitly) with each other in teachers' minds:

I think it's enjoyment ... what we offer the pupils is for them to enjoy the lesson and make sure that we cater for everybody ... if the pupils don't enjoy the lessons ... then how are you going to keep them (interested) and so on? Once you have got the fun side and you have got them enjoying the lessons then you can start to educate them in all the other aspects ... the social co-operation of teamwork, individual skill levels. You have definitely got to have that enjoyment (in) taking part in the lesson before they can begin to learn.

It was clear that enjoyment and learning were linked in a variety of ways in many teachers' thinking:

If pupils don't enjoy it they won't learn and so ... I don't think we'd get much done.

Well, if they are not enjoying it they are going to switch off ... I mean, how are you going to get enjoyment from those who hate going out on a hockey pitch; which you can appreciate when they haven't got the co-ordination and perhaps never will have. And they get to really hate PE ... (so) why not do something ... they really enjoy?



To many teachers in the study, enjoyment was also seen as a vehicle for the development of the kind of *active lifestyles* that would promote health by developing adherence to activity in a manner that would be likely to persist beyond school and into later life:

I like to think they would go away from my lesson and go and do (physical activity) out of school hours. And if they don't enjoy it in school they are not going to want to do it outside of school ... I wouldn't be a PE teacher if I didn't think they should try and be fit and healthy.

(finding) something ... they can carry on with when they have left school ... for a healthy lifestyle.

For many of the teachers in this study, then, enjoyment was presented as a vehicle for achieving 'philosophical' or, rather, ideological goals, particularly *adherence to sport and physical activity* and, as such, a precondition in many teachers' eyes for the encouragement of ongoing participation, and thus healthy lifestyles:

I think if we can introduce the children to even just one activity that they'd like to do out of school ... Because if they don't enjoy it ... they won't do it again. They have *got* to enjoy it (emphasis in the original).

Thus, teachers were particularly keen to encourage adherence to physical activity and sport via the medium of enjoyment:

they (should) come out of school and have a go at playing ... when they leave school. To say, 'Well, I really enjoyed that sport and I want to carry on after school' ... that is something we have achieved.

For all pupils, but particularly in the case of *girls*, enjoyment was also viewed as a vehicle for the development of confidence as a stepping stone to participation:

you've got to push them to a certain extent, particularly girls, to make them realise what they are capable of achieving.

It would be hard to imagine similar studies of teachers of other secondary school subjects placing such strong emphasis upon the centrality of enjoyment to the pursuit of their subjects. However, as far as teachers in this study were concerned, enjoyment was at the heart of their 'philosophies'. Enjoyment was seen as the key to *control*, to *learning* and, above all, to *participation*. In a word, if pupils enjoyed PE then pretty much everything else followed, or might be expected to: pupils were seen as more likely to do PE now and in the future. And the latter mattered to these teachers. For, in a variety of ways, these PE teachers expressed a clear desire to bring about an adherence, on the part of their pupils, to physical activity and sport, an adherence that was likely to endure in the form of a lifelong commitment to participation with the associated benefits for health. Nonetheless, despite this preoccupation with enjoyment in teachers' thinking it is noticeable, as one teacher observed, that enjoyment as a term does not feature in the NCPE:

I think one thing that is disappointing about this PE National Curriculum is that it doesn't mention the word 'enjoyment' anywhere ... when kids ... come to PE lessons I think there should be an enjoyment element to it. *I don't for one minute say that it should be all play*, but they should be encouraged to enjoy what's going on ... I think *it's a key aim*, it's one of the main key aims (emphasis added).

One wonders whether viewing enjoyment as a precondition for the achievement of 'philosophical' - or, more exactly, educational - goals is anything more than a rationalization for the fact that 'fun' would not be seen as a sufficient justification for a school subject. Indeed, it often seemed the case that 'philosophical' justifications were presented as after-thoughts; 'add-ons' intended to make the pragmatic reasons more palatable.

It is clear that, when set alongside the relatively prescriptive demands of the National Curriculum as a whole, teachers of PE appeared to view their subject as in some ways special (for example, in terms of the emphasis upon enjoyment as 'a key aim'), as 'different' from other subjects. This discrepancy between the relatively more academic 'philosophy' behind the NCPE and teachers' everyday 'philosophies' is quite revealing in so far as it is indicative of some of the problems associated with a justification for a National Curriculum in PE that bears little trace of the practical concerns and realities of teachers' day-to-day lives - a point I will return to when dealing in greater detail with NCPE. Whatever the underpinning ideology for PE teachers' 'philosophies' and practice, enjoyment of PE was seen as a necessary prerequisite. This was the case, particularly, for those who subscribed to education for leisure / 'sport for all' and health ideologies.

This raises several important questions: are PE teachers justified in assuming that education should be 'fun'? What would OFSTED or, for that matter, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools have to say about such claims? Of equal significance for this study, what would academic philosophers of education have to say about this justification? Characterisations of teaching and learning in the academic literature, such as that of Oakeshott, incorporate many things but nowhere is mention made of 'fun' - explicitly or implicitly - as a defining feature of either (e.g. Oakeshott, 1972). References to fun, are, significantly, also absent from justifications for other subjects on the school curriculum.

Before exploring the ideology of health as a prominent ideological justification for PE in the eyes of PE teachers, it is worth noting the links or continuities between justifications. This is especially so with reference to the



link between fun/ enjoyment, education for leisure/ 'sport for all' and concerns about health, as illustrated in the following teachers' comments:

I believe that (the) main function of a PE teacher, or PE department, is to introduce the pupils to physical activity - health - so that in the long-term, when they leave school, they continue to take part in some sort of physical activity. And in the short-term, while they are at school, they learn social skills and they learn how to enjoy themselves.

Basically (it's) about offering pupils the opportunity to compete in a lot of sports so that they can ... keep healthy ... so that once they have finished school they don't just become sort of 'couch potatoes' and hopefully ... find something they like and carry on outside of school.

The sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, links between various justifications reflected the common occurrence of a union of diverse elements within teachers' 'philosophies'. Prominent amongst such amalgam 'philosophies' was the theme of health.

## The ideology of health

### *Health promotion through PE*

Alongside their ostensible concern with enjoyment, PE teachers were keen to express a desire to encourage active, 'healthy' lifestyles. As tentatively hypothesised - on the basis of the pre-eminence of an ideology of health in recent years (Colquhoun, 1991; Green, 1994a) - many teachers appeared to view health as *the* current issue confronting PE teachers:

the health side of it is more and more important ... the health and participation part (of PE) ... and getting them to realise why they're doing it and why it's important ... with regard to what it's actually doing within your body ... an awareness of the health aspect.

Quite a big thing is made about the health side of things ... I see it as important. It affects the nation basically. It affects me because ... I have

to pay for people who are unwell ... if we can cut down the costs of the NHS etc. etc. then that will all have benefits (for) everybody.

For some, health has even come to overshadow 'traditional' PE - with its emphasis on team games - as the contemporary *raison d'être* for PE:

we teach netball, hockey ... bringing in all your motor skills and that's important, as is the team aspect, but to me the health-related (aspect) is more important.

Thus, with many teachers health promotion was considered either implicitly or explicitly *the* function of PE:

I think it's *our duty* really that children should be as active as possible and, obviously, we're trying to encourage children to become more involved in sport, in *later* life, and so we introduce them to sports - individual and team sports - so that they ... have a lot of enjoyment in later life, socially. And the only way they can do this is if they are fit enough also to participate in these sports (emphasis added).

*Because we've got the vehicle for it* (health promotion), really; that we can try to promote this to children: the way to stay healthy, the way to a healthy lifestyle, things like that (emphasis added).

It is quite revealing and informative that, without having mastered the details or, indeed, the precise implications for their practice, PE teachers have a general idea that PE - frequently in the form of sport - 'does children good'.

A permeating theme of this study is recognition of the fact that teachers' 'philosophies' are not especially likely to have been formed by professional, let alone academic, writing on the subject. Some teachers did make reference to developments which they perceived as occurring 'as a result of documents coming out' as well as 'research in a lot of PE articles'. More often, however, the emphasis placed upon health was not perceived by the teachers

themselves as having developed in response to what Green (1994b) referred to as the 'call to arms' to be found in the academic press and among academics and teacher-trainers themselves. PE teachers' views were more likely to refer to the effect of 'newspapers; your own belief ... (there's) so much more in the news'.

*PE teachers' 'common-sense' assumptions regarding the 'fitness' of young people*

For many teachers in the study, health promotion as a, even *the*, justification for PE was intimately related to a taken-for-granted conviction that children and young people are less 'fit' than they were<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, as Harris (1994b) has observed, the term 'fitness' was often used as if it were viewed as synonymous with health:

the level of fitness (among youngsters) is so much poorer than years ago. And that is a legacy of the fact that the PE departments aren't doing their jobs ... the pupils are less fit, the pupils don't run any more, or don't run enough within their physical education lessons, so the heart rate never goes up to a level that will get many fit. And unfortunately that's how it's going.

In this vein, the views of teachers in this study appeared to add weight to Roberts' (1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) claims that teachers have, since the 1970s, become increasingly aware of constraints towards sedentariness in many areas of young people's lives. At the same time, however, it was noticeable that teachers did frequently appear unaware of the growing popularity of sport and physical activity among young people. It was commonplace for teachers to allege slothfulness among '(the) young people of today':

Nowadays there's so many people that just don't seem to do any physical activity; it's more behind desks, or at the computer. I think ... it's getting more and more so that they need to get out and be active and realise the importance of being active ... We are always talking to them about the importance of doing some kind of activity ... We always



talk about why we should be doing it - exercise - as much as possible and as often as possible ... to get as much activity as we can out of them (in) the timetable, then offer them lots of extra-curricular clubs that they can come and take part in.

Thus, frequently associated with common-sense views - vis-à-vis the levels of inactivity as well as the alleged lack of fitness among youngsters - were beliefs that modern lifestyles were largely associated with declining levels of activity:

I can guarantee that out of a class of 30 you would have a lot of struggling kids of the same age, whereas 20 years ago people were that much more (active), they could cope with anything like that a lot better ... I think the natural fitness of children is not what it was; they are ferried about from place to place.

#### *The relationship between sport, fitness and health*

For many PE teachers who subscribed, more or less, to a health ideology, sport was still seen as the main vehicle for health promotion:

My view of PE is that, on the very basic level, I'm here to improve fitness, strength and promote health with all the kids ... my fundamental job is to raise levels of fitness and skill expertise in whatever area I'm working in ... *we're talking about why we need sport*, what they will get out of it as an individual, as a purely health-related thing, and how we want them to go on and be involved in sport for the rest of their lives (emphasis added).

In this vein, the comments of a significant proportion of the teachers in this study, regarding the role of PE in health promotion, bore the traces of what might justifiably be referred to as a preoccupation with sport in the interests of both the physical and mental health of the individual:

I feel sport has a role to play on that ... fitness side of things ... And, again, it's the social side ... if you're committed to a sport and you are

14 or 15, you are far less likely to get involved with street-corner gangs, far less likely to get involved with drugs and that side of things ... so it has a lot of good things that stop pupils getting involved with things that perhaps they shouldn't.

Some teachers pointed to the health of the nation as well as the health of the individual:

I think in general what it should offer is for pupils of all abilities to take part in some form of physical education ... (The) first reason I'll give is obviously the health of the nation, basically, and the health of the individual. A lot of kids nowadays ... are using ... things, other than sport, for their enjoyment in pastimes ... What we can do is try and offer a variety of sports so that somebody somewhere finds a sport they are interested in.

### *HRE programmes in practice*

Where HRE featured in PE teachers' purported practice it did so, for the most part, 'in a block of work', typically of several weeks duration, and was more usually referred to as health-related *fitness* (HRF) rather than as health-related *exercise* (HRE) - the term preferred in contemporary professional and academic writing (Harris, 1994a). Whilst typically delivered as a blocked programme, for a number of teachers the *timing* of the delivery 'depends on (the) facilities.' Frequently, HRE took the form of variations on the theme of 'circuits'. One teacher said, 'It's only been more recently that I have taught health and fitness and that's just been circuits and going on a run', a format which, in line with Harris' (1994b) observation, persists despite various teachers comments that it is something 'the kids don't particularly like'. However, in teachers' eyes whether or not circuits appeared attractive to the pupils was also dependent, at least in part, upon the resources available:

it depends on your facilities; if you've got state-of-the-art exercise equipment then it (HRE) can be quite interesting ... but (here) it's quite a limited experience ... (regarding) what you can actually do.

At present, the NCPE stipulates that HRE should be a permeating theme. This requirement for permeation does not appear to have left its mark on many PE teachers' thinking, let alone their practice. Various teachers 'delivered (HRE) as a "block" shared with ... (e.g. 'orienteeing'). The nature of many teachers' comments was such that it suggested that 'health' provided a convenient justificatory ideology which was latched on to by teachers more often for reasons of pragmatism rather than because it had been systematically thought through and implemented in the curriculum. When asked if she managed to tease-out or emphasise HRE as a permeating theme in compliance with NCPE, one teacher responded for many when she commented, 'Not sure, really'. Despite this, many teachers expressed the view that the 'health' theme permeated their work *as a matter of course*:

I don't focus on it in the sense that I don't say, 'Well ... this area is where we are going to hit health' ... But to me *it's something that is always there when we do any activity* (emphasis added).

There was, it was claimed, what amounted to a kind of *de facto* permeation:

We don't do specific units on health-related fitness. We do do some work within the GCSE on health-related fitness but no specific unit as such. When we do things like aerobics it's definitely associated with health-related fitness. Swimming also, I would say.

It is worth noting that this was a feature of many teachers' responses to several questions of this kind. They appeared not to have thought very much, if at all, about whether some aspect or other of their 'philosophies' (such as character-building, moral development, health promotion) actually took place or not; they simply assumed, or took it for granted, that it did. In this regard,



their thinking appeared rich with fantasy inasmuch as they were keen to defend what might be seen as a somewhat romanticised view of the achievements of PE, despite being unable to identify the whereabouts of some of the claimed features in their own teaching nor having identified these features in their initial 'philosophies'.

Those who did not do HRE at the time but were 'considering it' still appeared to visualise it as a 'stand-alone' rather than a permeating theme, as required by NCPE:

We don't do health-related fitness as a stand alone in this school. I'd like to do some more as part of the development. I'd like to try and develop a health-related fitness area, as a separate Key Stage 4 (block).

Even where blocks of concentrated HRE work were done, it was often viewed as insufficient by teachers:

I think we do two full weeks of health-related fitness; I don't think it's enough ... what impact is that going to have on anything? I don't think it has an impact on (the pupils).

KG: Do you do HRE?

Teacher: Yes, but in very, very small amounts. We did ... four weeks (at year 7) and all we do is make them aware ... (of) what is happening to (their) body. In Year 8 they go in the multi-gym etc., then in Year 9 they get aerobics and they all choose multi-gym.

Notwithstanding the extent to which they perceived HRE as permeating their everyday practice of PE, various teachers viewed their roles as giving pupils 'direct information' about health in the belief that this could be expected to have an impact upon pupils' behaviour. Such a view is consistent with Colquhoun's (1991) claim that an ideology of *healthism* prevails in PE, which tends to focus attention on, and responsibility for, individuals' health and

well-being on the individuals themselves rather than their context and circumstances.

Academics among the subject-community continue to see PE as having prime responsibility for increasing knowledge and understanding of what most teachers believe to be the relationship between exercise and health and encouragement and fostering of enthusiasm for physical activity (e.g. Gilliver, 1999). To a large extent this perception was reflected in the views of PE teachers in Mason's (1995) study. It is particularly noticeable that among the many and varied (even confused) justifications offered by the teachers cited in Mason's (1995) study, one justificatory theme was relatively common - that of HRE. In addition, traces of a health ideology were more or less apparent in virtually all teachers' comments in the present study. The health ideology has risen to occupy a prominent place on the ideological high-ground of PE teachers' 'philosophies' (Green, 1994a) and, thus, gradually amidst many teachers' habituses. Nonetheless, one is left with the clear impression that whilst PE teachers are broadly aware of the requirements of NCPE in relation to health and HRE, this remains a rather vague awareness, both of the rationale for HRE and of the manner in which it is required to be implemented according to NCPE.

#### *HRE, education for leisure and lifelong participation*

Roberts (1995: 339-340) noted that in Mason's 1994 research on behalf of the Sports Council:

teachers defended their broad curricula as the best way of maximising the number of pupils who find a sport at which they are competent and which they enjoyed, and which would extend their participation into their out-of-school and post-school lives.

Roberts (1996a) identified several trends that have led to the higher levels of participation by young people in sport in the 1990s and to the recent marked decline in the drop-out rate in late-adolescence. Prominent amongst these was the adoption by 'virtually all schools' in the 1980s of 'sport for all' policies together with the broadening of sports curricula. From the 1970s and into the 1980s, 'the sports interests of young people were steadily broadening both within the physical education curriculum and outside school time' (Houlihan, 1991: 226) as the traditional games-based PE curricula were significantly modified by teachers, not least in terms of the provision of 'options' for upper-school youngsters as part of the trend towards 'education for leisure' (Scruton, 1992). Roberts' (1995, 1996a) observation - that many teachers in the 1970s and 1980s had broadened the PE curricula they offered, not only by adding activities to the traditional diet but, also, by offering an element of choice - was borne out by teachers in this study. For many teachers, the way to bring about adherence to sport and physical activity was considered to be through 'option' PE or, as OFSTED (1998) refer to it, 'activity choice'<sup>2</sup>. Thus, increasingly associated with the health ideology (chronologically and conceptually) has been a more marginal, but nevertheless complementary, ideology, that has worked in the same direction, that of 'education for leisure', including 'sport for all'.

### Education for leisure

According to Roberts (1996a, 1996b) and Scruton (1992), since the 1970s teachers have been increasingly aware of, and have responded to, wider social trends regarding developments in youth culture. This appeared evident in a number of teachers' comments:

they (the pupils) have got other things to be interested in.



there's so many other things around now that we have to compete with ... which are offering ... adrenaline rushes ... So, I think we have to try and say, 'Yes, we can achieve a high and an adrenaline rush from sports, as well as those other things, but on top of that we can offer you extra things and relationships of belonging, of physical well-being'.

Consistent with the claims of Roberts and Scraton, a variety of teachers in this study appeared to perceive themselves as competing with alternative attractions:

it's (PE) about ... participation ... hopefully ... that they try, that they want to do something outside ... in sport, in activities, in being active rather than sitting around and watching television, you know ... To me, PE encompasses a lot of things, it's not just one major factor, it's got a lot of things to offer individuals ... yes ... enjoyment, participation.

Such comments seem to offer support for Roberts' (1996b) claim that one of the reasons that PE has, over the last decade or so, been what he terms 'a success story' in participatory terms, is that PE teachers have been 'in tune' with young people's changing leisure lifestyles and circumstances. In addition, teachers' responses suggested that they were also aware of the desirability of encouraging enjoyment and competence in a breadth of sports. Roberts and Brodie (1992) have referred to this as the desirability of 'a wide sporting repertoire' on the part of young people. This was expressed by teachers as follows:

so that when they become adults ... they would have experienced and enjoyed a *cross-section* of sports, so that they are ... capable (enough) to go on and say, 'Yes, I enjoyed that, I want to keep that going ... I know where I can go', and they can carry on playing (emphasis added).

I think it's important that our kids, when they actually leave school and they go (to) work ... *they feel able to join in with these things; they have a basic level of skills*, so that they don't think, 'That's not for me' and 'I don't know anything about it' (emphasis added).

Once again, it was noticeable that teachers frequently assumed that this continuing participation would be achieved through sport and sports clubs:

I'm looking for when they leave school, (that they) continue ... some form of physical activity ... they've got enjoyment (from PE) in school ... (and) want some form of activity to ensure they are healthy when they leave. That's my prime aim, I would say.

Mason (1995) described similar responses in her study, in terms of PE teachers embracing the Sports Council's 'Sport for All' 'philosophy' and many teachers - in the present, as well as Mason's (1995), study - commented upon their ostensible desire to encourage all pupils to acquire a commitment to physical activity in general and sport in particular.

#### **'Sport for all'**

Commenting upon the findings of Mason's (1995) study of PE teachers in England and Wales, Roberts (1995: 340) observed:

Virtually all the teachers believed in 'sport for all'. They were more likely to consider it 'very important' to involve as many pupils as possible ... than to compete against other schools ... or to win trophies.

Interestingly, in relation to PE teachers' predisposition towards sport, Roberts added:

but this did not mean that they were against their pupils learning to play competitive games or succeeding in them. Rather, it appeared that the teachers believed that making success in competitive sports the over-riding objective would exclude most pupils and could deny even star players sufficient breadth of interest and skill to sustain long term sport careers (1995: 340).

'Sport for all' appeared frequently, often prominently, in the justifications of many PE teachers in this study, both explicitly - as a phrase utilised by

teachers to explain their policies - and, implicitly, as a theme recognisable in a range of views proffered.

*'Sport for all' and schools in disadvantaged areas*

Interestingly, 'sport for all' was a 'philosophy' particularly common among those teaching in disadvantaged<sup>3</sup> areas. Teachers in such schools frequently introduced or qualified their statements with references to '*this school*', or this '*type of area*' and even '*these kids*':

Well, what I've tried over the years, basically, in *this school*, was to give kids an opportunity in any sports ... My job is to try to cater for everybody in my school with various sports; to the extent that now we can teach golf, archery, bowls. Because, I think there are some chubby lads ... who perhaps don't like doing a lot of running and things like that but would really get a lot out of some of the other sorts of sport. I think that's my role in life, to give them a taste (of sport) and hopefully they will take it from there and so develop their own interests (emphasis in the original).

Various teachers, working in relatively disadvantaged schools, proffered views similar to those of the following HoD:

In this country, the only opportunity *some* kids get for sport is within school ... the vast majority of working-class children get their first opportunity within schools ... As a PE teacher it's got to be 'sport for all' (emphasis added).

It was noticeable, then, that the comments of a number of PE teachers - especially those teaching in disadvantaged areas - included specific references to the 'types' of pupils in a manner that suggested that their views on PE incorporated degrees of what might be termed 'localism'. In referring to what they perceived as a need to adapt their aims, expectations and practice to the 'types' of pupils they taught, these teachers demonstrated a tendency towards



degrees of localism that one would not expect to find in other (more academic) National Curriculum subjects. Indeed, the *National Curriculum* does not cater for such qualifications according to the 'character' or location of the school. Nor, it is worth reminding ourselves, do the philosophies articulated by academic philosophers of PE allow for - let alone expect - degrees of localism in their justifications for the subject.

### *'Sport for all' and girls*

'Sport for all' was a particularly prominent 'philosophy' in relation to teachers' views of girls:

while they're in school I want to teach them these skills and hope that it transfers to later on in life ... we find that some ... particularly Year 11 girls, if they don't want to do (PE) they will not. They will sit on the side line, even if they have their PE kit there! If they don't like sports they won't do it. So, at one point two terms ago, we gave them a choice of three things they could do.

In this regard, teachers (and especially female teachers) appeared particularly concerned with girls' health and fitness:

in the last two or three years we've seen an increase, especially in the girls ... not wanting to do it. And the reason they don't want to do it is because they are unfit and overweight.

(for girls) I'd drop athletics ... I'd do it a lot more as health-related, fitness orientated ... Why are we making them run around the track 3 3/4 times? ... they walk it ... and that is a way of putting them off ... there (are) better ways of getting them interested in getting fit.

Whilst concern about the impact of gender, particularly on girls, was expressed for the most part by female teachers it was not confined to them. A young male PE teacher commented:

Teacher: We do a lot of gymnastics lower down and then we move more (towards) individual (activities) in terms of aerobics and trampolining as they go up (the school).

KG: Why?

Teacher: Because of body shape changes and ... (to offer activities) they may want to take up later on in life.

It was apparent, then, that various teachers' comments could be viewed as exemplifying an education for leisure (Scruton, 1992) or 'sport for all' 'philosophy'; for example: 'if you do this, you'll thank me in five years time!' Insofar as such 'philosophies' were often linked with 'option' PE they suggested that what the teachers *thought* was usually related to what they had come to believe on the basis of *experience*; that their dispositions towards PE had altered as their networks encompassed pupils and schools in disadvantaged areas and this, in various ways, came to constrain their practice of PE.

#### *'Option' PE / 'activity choice'*

Another feature of teachers' 'philosophies' and practice that appeared somewhat idiosyncratic (especially in relation to the expectations and practices of teachers of other curricula subjects) was their commitment to 'option' PE. Despite the fact that the scope for offering choice has been very much limited by the NCPE, it was nevertheless particularly noticeable that many teachers remained committed to it and managed to squeeze 'choice' in as, in effect, a continuation of what might be called their 'pre-NCPE' practice:

I always have done ('option') PE - ... only in Key Stage 4 ... to give them a wider base ... There were more options available than there were teachers to teach it (a continuation of pre-NCPE practice).

Many teachers would have liked to have been able to offer a wider range of options:

I think we should give them a broader range of experiences and give them as many opportunities as we can to do as many different things ... they might be really good at something.

For many teachers, 'activity choice' or 'options' was viewed as an essential 'tool of the trade':

KG: You made KS 4 sound slightly like an option system ...

Teacher: It is ... They do (choose) ... we introduce things like the minority sports ... I think it's very important at Year 9 to introduce these other sports to them.

leeway, in getting (pupils) a bit more choice ... we do try and give them as broad a range as possible.

As committed to 'activity choice' as they appeared in principle, many teachers, nevertheless, still viewed it as following on (chronologically and developmentally) from skill-development. They saw the early years of secondary PE (Years 7, 8 and 9: Key Stage 3) as focusing upon teaching 'the basics'; in other words, the acquisition of 'key' sporting (but also physical) skills that would, in their view, allow a more 'recreational', leisure-oriented emphasis in Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11):

I suppose in Key Stage 3 we offer a more narrow curriculum in the more traditional type activities ... developing their skill ... Then, perhaps in Key Stage 4, we'd give them a wider choice of activities - things like they could take up when they leave school, things like that ... to give them the opportunity to experience what there is available.

first, second and third year (Years 7, 8 and 9): they do netball, hockey, gym and dance - very traditional, very middle-of-the road type of things. Whereas (Years 10 and 11) ... they go to the multi-gym, which is something they could actually go and do themselves. They get to have a go at badminton ... I think it is seen as more *recreation* ... let them just go and play, just go and do it (emphasis added).



In light of high-profile concerns of the 1980s alluded to by Evans (1990b), regarding the dangers of so-called 'progressive' PE, it is worthy of note that much of what passes as 'activity choice' in the PE curriculum could not adequately be construed as 'revolutionary'; that is to say, it does not involve discarding what might be seen as the 'traditional' (sport and team-game oriented) PE curriculum:

my job is to cater for everybody in my school with various sports.

Moreover, it seems to bear out Roberts' (1996a, 1996b) observations that the 'options' made available to pupils *supplemented* rather than *replaced* 'traditional' PE. What it supplemented it with depended very much on what was available, or, rather, what *resources* (particularly facilities and staffing) were available:

we have to channel it at the staffing that's available and also (their) strengths and the facilities that are available.

with Key Stage 4 ... I'd offer them more of a variety of sports ... take them off-site ... show them swimming pools and ... take them cycling ... walking up mountains, just to show them that there are other things that you can do. But it's all down to time and money.

Given that many schools do not have access to extensive facilities, nor a great deal of time, it is unsurprising that the choice is often limited to the staple PE 'diet' with the addition of several less-frequented activities:

We gave them some sort of choice, but it was fairly limited choice.

I wish we could offer them more, in terms of greater options.

It was noticeable, however, that the choice of activities was far more likely to be of additional sports rather than physical recreation activities as such:

We do a little bit (of optional choice) but it's more ... 'traditional'; you either play hockey, netball, football - very traditional sport. And, again, you are teaching them a specific skill.

as a department, we value all aspects; but we realise where our strengths lie (games) ... (and) by giving more time to games you could introduce more games.

This was the case even though many of the teachers in this study were acutely aware that the staple PE diet - of sport and particularly team games - was not popular with many children:

a lot of them are intimidated by games.

that ... can be off-putting to some children if they are made to do something they really don't enjoy.

by the time they leave Key Stage 4 quite a few pupils are *switched off* because they do the same thing year in year out ... (at) Key Stage 4 we offer them a little bit more 'real' lessons. They do swimming, badminton ... squash, they can go in the weights room ... a lot of things we do are team-based ... and perhaps it's not every child's forte. I do think its very important; if we don't give them the opportunities then (it) is very difficult for them to do it from afresh (emphasis added).

we might not be meeting the enthusiasm (of) certain pupils in certain sports. I mean, I'm not naive (enough) to think that everyone likes hockey, cricket, rounders, tennis or whatever we offer.

It is noticeable that the justification for offering 'choice' frequently returned to the aim of finding something that pupils *enjoyed* rather than developing new skills, a wider sporting repertoire or even in terms of other specifically educational objectives. Having said that, 'activity choice' in PE was perceived

by many teachers as a catalyst for encouraging the kinds of enjoyment and commitment likely to lead to longer term adherence to physical activity and, thus, 'healthy' lifestyles:

that's a way ... of getting into (sport) - if you (talk) about enjoyment and health for life - that's going to be the pathway to get that ... child to enjoy health for life. It's a happy medium isn't it between pushing them to do something and realising ... (that) if you bring something that they really enjoy ... that is going to help them in later life, for the rest of their lives, much more than having this image of something they really hated and (will) never touch again.

Frequently, teachers commented to the effect that, in their experience, offering pupils an element of 'activity choice' had a positive effect on participation rates, especially with older pupils and girls. Once again, this was particularly the case in schools located in relatively deprived social areas:

the participation rate was brilliant ... our participation rate, our enjoyment rate, the success of the kids.

It appears somewhat ironic, then, that OFSTED, in its recent report, claimed that a 'move away from the "recreational activities" and "activity choice" approach is also raising achievement levels in Key Stage 4' (OFSTED (1998: 1). This is a particularly interesting development for it suggests, quite clearly, that whereas PE teachers' goals are often couched in terms of 'enjoyment', the goals of OFSTED remain phrased in terms of 'achievement levels'. OFSTED emphasises the *educational* objectives of PE and appears to be trying to move PE towards mainstream educational goals and formally defined criteria which they, and others, can measure in a form that will stand up to public scrutiny. One might reasonably speculate that for OFSTED (and very probably for the general public), for example, enjoyment would not stand up to scrutiny as an objective for PE.



It would seem from teachers comments that the development away from 'activity choice' - forced upon teachers by the demands of NCPE as well as being encouraged with advice from OFSTED - has not met with universal approval. Indeed, a number of teachers commented that they would like greater scope at Key Stage 4 to choose what activities to offer children ostensibly in order that pupils themselves might retain a degree of choice. Several teachers commented in negative terms about advice from inspectors to narrow their provision down in order to improve standards. One teacher's comments were illustrative of the manner in which various teachers favoured 'activity choice' in PE, in part, for pragmatic reasons. These teachers perceived a need to adapt their practice to the constraints of the area and children at their schools. Commenting upon how he would have liked to plan the PE curriculum on reflection and after negotiation (with the pupils and even the parents) before then deciding on content and delivery, he said:

Ideally, I would like to sit back and wait for the timetable and then look at the area and then look at the pupils and ... (get the views of the parents and the children).

Other comments suggested a desire among teachers to be more adaptable to 'tastes' and opportunities than they were, in practice, constrained to be:

we always sit there and say, 'Well, it would be great to get the kids out of school, go off with them, with sports they could do when they leave school' ... We offer them quite a limited (range) of all the sports that are available.

Nonetheless, and in tune with Roberts' (1995, 1996a, 1996b) comments regarding the threat to NCPE posed by teachers' attempts to adapt the PE curriculum to correspond with contemporary youth cultures, various teachers commented upon the allegedly built-in limitations of NCPE:

I don't think ... school offer(s) ... what children can do when they leave school or ... what's provided in the community.

At the same time, and as indicated earlier, it was not uncommon for teachers to have a mistaken appreciation of trends in participation:

netball is ... extremely popular ... Outside of school, it's the most participated in sport for females.

A gender dimension was again evident. The comments of a number of female teachers, in particular, suggested incorporating 'activity choice' was perceived as a far more pressing matter for girls than for boys:

it's much easier for boys to take up sport than it is for girls.

Yesterday I gave a class a choice (for) the last lesson and I said right you've got the sports hall what would you like to do. Half put their hands up for netball and half of them just ducked their heads because the half that put their hands up for netball are the school team and love it and the other ones just didn't want to know ... because they don't like sport they don't want to get involved ... a lot of people who bring these notes in are the ones that don't enjoy (PE).

It is a moot point whether OFSTED are correct in claiming that there has been a move away from 'options' (or 'activity choice') among PE teachers in secondary schools. It is equally debatable whether any movement away is born of necessity rather than teacher choice as such. Also questionable is what is meant by 'raising achievement levels'. Having said this, it might equally be argued that, at the very least, the criteria in terms of which OFSTED measure 'achievement levels' are clear and explicit. PE teachers, by contrast, did not appear to have any criteria for assessing the effectiveness of their own preferred versions of PE.

Specialization upon a limited number of activities (as per NCPE) and the re-emphasis upon traditional team games, frequently encouraged by OFSTED in their reports to the schools in this study, appeared unpopular and was frequently viewed as potentially counter-productive. One teacher, for example, commented that:

It has changed with Years 10 and 11 quite dramatically because we used to do a lot of activities to try and find activities for the children to do, enjoy and participate (in) for the rest of their lives, but we had an inspection. An inspector came in and criticised us for not ... concentrating enough on specialist activities for Years 10 and 11, so we've narrowed it down. We now give a much greater (emphasis to) skills and time to specialist activities.

He added:

I'm still quite critical about that, I don't think it's right. I think some children are missing out now on activities which we can't fit in. I find Years 10 and 11 would prefer a broader base ... So, I think it's far too narrow. I would like them to have the opportunity to do things like volleyball and badminton; especially for the children that don't like the football and basketball. But we were actually told we should narrow it down after the OFSTED (inspection).

With this clear tension between many teachers' preference for 'activity choice' and the constraints imposed by NCPE and the OFSTED inspection process in mind, it is worth reminding ourselves of Roberts (1996a, 1996b) comments. Roberts argues that in broadening the curricula PE teachers had been succeeding at 'moving with the flow' of 'the broader tides' in young people's preferred uses of leisure and that policies set against the tide (such as those recommended in *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) and apparently prevalent in OFSTED inspection advice to PE teachers) are likely to undo much of what he sees as the good work achieved in participatory terms over the last 20 years.



Various PE teachers appeared particularly concerned that this move away from 'activity choice' was, in their view, potentially counterproductive and, once again, it was noticeable that female teachers, in particular, pointed to what they perceived as the particularly negative consequences for girls:

(at Key Stage 4) we try to offer them (girls) a variety of trampolining, aerobics, badminton ... different things than we would lower down the school. And then having to do a game on top of that ... !

As previously intimated, with regard to teachers' adaptation of their practices and 'philosophies' in accordance with the school contexts in which they operated, it was interesting to note that many teachers also identified a process of change in their 'philosophies' towards 'activity choice' associated with the 'type' of pupils and 'kinds' of schools they found themselves teaching in:

(teaching) in (this area) my views had started to be shaped... I started to put into practice (options) ... we did what the pupils wanted and they could get a benefit from, so I started putting it into practice.

As if to emphasise the way in which recent developments had worked to limit his attempts to broaden the curriculum, this teacher added:

I've not been able to do that here because of the National Curriculum, because I've been OFSTED'd in my first year. And we're being OFSTED'd again in November. So, I've got to make sure my department (know) what the guidelines under the National Curriculum say. (We're) doing what the school expects, having everything planned out.

Finally, however, a caveat should be added, lest one forms the impression that 'option' PE is one area in which there is a consensus among PE teachers. Not all teachers were converts to 'activity choice':

it might look good, to some extent, 'Oh yes, we're making use of our sports centre, we're going there and we're doing weights and we're doing swimming and we're doing this', but it's all *leisure* and when the boy gets puffed out he stops! ... *the idea of fun and leisure at the moment is mediocrity*. Fun can be about achievement. Why is it that we don't push anymore? Why is it that we're prepared to accept poor standards in behaviour and discipline. I'll tell you what's prevalent now in children of the 90s: 'I don't want to do this anymore and my mum says it's OK!' ... *my job is to promote sport at every level* (emphases added).

Whilst 'activity choice' appeared to have been embraced by very many of the teachers in this study there were those who held out for a more traditional curriculum. They were more likely than not to be established teachers at what one might describe as the more traditional schools: with fewer ostensible 'problems' and fewer concerns regarding pupils' participation.

### The sporting ideology

As previously indicated, the vast majority of teachers in this study identified enjoyment as a central plank of their 'philosophies'. In addition, many saw enjoyment as crucial to young people's adherence to active lifestyles and this was another key element in the teachers' ostensible 'philosophies'. It was noticeable at the same time, however, that for many it was simply taken-for-granted that such *enjoyment* would be of *sport*:

above all ... for them to enjoy PE through a medium of participation in sports.

they (the pupils) have to understand that ... sport is to be enjoyed ... sport is enjoyable and something that is good.

Such views were typical of the amalgam of what I will refer to as justificatory ideologies which frequently incorporated unrecognised and irreconciled

tensions; for example, an emphasis upon competitive team sport often sat somewhat uneasily alongside an avowed commitment to 'enjoyment' and, at the same time, to 'sport for all'.

Even where participation was the primary concern of teachers, this tended to be participation in (competitive) *sport* and, frequently, team-games. Indeed, physical activity and sport were regularly treated as synonymous:

PE should be about getting children involved in physical activity and teaching them about different physical activities ... (because) *that's what sport's all about isn't it? ... children need to be taught sport and if they are not taught it in schools where are they necessarily going to learn about it? And it's getting them involved in sport and making them see that sport is ... enjoyable and it is accessible to them ... because we are not going to have a fit and healthy nation (otherwise) ... so that they will play in later life when they leave school ... I suppose what we are teaching them is about different sports* (emphases added).

By the same token, even where teachers possessed a strong commitment to widening access and to encouraging active lifestyles in the promotion of health, it is worthy of note that they frequently also had a strong commitment to sport and sports performance including the associated ideological leanings towards the alleged benefits of sporting competition:

for as many people as possible ... it's our job to educate the pupils (so) that when they leave school they (will) want to partake in *sport ... to get all pupils to as high a level of performance as they can ... so everyone gets a chance ... a 'sport for all' philosophy* (emphasis added).

On the whole, PE teachers' 'philosophies' were nothing if not complex, even somewhat contradictory. As appears to be the case with the Sports Council's 'Sport for All' and sports performance policies, ideologies were often intertwined in an awkward and not altogether coherent framework. Various



PE teachers (especially male) appeared to assume that competition was an important, if not the *essential*, element of sport and, thus, PE. The importance of achieving competitive sporting success frequently appeared to dominate these teachers' thinking:

I think it's brilliant having competitive sport in school; it's a real focus and it's a real drive for the children.

we have been very successful over the years. For a small school of about 600, if I don't get a team in the local finals I'll be *very, very* upset (emphasis in the original).

and we are not going to drop netball because we are one of the most successful teams in (the county).

This was the case despite the fact that their responses often included claims to the contrary:

I don't care about winning. I've never bothered about winning. *If you're doing your job then you win!* ... I've got no time for elitism ... schools that we compete with they will often say that we're elitist because we tend to win everything (emphasis added).

Whilst emphasis upon winning and success appeared to conflict with other aspects of PE teachers' 'philosophies', it did seem to reflect (a) the teachers' own intuitive feelings and values; (b) their views on the traditions of PE; and (c) their perceptions of the school's expectations of PE. Two things became apparent: firstly, that teachers' emphasis upon competitive sport did not sit at all easily alongside their ostensible commitment to 'enjoyment' - not least because, as some teachers recognised, many pupils (perhaps especially girls) may be put off by such an emphasis upon achievement and competition. Secondly, it also indicated that they were not given to abstract philosophising in which emphasis is placed on developing internally consistent and coherent

justificatory systems. In other words, their views appeared an amalgam of their particular habituses in figuration with the dominant ideologies within PE and the constraints of day-to-day practice: they were intuitive responses to their 'gut' feelings interwoven with pragmatic responses to practical circumstances.

### *The performance/participation tension*

Given the aforementioned complexities, not to say confusion, permeating teachers' comments, it was unsurprising that the performance/ participation tension was an implicit theme running through the interviews with many teachers (especially males). This tension became especially transparent in relation to extra-curricular PE, as I shall indicate later. Two quotations - from female and male teachers respectively - provide a flavour of this tension:

'sport for all' ... as many people involved as possible, *rather than just sort of getting teams out* ... we want *excellence* but we want it across the board (emphases added).

Number one, we want *everyone to be involved in sport*; number two, *I don't like the idea of recreation*. I believe that the country is turning into armchair athletes and armchair footballers rather than actually going out and doing it ... don't go away with the idea that it's the teams that worry me; that's just an extension, that's just the last 1/10th of it (emphases added).

One particular exchange provided a neat illustration of the confusing, even contradictory, ideas prevalent in some teachers' thinking, particularly that of males. Such views appeared to reflect an amalgam of an intuitive commitment to a notion of PE as *essentially* sport that had, nonetheless, been more or less penetrated by an amalgam of 'sport for all', education for leisure and health ideologies. An established male PE teacher offered the view that the emphasis on performance and skill-acquisition in PE lessons was

diminishing and added, 'that's what we need to get back to ... because the standard in those major team games is slipping'. When I suggested to him that some of the teachers he was criticising (for allegedly moving away from 'traditional' PE) would also claim that they were trying to encourage 'sport for all' but through a 'recreational' or 'option' approach, he replied: '(S)o, what is the success rate of that attitude of getting pupils to actually *perform at any level whatsoever?*' (emphasis added). He continued:

I mean, OK, you can go to the gym - that's fine for 'fitness for life' ... that's important but other things, like badminton, ... to get to any sort of standard you've got to actually give them the chance to go to clubs; a chance to be part of a team. Because that is what will happen in life: they will go to a club ... will be involved with a team ... but I don't see that after 3.20pm - they go home; it doesn't happen!

This kind of view was expressed more directly by this teachers' HoD:

what horrifie(s) me, Ken, is the general standard of PE in this country ... I would say it's awful ... year in year out, the same schools go to the finals. Now, every school does athletics, supposedly; every school does cricket, supposedly; every school is doing all of the sports and yet most schools don't achieve anything with their teams! Now, how can that be?

Of particular noteworthiness, was the manner in which such views involved very *particular* and *subjective*, that is to say, preferred, conceptions of what PE should be about; in this case, and once again, particularly with males, it was evidently sport and especially team-games.

### *Acquisition of sports skills*

The prevalence of a sporting ideology was reflected in some teachers' (both male and female but especially the former) emphasis upon the acquisition of skills in PE lessons. It was at this point that prior emphasis upon what might



be described as the non-educational goals of enjoyment and sports performance began to incorporate more ostensibly educational goals. Many teachers in the study perceived the acquisition of sporting skills as being a central function of PE, particularly in the initial stage of secondary education (at Key Stage 3):

from Year 7 to Years 8 and 9 ... they are increasing their repertoire of skills.

learning basic skills. And if they don't get basic skills - the co-ordination - they are never going to get them; it's something we have to do; it's on the curriculum.

In similar vein, some teachers in Mason's (1995) study offered views contrasting with the educational orientation of others. Mason commented:

some teachers held a more 'skills training' view of PE, consistent with teaching pupils the basic skills of PE mentioned in the earlier stages of the National Curriculum (Mason, 1995: 3).

Indeed, for some teachers in my study, skill-acquisition remained the role of PE throughout pupils' secondary school life. Some made no attempt to hide their unequivocal commitment to the acquisition of sports skills in the face of recent developments (such as NCPE):

Call me old school if you like but it's about *physical* education; it's about the *physical* and ... (as) the old school say, 'put the physical back into physical education' ... When I hear 'plan/performance/evaluate', I'd go along with that to a degree, I mean they can plan things like in ... gymnastics, but I don't think they can plan particularly well the movements for a (rugby) line-out ... (performance) that's where I'm coming from (emphasis in the original).

It was interesting to reflect that this male teacher articulated a view implicit in a number of (particularly male) teachers' comments. Yet, at no time did a

teacher intimate the contrasting view that might be summarised as 'putting the *education* back in to physical education'. The clear impression one formed was that for many PE teachers (and, once again, particularly the male teachers) the emphasis in PE *is* and *should remain* on the *physical* rather than the *educational*.

As was the case with a number of (usually male) PE teachers, in the eyes of the above teacher PE was 'definitely' about skill-acquisition. In this regard, it was interesting to note one teacher imply that learning was necessarily related to skill acquisition; *anything else was not learning as such*. This kind of view stands diametrically opposed to the intellectual definition of knowledge favoured by the views of those philosophers of education (and PE) whose line of thinking has come to represent the 'standard' conception of education and in recent years, according to Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997), the 'new orthodoxy' in PE.

Skill-acquisition remains close to the centre of a number of (yet again, particularly male) teachers' view of PE. As one teacher put it, sometimes lessons are about enjoyment and sometimes 'it's much more serious':

sometimes I would explain to the kids that certain sessions ... (are) about *learning*; this is *pure* physical education you know - learning about *how to do something*.

Notwithstanding the increased popularity of TGFU that was an aspect of the supposedly 'new PE' approach (Evans, 1990b), notably among academics and teacher-trainers, it is clear that the conventional approach to pedagogy retains many loyal supporters, particularly among established male PE teachers:

we warm up ... we do certain skills that we are going to look at (in) that particular lesson and, then, if they behave, and all has gone well, we

can finish (with a game) and they can take those skills that we've practised through to the game ... and that will go through every games lesson.

I'm the old school that says, 'Right, warm them up, this is how you perform in a line-out, now go away and perform it' ... They need to know certain moves for rugby, for soccer, for cricket, and I believe they should be taught rather than go away and plan them and then perform them.

Needless to say, many male PE teachers were 'quite happy' with the renewed emphasis upon games in both the revised NCPE of 1992 and *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995).

#### *Coaches, coaching and the sporting ideology*

The tension evident in teachers' comments related to the participation/performance emphasis was illustrated in their mixed views on the involvement of coaches in PE - a trend already in place before the publication of the Government's policy statement *Sport: Raising the Game* but further encouraged by that report and the then government's renewed emphasis upon 'traditional' sport and team-games in the curriculum. It is noteworthy, however, that, on the whole, PE teachers appeared remarkably receptive to coaches being involved in PE. This is contrary to what one might expect, given that it implies that there is no *a priori* need for a specialist qualification in order to be involved in teaching PE and that this, in turn, might be seen as undermining teachers' claims for specialist status which has been something of a preoccupation with PE teachers in recent years.

There are a number of practical reasons for this willingness to use coaches. Several teachers noted the growing links with coaches and the governing bodies of sport:



We get a lot of offers, you know, 'Can we come and do this, can we come in and do that?'

there have been a lot of government schemes trying to encourage 'sport for all' ... *Raising the Game* ... we have done lots of things like that. We've had all sorts of people coming in to school to give people basketball - Manchester Giants come, Chester Jets come - ... rugby league, we have cricket, dance people coming in - the National Ballet ... we have become more aware of it through national ideas and initiatives.

As with a number of other links between schools and their communities, the impetus for many of these developments, as reported by several teachers, came not so much from the academic or professional press but rather the 'lots of flyers sent around the schools which has made a bigger influence' and the contacts made with schools by local coaches and clubs themselves.

A number of teachers seemed equivocal about the inclusion of coaches. Perceptions appeared more likely to be influenced by some kind of cost-benefit analysis on the part of teachers, rather than objections born of a *philosophical distinction* between teaching and coaching. It was interesting to note, then, that whilst expressing *practical* concerns, many teachers did not appear as threatened as one might have expected, nor for that matter, to object *in principle* to the prospect of sports coaches becoming involved in PE:

some (coaches) are good and some are bad, some have got a lot of knowledge but can't pass it over to the kids ... some are absolutely brilliant and the kids get an awful lot from it, but you have to vet them, you really do. And I have to go to (coaches) sometimes and say, 'I'm sorry, but I want you to do this rather than you just go out and show off your skills'.

KG: How do you feel about coaches coming into PE?

Teacher: Some of them are excellent in their subject knowledge but when it comes to actually teaching it's a little bit different ... I can't see them taking over, it's just a very good addition (to PE).

Some of those teachers who commented upon the issue of coach involvement appeared to take a view not dissimilar to that on 'activity choice' in PE. One teacher indicated that it seemed more appropriate to have coaches coming in at Key Stage 4 (and/or extra-curricular PE). Nonetheless, and as I will indicate later, many teachers were quite happy for coaches to be involved at all levels of PE. Some teachers expressed the view that they would like to see coaches in PE because it was seen as helping maintain pupils' interest and motivation:

if somebody (comes) in with new ideas - the whole place is buzzing!

Teacher: I would love, absolutely love, more coaches to come in after school and help me.

KG: In the curriculum as well?

Teacher: I would love it.

Along with several others, the latter teacher expressed his preparedness to embrace coaches within the curriculum as well as in extra-curricular PE:

I would love to do that. I would love to be a coach who went into schools and taught trampolining ... the overall standards would go up.

Here again, the teacher did not respond by outlining a *philosophical* justification for the involvement of coaches in the domain of teachers. Indeed, the justification was *no* justification as such. Rather, it was merely an outline of the *practical* benefits to the teacher of the involvement of coaches; that is to say, involving coaches in PE let some teachers 'off the hook' - in terms of saving them work and/or providing 'cover' for areas of inexpertise as well as helping with class motivation and control. In this regard, it was noteworthy

that aspects of the justifications for the inclusion of coaches were similar to justifications for enjoyment as an aim inasmuch as the primary concerns of teachers appeared to be *pragmatic*.

Interestingly, those teachers most confident about the involvement of coaches were usually coaches themselves. They were, or had been, actively involved in coaching beyond the school setting and, on occasions, appeared to perceive themselves as much as coaches as teachers. This might become an increasingly pertinent issue if, and when, the 'Coaching for Teachers' courses presently on offer 'turn' teachers into coaches and Government plans to make a substantial investment in competitive school sport (and particularly in extra-curricular provision) are realised (Revell, 1999).

A number of PE teachers appeared ready to turn a good deal of their teaching over to coaches - an attitude which would seem at once to undermine their claims to possess special skills. Several teachers' comments implied that they thought the quality of coaches had improved and that 'these days' the quality of coaches was 'far higher' because coaching courses had brought about a improvement in coaches' teaching skills. One teacher, unhappy with the pressures on her to perform onerous extra duties (additional to teaching and the extra-curricular work required when pupils are successful in county teams, for example), compared the situation in the UK unfavourably with the impression she had formed of PE in the USA, as delivered by teacher-coaches:

(I was) much more impressed by it. It seems so much more professional and structured than it is here ... they ... have external people coming in to support them ... they did a similar-type of thing during the day but it appeared ... that they only opted into the extra-curricular if they wanted to. So, they opted into running a school basketball team if they wanted. And it's fairly contractual - a contract would be signed ... and they would be obliged to run ... matches and ...



for that they would receive a payment ... and you could opt out completely if you wanted to and just actually be the PE teacher and then they get external agencies in ... like they do at some private schools here.

Bearing in mind what I have already suggested regarding PE teachers seeking practical solutions to practical problems, it is worth noting that adoption of such a system in the UK would, in effect, offer teachers the opportunity to opt out of the things they did not want to teach.

For some teachers in this study, distinguishing between the role of teacher and coach may well have proved difficult. Indeed, one suspects that if some teachers had been able to find gainful employment in sports coaching, along the lines of the American education system, they would have pursued such a career path in preference to teaching. Describing himself as a coach as well as a teacher, and one who ran his own sports coaching business, one teacher commented that, 'if the honest thing was said, I'd rather do that than teach'. Implicitly revealing his own sporting ideology, he argued that PE specialists should be involved with children from the beginning of primary school which, he claimed, would not only affect 'sport for all' beneficially but would also 'affect how many children are able to get to that sort of excellence stage if they want to'. In this vein - and in line with Government claims (DNH, 1995) regarding the alleged sporting orientation of PE teachers - he commented upon the benefits 'of coaching from a qualified coach from an early age', and added, 'until we do that sport won't progress in this country'. Invited to offer his views on coaches becoming involved in teaching, he responded:

I'm biased on the point because I am a coach as well as a PE teacher. I feel that it would benefit schools and we've had instances of it here quite recently when we did cricket. A gentleman from the (local) cricket club offered to do sessions ... three of the kids are suddenly part of (their) junior team.

He continued by making reference to what he saw as the role of coaches in developing talented children in areas where teachers do not have the requisite specialism:

I certainly would not be able to take a good team and progress them further because I don't feel my personal ability, coaching-wise or cricket-wise, would allow me to do that. Whereas, if somebody comes in who's a good cricket coach ... he's got the ability to take them further.

Penney and Harris (1997: 49) observe that:

the long talked about divide between schools and clubs and between teachers and coaches in England and Wales has yet to be overcome. He (Lawson, 1995) identified ... the 'school perspective' as being '... the entitlement of *every school pupil* to be given the opportunity to develop skills to a level commensurate with his/her ability and inclination' and the 'NGB perspective' as the creation of links that will assist towards a *talent identification programme* (emphasis in the original).

My research, it must be said, did not entirely bear out such a conclusion. In the first instance it makes no sociological sense to talk of the 'school perspective'. Teachers in this study subscribed to a range of views that could be taken, it is argued, to represent, more or less, several ideological clusters of meaning. At one end of the spectrum these were in line with those alluded to in Mason's (1995) report - where teaching and coaching were seen as quite distinct entities - and, at the other end, were those teachers who appeared to treat them as synonymous, and occasionally saw the latter as the essence of the former - as was the case with several teachers in this study. At the same time, a number of teachers in this study seemed to view 'sport for all' as sitting quite easily alongside talent identification.

One area in which sporting ideologies were particularly in evidence was in teachers' views regarding extra-curricular PE, and it is to this that I now want to devote particular attention.

### **The sporting ideology and extra-curricular PE**

Extra-curricular PE is probably most adequately defined as:

the provision of activities outside of the formal PE curriculum, most often after-school and at lunch-times, but also in some schools, at weekend and/or before school (by PE teachers) (Penney and Harris, 1997: 42).

Research (Mason, 1995; Penney and Harris, 1997; Roberts, 1996a; SCW, 1995) suggests that, in terms of the involvement of teachers and pupils alike, extra-curricular PE is alive and well. All of the 35 teachers (representing 17 schools) in this study professed involvement in extra-curricular PE. Indeed, many expressed the view that their professional (and, frequently, personal) lives were more or less dominated, almost blighted, by it. Despite this, in my own study several teachers - usually male - maintained the common-sense view of the Government (DNH, 1995; Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999) that there had, indeed, been a degradation of extra-curricular PE since the 'teachers dispute' of the mid-1980s:

I think a lot of people packed up and didn't go back to extra-curricular. I mean some areas are now getting back to what they were but others are still well behind.

But I know that outside it's getting more difficult to get ... matches and extra-curricular things, because teachers aren't prepared to give up their time after school or at weekends or take part in matches.

Such a view was more apparent among teachers at schools with a strong sports orientation and commitment to competitive sports fixtures:



KG: Are you convinced then that some teachers are not by and large doing things (extra-curricular)?

Teacher: Oh no - they're not; they are definitely not. I mean you can look at football ... to actually get fixtures ... you're wasting your time.

There was a tendency among a number of teachers - especially those whose extra-curricula provision was particularly successful - to caricature provision (and, for that matter, the attitudes of teachers) at other schools:

I'm sure not every PE teacher does it. I'm sure they say 'Well, we're not going to enter X, Y and Z because we want to be home at 5.30pm with our feet up with our children'. I'm sure a lot of people do. It's our own fault.

Surely somewhere there's extra-curricular going on because that's part of the job but I have not even met 40% of the teachers in the area because you never see them.

It was noteworthy that the perceptions of the above teachers contrasted markedly with the views of the teachers being caricatured. Indeed, the caricature could only be said to apply to a very small number of teachers in the study; what Scotson and Elias (1994) might refer to as 'the worst of the worst'.

But what of PE teachers' 'philosophies' regarding extra-curricular PE? It was noticeable that the broad consensus among PE teachers was that extra-curricular PE represented an *extension* of curricular PE.

#### *Extra-curricular PE as an extension of curricular PE*

The view of extra-curricular PE as an extension of curricular PE has, in my personal experience of teaching, long been common-place among PE teachers

and it continues to be so. Almost without exception, PE teachers described it as an 'extension of curricular PE':

Well, it's extensions. (In) curricular PE we start off with the basics (skills) and develop it as we go through.

to have any sort of extension you need to be partaking in extra-curricular - which is part of the job.

This view of extra-curricular activities as an extension of the curriculum programme is one shared and implicitly endorsed by OFSTED (1998). This much, then, was self-evident: that, for many PE teachers, extra-curricular PE was an 'extension ... of what they do'. However, quite what the focus or foci of extra-curricular work should be, was a little more difficult to establish. To put it another way, it was when one came to explore PE teachers' 'philosophies' vis-à-vis the practice of extra-curricular PE proffered that the picture became more opaque. The 'philosophies' of PE teachers with regard to extra-curricular work were quite complex, not to say confused. Frequently, the views of teachers in the study reflected the multiple foci of extra-curricular work:

it's another time when you can go and do some sports and exercise to extend what they're doing in (the curriculum), and give them an opportunity to participate against other schools.

what we should be aiming to do here is to have it (extra-curricular) as an extension ... just for participation ... (but also) to actually set higher targets ... skill-wise.

The final quotation illustrates the janus-headed nature of extra-curricular PE. By 'extension' PE teachers appeared to mean at least two things: extension in terms of a *continuation* and/or, more usually, development 'to a higher level' of (sports) *performance*:

we offer an extended version of what we offer in lessons ... we have netball teams, hockey teams, tennis teams.

they (the pupils) are willing, they want to learn, so we do skills which you wouldn't normally do in the lesson time.

Whilst 'continuity' was the ostensible rationale, the manner in which the principle of continuity manifested itself tells us something about the underpinning ideologies at work as well as the constraints surrounding practice. It was quite common, for example, for teachers who claimed continuity to nevertheless stress the desirability of a performance emphasis in extra-curricular work:

extra-curricular is more about elitism ... (it should be about) competing against other schools ... Having said that, to rounders club I'll get children who are keen ... Well, ideally, it should be about a broad base again shouldn't it? Yes, well, *when I think about it*, yes: it should be about helping those children in different areas improve on skill and ... push them a little bit further to compete (emphasis added).

#### *'Sport for all' or de facto elitism?*

Consistent with the findings of Penney and Harris (1997) the practice of PE teachers in my own study (if not always the 'philosophies') revolved to a greater extent around sport, particularly team sports, and to a lesser extent around team practices. Nevertheless, a noticeable feature of the teachers' views was that, again almost without exception, they described extra-curricular PE as 'open' to *all* pupils inasmuch as, ostensibly, any youngster could attend if they so desired. Characteristically, teachers in the study claimed a commitment to both 'sport for all' *and* performance sport:

There are practices every break-time, every lunch-time and virtually every night and at weekends. But it's not just for the teams, it's open - the whole school can take part. Now, that's a lot of work.



extra-curricular activities ... are skill-based, selective ... but (we) also have open practices as well. So, if someone feels they wouldn't get into a team or they are not very good, they can still come to these practices. (They're) not just for so-called team players ... it's ... open practices. So, the pupils, whatever level, can turn up to do something.

In this vein, many teachers not only stressed the *equal weighting* given to both 'sport for all' and performance sport but felt able to reconcile the two:

I think that ... you should have ... the school teams etc. but there's got to be the recreational side - like a badminton club on one night - anybody can come along, anybody can take part, there's no competition to it.

Indeed, a number of teachers argued that one led to the other:

But your teams come out of the open clubs. All the clubs here are open, any pupils can come.

(extra-curricular PE is) *Very, very* important; and for a large number of children to be involved. Extra-curricular is *really, really* important ... we really struggle, to get team practices in ... The school is a very small school but a large number ... of staff are involved in extra-curricular, especially the PE side. And, because this is happening, clubs take just as much importance as teams - loads of clubs. And also we're encouraging as many people to come to practices as possible ... anyone can come, it's not a team practice, anyone can come ... Our teams could be stronger if we didn't allow ... as many as possible (to come). And we fill a coach. So that it's not year 7 'A' team netball going off - we've got A, B, C and D teams going (emphases in the original).

Similar to the manner in which PE teachers appeared quite ready to embrace the use of coaches in PE they were also keen to develop links with sports clubs:

connections with outside clubs, which is something we try and steer people towards.

Among the 35 teachers in the study there were some unequivocal expressions of commitment to what might be termed 'sport for all' (along the lines of the Sports Council's strategy of recent decades with which it was associated):

I just want to get as many people as involved as possible. I'm not bothered whether they are brilliant teams or whatever, I just want to try and get everybody to like PE.

However, these were relatively rare. Indeed, even here, whilst the philosophy was one of 'sport for all' the putative practice centred upon sport and competitive team-games. It became clear that, notwithstanding professed commitment to involving as many pupils as possible in extra-curricular activity, there was a tension here that had, unsurprisingly, not been thought through; for nothing constrained teachers to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable. Extra-curricular PE provided teachers with a degree of freedom to choose and they chose sport. This predisposition was, in turn, exacerbated by constraints in the form of the expectations and requirements of various groups, prominent amongst which were headteachers and parents.

#### *Emphases on performance and team games*

Despite outward expressions of commitment to 'open' practices and 'sport for all', an emphasis on *performance* was clearly evident in teachers' 'philosophies' as well as in their professional practices:

the importance is on *performance* and getting people to get involved in sport (emphasis added).

the ones that are more able can come to the extra-curricular activities and I can push them on ... beyond the Key Stage.

And this was not merely an emphasis upon performance. It tended also to be an emphasis upon performance in *competitive* sports and particularly *team* games:

We do most clubs, apart from athletics. We do a lot of netball.

However, whilst 'clubs' can refer to, 'Badminton clubs, gym clubs, dance clubs', more usually it meant team-games and team practices:

we run so many teams as it is, we don't have the time to meet all the sports ... so we ... point them in the direction of clubs (in volleyball for example).

(extra-curricular is) *Very, very* weighted towards team games (emphasis in the original).

A lot of it's teams ... but we do try to keep clubs going for such activities as trampolining ... very, very popular ... I find my time is taken with team games.

Penney and Harris (1997: 43) claim that extra-curricular PE, 'is dominated by traditional team games, invariably has a competitive focus and is also "gendered"'. Accordingly, they argue that this 'particular focus' results in extra-curricular PE '*offering limited opportunities to only a minority of pupils*' (Penney and Harris, 1997: 43; emphasis in the original) - a claim reinforced by government research (see Mason, 1995). 'Invariably', Penney and Harris note:

the focus of extra-curricular provision is competition between single sex teams representing different schools. Furthermore ... this focus is also competition in 'traditional', 'gendered' and primarily 'invasion' games ... It is games such as rugby, football, netball and hockey that dominate (1997: 46).

Penney and Harris' view is supported by the research reported here.



### *Self-selection*

Even when teachers acknowledged that, on balance, extra-curricular PE favoured team practices, they appeared keen to add a caveat regarding 'sport for all': 'But even at team practices anybody is welcome. It's not just the team that come'. It is illuminating to note, however, that this teacher acknowledged that in practice:

it does end up like that, they (the elite girls) are the team ... and the others are not welcome. So, although we have team practices we still hope those people will come but they don't. But then we've got more of a weighting towards the team but they are still opportunities for people just to come along (to) non-team clubs.

(extra-curricular PE is) recreational based. We will have football practice from which we will select a team ... (but) anybody who wants to come along may do so; *although, in reality, it is nearly always the team* (emphasis added).

Teachers also seemed aware that the participant profile of pupils attending extra-curricular PE (i.e. the more able) acts as one more barrier to the less able:

the ones that stand out are the ones that come to extra-curricular. They are the ones that create teams and I just think that situation puts a lot of people off.

The profile of participants appeared to serve as some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that reinforced the sporting ideology of many teachers.

Several aspects of PE teachers' figurations appeared particularly significant when it came to their 'philosophies' and practices in extra-curricular PE, and were more often than not perceived of as constraints.

### *Tension between 'philosophies' and practice*

It is important to note that 'philosophies' regarding extra-curricular PE frequently did not appear to match professed practice, in that - despite the rhetoric - practice was biased towards *sport*, especially team-games, rather than *exercise*, and was *competitive sport* rather than *recreation* oriented in nature. In part, this mismatch can be explained in terms of inheritance; the continuation of tradition. It is also, however, a reflection of the pre-eminence of a sporting ideology in teachers' 'philosophies', in figuration with the various constraints they experience at the local and national levels.

One interview provided a particularly useful insight into the complex and multi-faceted pressures on PE teachers in relation to 'sport for all', active lifestyles and sports performance:

I do feel that we go over the top. We allow the extra-curricular to, not exactly dominate, but it does take a fairly high profile in this school ... we (the department) (decided) ... a while back now ... that all children should have the opportunity to do extra-curricular activity at least once a week and we've endeavoured to do that. And I think really, with hindsight, we are too small a department to carry that through.

But it is not simply a *tension* that is apparent, frequently *confusion* also appears close to the surface:

Extra-curricular activity is for children who want to do (PE); who want to be taken that much further. My lessons would obviously cater for them as much as I possibly could, but PE lessons are for everybody as far as I'm concerned, regardless of ability ... (extra-curricular) is the chance I get to spend with the kids who want to (do PE) ... the more *able* kids, all the kids who want to come along and have *fun* (emphases added).

Having spoken at length and with feeling about his concern that PE - especially at Key Stage 4 - should introduce youngsters to a range of activities that they might take with them into later life, one teacher outlined an extra-curricular programme that provided what he termed 'opportunity'. And yet, seemingly unaware of the potential tension between the two positions, he went on to comment:

We are quite competitive. We play netball ... football in the main. But we do cross-country, athletics, we have the occasional basketball ... We do cricket, rounders, tennis, athletics - we run as much as we can ... The majority are team-based, but we run practices that are open - anyone can come along, it's not just ... the team players ... There are clubs that are not team-based, like badminton club, table tennis club, gym club.

He added:

I must admit *I still like competition*, even after having said all that. I think children thrive on competition - life is a competition, really. So, I like the competition ... I'm still a competitive person myself. I was brought up that way. But I understand that *there's people out there who are not that way inclined*; we offer the other clubs for them *when we can* (emphases added).

This view was not at all uncommon and the tension was implicit in the comments of a number of teachers; for example:

the aerobics, the circuit-training, they're all pretty good fun, but we used to have competitions, aerobics competitions. We do rhythmic gymnastics - then we have a competition for that. So, we're doing it as a recreational thing really; at the end we have a competition to decide the best ... It's netball practice on Thursday night and we have team practice ... then I organise matches on a Tuesday night.



### *The 'fundamental link' between PE and sport*

It is in extra-curricular PE, Penney and Harris (1997) suggest, where the 'fundamental link' as they describe it, between PE and sport - often implicit, frequently explicit, in official and semi-official pronouncements - 'is arguably most visible' (p. 42). Indeed, it is tempting to observe that in some cases it might be more adequate to describe extra-curricular PE not so much as a PE-sport link but, rather, a sport-sport link. This is perhaps best illustrated by a teacher from a very successful school (in sporting terms): 'I don't differentiate between lessons and extra-curricular, I just carry on'. He added:

The PE department here work right through the day. The break-time here is just another session. So, at the moment, I'll do high jump in the gym because I can have my coffee and as many kids as want can come in ... the whole day is just an extension of what I do - that is, *coach sport* (emphasis added).

### *Extra-curricular PE as the main focus of PE*

On occasions explicitly, but more often implicitly, it became clear that for a substantial number of teachers (usually, but by no means always, men) extra-curricular PE was not so much 'the icing on the cake' as the primary concern of teachers. Or, rather, what they were 'free' to do in extra-curricular PE - in essence, sport - was more like what *curricular PE should* consist of, as far as they were concerned:

in some cases ... extra-curriculum is sort of like the 'head' ... the curricular (PE) is not the main focus.

if we do our jobs properly we should have people knocking at the door to do extra-curricular activities.

Penney and Harris echo the SCW's concern that this tendency 'exacerbates the previously existing imbalance as *extracurricular sport seems to be becoming ever more competitive and geared to performance*' (SCW, 1995; cited in Penney and

Harris, 1997: 44; emphasis added); as a result, it is biased towards and favours the minority of pupils with particular sporting ability. Whatever the merits or demerits of such a development, it seems indisputable that - as several commentators have pointed out (Mason, 1995; Penney and Harris, 1997; SCW, 1995) - extra-curricular PE is biased towards sport and, within sport, towards team-games, not least because many PE teachers like it that way and are more constrained towards such practice than they are constrained away from it.

### **The academic ideology and the 'silent curriculum'**

To the extent that an academic ideology was discernible (even tangentially) in PE teachers' comments, it typically took the conventional form (see Blake, 1996; Laker, 1996a, 1996b; Munrow, 1972) of faith among teachers in the utility (supposedly inherent in sport) of PE for the development of the moral and aesthetic dimensions of youngsters' characters. Many of the claims for the alleged moral and character development benefits of PE made by teachers bore the hallmarks of the kind of fantasy-laden thinking that, according to Dunning (1992), characterises ideology. Occasionally explicitly, but more frequently implicitly, teachers indicated their beliefs that mere involvement in PE - and especially sport and team games - would be sufficient to bring about what schools often label PSE (personal and social education) or, more recently, personal, social and *health* education (PSHE). Whilst I have chosen to use the term PSE because of its currency in secondary schools as a formal process for bringing about the kinds of objectives PE teachers were claiming for PE, it is worth noting, nonetheless, that they themselves did not make this connection explicitly or otherwise. This is something one might reasonably have expected them to do had they really believed in the efficacy of PE in PSE terms. Rather, they appeared to turn to PSE more as an after-thought, seemingly utilised to bolster their preferred views with a more overtly educational rationale.

The belief, put colloquially, that PE reaches the parts that other subjects cannot, in terms of 'building up the character', as one teacher put it, was quite common-place. For many teachers this was seen as a kind of informal but nevertheless significant aspect of the PE curriculum:

Teacher: it's like a *silent curriculum*, the social side of it - it's in our handbook ... we do work at it but it's obviously not in the written curriculum.

KG: Why? What is in the written curriculum?

Teacher: It's just skills, really ... sports skills ... The social skills are what you would call the 'silent curriculum' (emphasis added).

A variety of features of this supposed process of socialization were identified, such as the benefits of co-operation for pupils' sociability:

working as a team ... Co-operation through relationship building ... I think that on the way, actually taking part in these things, you gain a lot more ... than 'I just play netball, I just play football' ... It's something for life that you are trying to promote, not just for the now ... the skills that you achieve will help you in other areas of life as well.

Thus, involvement in PE and sport was taken by teachers to propagate 'a lot of social skills' as well as 'an opportunity to develop their all-round character':

I think that people should be able to participate (for) all sorts of reasons ... the health reason to start off with ... that's a fairly high profile at the moment isn't it? But also there is all the social skills and everything else ... it's the whole person development.

Such a view was expressed particularly forcibly by teachers in the relatively disadvantaged schools in the study:



In (this area) it's even more of a priority, because a lot of the kids are quite antisocial, so you put them in situations where they depend upon each other for their success.

because a lot of them don't know how to mix socially, how to play with others, how to team up with others.

Some teachers in schools with a particular religious 'mission' also emphasised the supposed PSE benefits of sport and PE:

we talk about the school motto ... 'Do unto others as you would have done unto you' and we follow that motto in our teaching to the kids.

Sport (for it was usually sport rather than PE that was mentioned in this vein) was frequently claimed by teachers to be analogous with life: '(sport) can be associated with life, really'. The character-developing benefits of experiencing an allegedly 'natural', all-pervasive (and by implication, beneficial) feature of social life - competition - in a game form, was also to the fore in teachers' comments:

the competitive side of sport which ... in other subjects ... in school you don't necessarily get and obviously you get that when you leave school in your jobs ... you're going to get benefit from ... social, competitive challenge ... which are all interlinked to participation in sport.

In addition, a sense of achievement was expected to flow from sporting success:

A feeling of personal achievement, helping the social skills, the social interaction, helping their self-confidence, finding something they're good at.

Once again, this was particularly prominent amongst teachers faced with the perceived constraints of working in disadvantaged areas:

giving them (pupils) a sense of achievement ... for the lower (ability) end ... teamwork and getting on with each other ... It's a sense of achievement for them if they are good at sport but not so academically.

In this regard, teachers frequently suggested that PE might bring pupils 'out of themselves', enabling 'the quieter ones', 'the more introverted pupils', to find something they're good at to 'improve their self-awareness and self-esteem' and to take 'leadership' roles. Several teachers commented upon the professed 'knock-on' effects of success in sport for academic school work:

if they're achieving through sport, through physical activity, ... then they can go on to achieve academically, they can achieve in terms of their future and they can set themselves goals and they can set themselves targets.

All in all, PE was ostensibly perceived as an ideal vehicle for encouraging young people to 'develop themselves' on the basis that this was what teachers' frequently perceived sport to have done for them:

I went down the rugby road and rugby opened up so many avenues in terms of personal strengths, not only the physical side, which I believe is very important ... it gave me a lot of confidence ... I went ... from strength to strength ... and I believe that sport gives that to children ... I believe sport is important from that point of view ... they gain confidence, organisational skills. It opened up other avenues ... friendships.

It was also noticeable, however, that many teachers who claimed PSE benefits for PE, when asked if they could identify it in their practice, answered, 'Don't think so, no'. Even those who claimed they could then tended to describe it as happening indirectly or unconsciously:

KG: Can you recognise yourself *doing* moral development and aesthetic development in your lesson?

Teacher: Yes, I think I would. Definitely, yes. I don't think you're conscious in saying, 'Yes, I must get moral development'. I think what happens is it (just) comes out of what's happened (emphasis in the original).

The way in which the above teacher elaborated on this point - by offering an example of a girl being 'stumped on fourth base', being annoyed, throwing her rounders bat away and the lessons the pupil allegedly learned as a result: in this case about the need to try harder next time - was typical of the anecdotal evidence teachers tended to supply, almost as an after-thought.

What was particularly striking about what I am referring to as teachers' claims for the contribution of PE to PSE was the impression one formed of a somewhat idealised view of the process. In addition the manner in which teachers' responses were often quite delayed - as if they were struggling to find practical examples - seemed to suggest more of an eclectic, 'clutching at straws', approach to justifying PE in PSE terms. Similarly striking was the impression that the rather vague responses to questions regarding the ability of the teachers to recognise examples of PSE in PE in *practice* suggested that external agencies such as OFSTED would be even less convinced of their efficacy. Academics (such as Laker, 1996a, 1996b), as well as a number of teachers, might continue to claim its existence in theory but it seems that many would have difficulty - as, indeed, teachers in this study did - finding examples from teachers' professed practice.

### The gender dimension

There was a clear gender dimension evident in teachers' comments, particularly with regard to their perceptions and claims regarding what was taught in the name of PE. According to a female HoD, the boys' department at her school tended to do 'football most of the time' whereas the girls



provision was seen as far broader. Several female teachers offered comments reinforcing the view that, in their eyes at least, girls received a broader range of sporting and activity experience than boys on the whole. Nonetheless, it was apparent that much girls' PE remained quite traditional in practice:

Netball, hockey. That's the two main winter sports (for girls). We don't do any sort of football or anything like that, or basketball. We concentrate on netball, hockey, gymnastics and dance and cross-country obviously ... (we) like to develop pupils in ... the traditional female sport(s).

Female teachers (and, occasionally male teachers) were inclined to explain the alleged broader provision for girls in terms of commitment:

KG: What would you put it down to?

Teacher: Commitment ... to PE and offering the best and offering them (girls) a broader opportunity.

Several (mostly younger) female teachers took the view that the male side of their departments needed 'new' and younger, teachers if provision for boys' PE was to be broadened beyond an emphasis upon sport and team-games and, by implication, improved:

I think it needs new staff ... I think the boys especially miss out on a lot of things. The girls get a lot ... I think it's a shame the boys don't get what they should get.

(the department needs) young male role-models for the boys.

Both female and male teachers reported that the former were more prepared to teach dance and gym and thus '(girls) get more opportunity' to do dance and gymnastics. Dance and gymnastics appeared to be the only areas that were frequently taught in mixed-sex groupings. Although several teachers reported that their departments 'mixed up the boys and the girls', this, it was

alleged, tended to be for dance and gymnastics and a selection of other activities:

for all sports, bar outdoor.

the girls did hockey and the boys did rugby. But they did dance ... they had mixed dance. They did gymnastics together, they did basketball together - because they had done it from Year 7.

It is worthy of note that there appeared to be less equal opportunities outside the formal PE curriculum; that is to say, perhaps unsurprisingly, more gender differentiation seemed (on the basis of teachers' claims) present in extra-curricular *sport* than in NC *physical education*:

pretty much (all extra-curricular clubs are) single sex and that's our (male) Head of Department's choice.

(boys) get football and they get basketball ... the girls get dance, hockey, netball and football ... I do think that the girls get(ting) a lot causes a bit of a 'stir', (especially) getting the football thing together!

(for girls) dinner times is an open shop ... after school, I would say it's more team-based.

Whilst many female, as well as male, PE teachers appeared to prefer single-sex lessons (for reasons that will be explored in Chapter 7), a number of female teachers commented upon the supposed lack of opportunity for girls to get involved in activities beyond the traditional girls' curriculum:

there's definitely an attitude in this school ... (it's for) the boys and it's not for the girls ... It's OK for the girls to go and watch the boys play football but it's not alright for the girls to play football themselves. It's definitely that kind of mentality. And I think that's the area ... and I think that's where we lose out a little bit.

the boys do more games than the girls do (at Key Stage 4).

Nonetheless, several teachers reported that they were offering football to girls and it was seen as being very popular:

I did give them a couple of weeks where I gave them a choice ... and they all wanted to (do football).

girls have had a lot of success in soccer, so I don't feel that I should stop them having that success just because it's not a traditional girls' game.

At one established female HoD's school, girls could 'do some football' and the intention was to offer them cricket at some stage in the future:

equal opportunities ... that's the way things are going now - a lot more girls teams. For the first time this year they are setting up a Cheshire League and a Halton League for girls. So, in order that our girls can progress to that ... lower down (the school) ... (we will do) the skills so that later on they can play that.

Several teachers claimed that offering girls a choice of less traditional activities often resulted in greater participation; and not simply in gender stereotypical activities. One teacher described how, at her school, girls could choose aerobics and multi-gym and that 'quite a lot of them' chose multi-gym. Female teachers also alleged that this frequently created tension with male colleagues especially. In this regard it was apparent that the comment proffered by a male HoD represented only a slight caricature of the perspectives of a number of established male teachers:

We despair when we see boys playing football with girls at some schools ... because, quite clearly, the girls can't cope with the boys physical presence and the boys are not working the way they should be because girls are present. And they say, 'It's because we haven't got enough PE teachers', and 'This is the way the head wants us to teach', and 'It's because we've got this equality clause in our school'. Well,



that's theorized on absolute nonsense ... I've got a girl here who plays for England but I wouldn't coach her in lessons. I will not have girls doing football here because we will go down the mediocrity path. She will do the traditional girls' lessons: netball, hockey, dance, gymnastics and so on. Now she can then come out and do football at lunch-time if I've got someone to coach her in a girls situation. It does not matter about equal opportunities - I'm not interested. And people come and say that it's not an 'equal opportunities' school and I say, 'So what?'.

Thus, it was readily apparent that various female teachers perceived male teachers as not as interested in PE (e.g. gymnastics and dance) anything like as much as sport and games and that some male teachers concurred with this impression. This perception was implicitly endorsed by several male HoDs who commented on the difficulty they would face trying to get the 'older' men to change their ways in line with the requirements of NCPE in relation to dance and O&AA, for example. Whilst stressing that 'not all men' she had taught alongside held such stereotypical orientations towards boys' and girls' PE, one well-established female teacher added that it was, nevertheless, typical of a large percentage of the many she had worked with over the course of her career. Indeed, this teacher was by no means alone in commenting that male teachers, when it came to outside 'inspections' of their work, might 'talk a good game' (as another teacher put it) but their practice was markedly different:

They (male teachers) could say one thing ... because they felt they ought to say it to you but ... what they deliver in a lesson! I do think in a lesson the majority of the time they would just go out and 'knock hell' with the boys and they couldn't give a 'toss' about the National Curriculum ... generally, most bloke PE teachers are just ... quite happy to go out with the lads and have a game of rugby and have a game of football.

In this regard, another teacher commented that her impression of the gap that she perceived, on the part of male PE teachers, between rhetoric and reality had been reinforced by the example of her brother, who she said was now lecturing at a college. She concluded:

Well, we're just different, women and men are different and the way we approach jobs are different ... The blokes are still happy to go out ... a bit of a run around ... hacking the ball about on the football pitch. They do keep some skills because they have got to be seen to be doing it but they will ... not be so concerned about the content of their lesson.

For many teachers the differences were not just in *what* they claimed to teach but also the *way* they claimed to teach. An exchange with one teacher neatly illustrated many female teachers' perceptions of the gender differences in *modus operandi*:

KG: (Do) you think that the view you have (the 'philosophy') is shared within the department (at) this school?

Teacher: By the three women staff - yes, definitely.

KG: And not necessarily by the men?

Teacher: No, I don't think so ... with (the) boys (the male teachers) will say: 'Oh, let's go and play a game'. Whereas, I think, with female teachers they'll say, 'No. We need to learn more about it rather than just playing a game'.

It was interesting to note that a male teacher appeared to view the varied teaching styles employed by female PE teachers as a pragmatic response to the constraints of teaching girls' PE:

I think on the female side they have had problems with getting girls to do PE. So, therefore, they have got to be more variable in their approach to lessons; they can't just get away with saying like, 'Today we are going to do this' and talk for about five minutes about the skill because the girls haven't got the listening capabilities. So, I think the

female members of staff have been a lot more diverse in their approach to lessons, which I think makes it more enjoyable for pupils.

Whereas, various female PE teachers claimed, by contrast, that female teachers in general were more concerned with the principles said to lie behind movement rather than actually performing and improving skills:

in girls' PE it's more to do with understanding why you are doing it, how you are going to reach that final end of doing a cartwheel or whatever ... I'm not saying it doesn't go on (in boys' PE) but they go through the stages and it's not explained as a principle of why you are doing it, rather than 'you do this, you do that'.

In this regard, it was interesting to note the perceptions of both male and female teachers (but especially the latter) that male teachers have not embraced other aspects of NCPE (or 'best practice' for that matter), such as 'performance, planning and evaluation' (PP&E), to the same extent as female teachers:

I'm not at odds with the ladies department in this school, but they want to plan, perform and evaluate and I want to teach rugby, soccer. I'm a bit of a games man and I *am* the acquisition of skills; *perform*, and *then* evaluate if necessary (emphasis in the original).

An exchange with one female teacher illustrated comments that were more commonplace than one might have anticipated, among both female and male teachers, with regard to the inherent capabilities and interests of boys and girls:

they are so different, just innately different ... because boys are so innately competitive - and I wouldn't have said that without having had the experience of it ... they want to be competitive, whereas with the girls you are actually trying to get them to be competitive (which has) ... to come secondary because you are trying to make them enjoy it first. But if you make it too competitive too early on that takes away



their enjoyment and they will actually stop wanting to play. Now it's different with girls (in) teams because they are automatically the more competitive ones in the group ... For the girls enjoyment and social interaction would be first, skill(s) ('which would take them into later life') would be next ... and with the boys I think you are looking more at skill first ... which would take them into later life, then interaction; because they are so competitive they help each other along.

With regard to the gender dimension of PE teachers' 'philosophies' the data from this study support the claim that developments in academic theory in relation to gender 'have had little impact on the prevailing ideas relating to gender differences in PE' among PE teachers (Waddington, Malcolm and Cobb, 1998: 34). Indeed, the 'philosophies' and practices of many PE teachers continue to bear the hallmark of gender stereotyping in relation to their perceptions of male- and female-appropriate activities. In addition, significant differences were evident in the 'characteristic pedagogical models' of male and female teachers in the study, similar to those reported by Waddington *et al.* (1998) and Evans *et al.* (1996).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to identify and describe the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers on the basis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews. The first point to note is that, as expected, PE teachers rarely have anything that can be called a 'philosophy' as such. Confusion and contradiction were common features of their views. What PE teachers articulated was typically a kind of check-list of aims frequently centring upon words and phrases like 'enjoyment', 'health', 'skills' and 'character'. If one were to be generous one might describe this as what Reid (1997) referred to as 'value pluralism' - a multiplicity of justifications for PE based on a plurality of values such as health, sports performance and character-development. It seems more likely, however, that the teachers in this study did not possess the

kinds of coherent, reflexive 'philosophies' identified by Reid and others; rather, it seems that, in practice, PE teachers seized on convenient *ex post-facto* rationalisations or justifications for the things they *did*! In this sense, it appeared that the 'philosophy' followed the practice, rather than *vice-versa*. In response to a follow-up question regarding why the things they had mentioned were important, the vast majority appeared to see this as an unnecessary question, as if the answer were self-evident or as if they had never really contemplated such matters.

Many 'philosophies' incorporated several ideas or ideologies. Frequently these 'philosophies' emphasised one dimension, such as sport, among an amalgam featuring several additional aspects, such as health or PSE. The following examples illustrate the kinds of amalgam 'philosophies' that were relatively commonplace. The initial examples are illustrative of a view which incorporates sport, health and education for leisure (in which sport is implicitly taken to incorporate health):

providing children with positive habits throughout their life, positive sporting habits. That includes things like healthy eating, education on smoking, so not just strictly exercise; it has more wider-related issues ... (The) number one aim as a teacher is to teach pupils various sporting skills and then ... to enjoy it more, enjoy coming to the lessons ... then probably the third would be to motivate them to do things.

It should be giving pupils the best opportunity to take part in physical activity ... for health ... it's part of holistic growth of people. If they're not involved in PE they can't expect to be a person I don't think; if they're not physical as well as mental. The intellectual side of them can't be addressed just in classes. Intellectual growth is all about other things as well ... it's just as important; in some ways, even more important.

Other amalgam 'philosophies' incorporated an emphasis upon PSE in particular. An example was provided by the teacher who described personal development and health education as her two main aims, but who laid particular stress on PSE:

I think it's an extremely good way for pupils to develop self-confidence in physical ability, in terms of relationship building, in terms of learning to co-operate with others ... a way of believing in themselves, having achievement and ... recording that achievement ... In terms of self-esteem it does them a lot of good. In terms of keeping themselves healthy for the future, I think it is extremely important.

Yet other amalgam 'philosophies' took fitness as a substantial aspect of their focus:

KG: What do you think PE should be about?

Teacher: Teaching skills ... keeping children fit and teaching social skills as well.

KG: Why?

Teacher: Well, we're all trying to maintain a reasonable fitness - that's part of life. We try to educate them to stay fit in all three areas, really: strength, stamina, suppleness. The social side: they have to work with each other in life, they play games and have to get on with each other - that's a strong philosophy of mine really ... We work on that a lot in our department ... I put social first, fitness second and skills third, really.

Many mixed 'philosophies' - and particularly those of male teachers - emphasised sport and the development of sporting skills:

Well, first and foremost ... I think enjoyment has got to be one of the key issues; acquisition of skills - obviously - and teamwork/co-operation. Obviously fitness is ... mixed in with all that as well ... to play sport, to carry out skills, you've got to have a certain amount of fitness.



The main thing I think people should get out of PE is enjoyment ... in games situations and ... within their own individual skills; whether that's in individual sport or games ... (plus) being active learning skills ... (so) they will do it outside of school.

The bottom line: I would like them to enjoy it, have some fun ... increase their heart-rate ... and, thirdly, ... actually learn something as well ... some skills or tactics or game-situations ... (so that) they will carry on after they have finished at school.

The existence of continuities alongside (and somewhat despite) change appears a characteristic of ideological trends in the history of PE in the United Kingdom. Several distinguished commentators claim that real change occurred in the ideologies and practices of PE teachers in the last 15 to 20 years (Evans, 1992; Kirk, 1992a). It seems true to say that HRE, in particular, has assumed a more prominent place in the 'philosophies' and practices of PE teachers. At the same time, education for leisure/ 'sport for all' (Hendry, Shucksmith, Love and Glendenning, 1993; Scraton, 1992), together with the promotion of active lifestyles, have become more central rationales for PE. Nevertheless, we can identify the persistence of widespread continuities alongside the occurrence of real change (e.g. Curtner-Smith, 1995; Roberts, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; SCW, 1995). Sport, and especially team-games, continue to be the most prominent activity area in the vast majority of curricula for boys and girls in secondary schools and lie at the heart of many teachers' 'philosophies' of PE, albeit alongside other justificatory ideologies.

The best evidence regarding the extent of change - especially in PE teachers' 'philosophies' but also in their practices - may well be provided by the way in which NCPE has been implemented at the level of the school (Curtner-Smith, 1995), as well as what happens in extra-curricular PE (Penney and Harris, 1997), and this evidence suggests the persistence of a sporting ideology. This

should not be altogether surprising, for it is important to note that whilst a comparison of the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers with those of academic philosophers of PE might be seen to imply similar processes, this is far from the case.

Perhaps the most extensive and most recent study of PE teachers' 'philosophies' is to be found in the Sports Council's *Young People and Sport in England, 1994. The views of teachers and children* (Mason, 1995). Even though the report only deals briefly, and somewhat tangentially, with teachers' 'philosophies' it does enough to indicate the continued existence of many of the aforementioned ideological themes and, when placed alongside the views of teachers gathered from elsewhere (e.g. Armour, 1997; Armour and Jones, 1998), provides a reasonable picture from which some broad generalisations can be made.

Despite a growing number of PE teachers incorporating health-related justifications as a central ideological underpinning for the subject, in the late-1990s PE has been experiencing a significant shift back towards a renewed emphasis upon team games and sport (so-called 'traditional' PE). Having said this, the proposals for the latest revision of NCPE, due on stream in 2000, appear likely to feature the removal of obligatory involvement among older pupils in team games. This, it is claimed, reflects the present Secretary of State's 'belief that children of 14 (and older) should be allowed more choice' (Revell, 1999: 4) in line with the research evidence regarding the leisure and physical activity preferences of young people and adults.

It is abundantly clear, then, that there is a gulf between what academics have to say about the nature and purposes of PE and PE teachers views about what they should be trying to do. The gulf is more obvious in certain respects than

others. For PE teachers the process is far more practically oriented, impressionistic and re-active than the kind of abstract philosophising commonly associated with professional philosophers. Academics can be expected to develop the kinds of abstract philosophy that attempts to bring PE into line with other elements of the curriculum by developing an 'educational' rationale for physical activity based around achieving similar goals, albeit by different means. PE teachers, on the other hand, appear to arrive at their 'philosophies' in response to their intuitions, or habituses, blended with the constraints of their practical situations.

Several features of the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers - such as the overt emphasis upon enjoyment, the unusual justification for 'options', the emphasis upon sports performance (presumably one of the things which discourages some pupils), amongst other things, suggested that PE teachers perceived PE as somehow *different* from the rest of the curriculum. Theirs were very special kinds of 'philosophy' characterised by degrees of localism, particularism and subjectivity that stands in marked contrast to what one finds in other areas of the National Curriculum and, indeed, from what OFSTED might demand.

That skill acquisition featured as one of the few overtly 'educational' goals of PE teachers' 'philosophies' is not altogether surprising for it is what one would expect with common-sense 'philosophies'; PE teachers seldom, if ever, sit down and think their 'philosophies' through, so to speak. Nothing constrains PE teachers to think those 'philosophies' through systematically and identify links between the differing aspects thereof; consequently, they remain a 'mish-mash' characterized by preferred and ideological conceptions. On the other hand, a great deal constrains teachers to fashion their thoughts to match the 'necessities' of practice and their habitual preferences. The



apparent trend towards an acceptance of the involvement of coaches in PE at all levels, for example, appeared as much to do with practical constraints as ideological commitment. Thus, the views of PE teachers' seemed formed, at least in part, by perceptions of practical constraints. Whereas academics are constrained to 'iron-out' the inconsistencies in their justifications, PE teachers are not constrained so to do. Indeed, if anything, PE teachers are constrained not to 'iron out' inconsistencies. They experience many aspects of their working lives, and lives in general for that matter, as discrete and somewhat immediate elements to be dealt with in the here and now rather than to be considered further on reflection.

Why, then, do PE teachers think the ways they do? How might one satisfactorily explain or account for their kind of views? In the following chapters I will attempt to explain how the 'philosophies' held by PE teachers and their underlying ideologies can best be explained in terms of the networks of social relationships - or figurations - of which they are a part.

## Notes

1 A belief which, as several authors (e.g. Armstrong, McManus, Welsman and Kirby, 1996; Armstrong, Welsman and Kirby, 1998) have pointed out, is by no means necessarily the case.

2 The terms will be used interchangeably.

3 As indicated by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals at the school.

## Chapter 6

### **Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: the Personal Dimension**

Over the course of the following three chapters I want to begin to explain PE teachers' 'philosophies' in terms of the how they experience the network of relations - in other words, the figurations - in which they are involved. For ease of explanation I will divide the analysis up into three dimensions: the personal, the local and the national.

In the first of these three chapters I endeavour to tease out some of the pivotal aspects of what I have called the personal dimension of PE teachers' figurations. In particular, I will attempt to examine the significance of PE teachers' sporting, educational and professional biographies for their developing habituses.

#### **PE teachers' biographies and habituses**

To view PE teachers' 'philosophies' merely in the context of their immediate circumstances would be to make a significant error. People's thoughts, as well as their behaviours, tend to bear the hallmark of past as well as present experiences. The figurations of which individuals have been, and continue to be, a part have long-term significance for their identities. Thus, the networks of relationships in which teachers have been involved in the past can be seen to have as much potential significance for their thoughts and practices as those in which they are currently involved, since both are likely to affect their disposition towards PE.

One aspect of PE teachers' figurations at the personal level merits comment, namely, their biographies. Indeed, PE teachers' own experiences of sport and PE as young people - and the impact of these experiences on their sporting and teaching identities - is worthy of particular attention.

Much recent research provides reason to believe that the biographies of prospective PE teachers has an ongoing influence on their values, thoughts and practices (e.g. Chen and Ennis, 1996; Evans and Williams, 1989; Macdonald, Abernathy and Bramich, 1997; Macdonald *et al.*, 1999). More specifically, there is evidence to indicate that teachers' own childhood experiences of sport and school PE have a significant impact on both their sporting and teaching identities. Macdonald *et al.* (1999: 33) identify a range of research in the period spanning the late-1980s to early-1990s which suggests that:

PETE students in 'Western' countries come from narrow sections of the community and hold similar values. Male and female students are attracted to careers in physical education teaching in order to continue their extensive and positive experiences of sport ... and to work with young people.

It is the significance of their sporting and educational experiences for teachers' habituses that I will address in this chapter.

### Sporting identities

As Dunning (1996: 188) has observed, 'personal and collective identities' are particularly important in the world of sport. The emotional ties to, and identification with, sport forms what Elias might describe as 'a deep-anchorage in the personality structure' of sports men and women. It is a significant dimension of their individual identities and one which 'cannot easily be shaken off' (Elias, 1965; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 251).



A plethora of ties bind sports people and PE teachers to what Elias described as 'we-groups', which may range from sports clubs, PE departments, schools, professional bodies to nation-states. One of the central themes of these associations is strong emotional ties with sport. Unsurprisingly, for many PE teachers in the present study, experience of sport was, as one teacher put it, a 'major influence'.

Chen and Ennis (1996) suggest that 'value-commitments and beliefs' form an important basis for the aphoristic or everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers. PE teachers value sport and their 'philosophies', not surprisingly, reflect this fact. Indeed, according to Evans and Williams (1989), the most common reason for entering the PE profession in England and Wales is 'love of sport'. Macdonald *et al.* (1997) have noted a good deal of evidence to suggest that both male and female students have been attracted to careers in teaching PE primarily because it provides them with an opportunity to continue their association with sport, an area of activity with which they have had extensive and positive experiences. Macdonald *et al.* (1999: 32) cite a number of authors who observe that:

Many young people who have had positive experiences with school physical education and sport are attracted to the further study of physical activity, bringing with them particular knowledge and expectations.

Valuing sport was a pervasive and enduring influence on the 'philosophies' of many teachers in this study being, as it was, central to many of their lives and identities ('I love sport and all the different activities'). This 'love of sport' had been influential at the outset of their teaching careers (in terms of their original orientation) and continued to be influential, regardless of their age or gender:

First of all, I think, my sporting background. I play a lot of sport and that's perhaps a major influence. The people I'm surrounded by are all very sporty.

Indeed, they frequently perceived 'love of sport' as a common bond between them and their fellow teachers, describing themselves as surrounded by like-minded colleagues: 'the people I'm surrounded by are all very sporty - quite a lot of the teachers'.

Many teachers identified a career in PE teaching as a 'natural' progression from *enjoying*, and being *successful* at, sport whilst at school:

when you first start you want to be a PE teacher probably because you've been very good at PE at school, and being successful is lovely isn't it ... I do like the feeling of winning.

I've been competitive throughout my life ... I enjoy participating in any sort of little tournament, in any social game ... I was good at sport and that's why I went and did the teaching certificate.

Unsurprisingly, then, with many teachers the benefits of sport was a theme linking their biographies with their occupations:

it (sport) was my life in school ... and I used to play all the time ... the same at college ... that was reinforcing things for me *which I have passed on to (my) school teaching* (emphasis added).

Given this affiliation with the *practice* of sport and PE, it is not surprising that teachers viewed 'doing' rather than theorising as their strength, as well as their primary function, as physical educationalists:

We're not academics, most of us ... the vast majority of PE teachers went into PE because ... they enjoyed sport ... That's all I ever wanted to be, a PE teacher, because I was interested in sport and I was good at sport.

Not only did PE teachers in this study enjoy sport *per se*, they were quick to point up the alleged personal and social benefits of involvement with physical activity generally and sport in particular, both for themselves and, by extension, for their pupils:

I do know that exercise makes you really happy and I don't need much more in my life ... So, I'm hoping that some children will get that benefit.

how much it's given me ... how much confidence it's brought me.

It was readily apparent that many teachers (male and female, young and old, established and relative newcomer) held preferred views of the benefits of PE:

I think ... there's a lot of social things that come out of being a team member.

In a similar vein, it was interesting to note that, alongside their passion for sport, many teachers, especially male teachers, had stereotypical (and largely inaccurate) views of the so-called 'golden years' (Roberts, 1995, 1996a, 1996b) of sports participation ('everybody played football ... cricket ... families went with dads ... watched the cricket, played cricket while dad played, that sort of thing'). These views were frequently out-of-kilter with participation trends in recent decades, consequently, some of the 'philosophical' justifications proffered by teachers for PE revolved around false assumptions and, thus, gave the impression of being largely mythical in nature.

In this vein, several (usually male) teachers also offered stereotypical views when contrasting their own experiences with those of contemporary youngsters:



Because when I was brought up that was what PE was about: PE was about standards of performance ... extra-curricular (PE) went on to a massive degree ... then, within PE, we had not too broad a base (with) basically people just skimming over the surface and (achieving) no standard at all; which is common-place in most departments nowadays where there's no standard whatsoever (where they have a) really broad base.

The mythical dimension to teachers' views of the justifications for, as well as the associated benefits of, PE serve to remind one that theirs are 'philosophies' in the everyday sense - they are more-or-less ideological - and are in many respects different from the philosophies articulated by academic philosophers (who these teachers would not generally have read). The formal and informal socialization processes of sport and PE frequently add up to habituses that, in effect, serve as a predisposition to replicate the experiences they themselves enjoyed so much as school pupils. Thus, the sporting biographies of prospective teachers and their PE experiences as pupils act, in effect, to socialize them into particular views regarding the nature and purposes of the subject: into particular 'philosophies' or, more exactly, ideologies. Waddington *et al.*'s (1998) study reinforced the perception that their experiences tend to 'blinker' teachers. They observed that PE teachers tended not to be 'equally receptive to all aspects of NCPE' (p. 41) and this was particularly the case with activity areas that teachers had little experience of, and thus pleasure from, themselves. The comments of teachers in this study were consistent with findings that *sporting* expertise and preferences often lead to *teaching* expertise and preferences:

I was not in the top. I was ... middle ground ... all I can remember is not playing much cricket, not doing much in general, just maybe sticking to rugby. I was good at rugby and that's what I did ... (and do).

The impact of teachers' personal sporting expertise upon their teaching preferences appeared to be reinforced by stereotypical attitudes, for example, towards particular NCPE activities such as dance and gymnastics. For the most part, the ideological nature of their views on the value of particular aspects of NCPE lay below the level of teachers' consciousness. Nonetheless, some teachers were aware of the effect upon their teaching of personal sporting shortcomings:

I was a swimmer ... I don't regret for one second being a competent swimmer but it did take me away from other areas ... there was no football team for me or anything else, which was a regret. It was very hard to catch up on, you know, consider(ing) the job I'm doing now. So, in some ways, I regret being totally dedicated to one sport.

Here once more, however, it was noticeable how often the practical implications of particular experiences at a personal level appeared to form the basis for teachers' perspectives on PE, rather than the persuasiveness of any theoretical rationale for particular conceptions of PE. Valuing sport *per se* seemed to be a particularly pervasive and enduring influence on the 'philosophies' of teachers and it is clear that experiences of PE at school can have a significant impact upon these 'philosophies' (Mawer, 1996). The impact of their early experiences on many teachers in this study was neatly illustrated by one teacher's comment to the effect that it had 'definitely' been school that had the most significant impact upon her 'philosophy': 'The system I went through. It was just how I would do PE really'.

PE teachers value sport and their 'philosophies', somewhat unsurprisingly, reflect this fact. Teachers in this study were, for the most part, attracted to PE teaching as a career, in the first instance, as an opportunity to continue their association with sport. Their positive experiences of PE and of their own PE

teachers (whilst pupils themselves) tended to reinforce this orientation towards sport.

### **Educational identities**

It is evident, then, that PE teachers' 'philosophies' tend to be shaped by their experiences of sport in general but also by sport as they experienced it in their own educational careers. Thus, for many would-be teachers, experiences of PE at school acted as confirmation of this 'love of sport' and reinforced inclinations they may have had towards PE teaching as a career:

I think it ... stems back to my own experiences in games and PE lessons. And that's something that's affected my life - my early experiences in PE; the fact that I happened to have good PE teachers and I learnt to play sports well at an early age ... it's given me a lifelong experience and I know that it can do that for other people as well.

I was successful in sport ... and so all of my time was devoted to sport ... my parents had a great influence on me ... parents, school and teaching practices - I learned a lot on my teaching practices<sup>1</sup>.

As Mawer (1996: 2) observes, prospective teachers learn a great deal from the many 'happy' hours spent in school PE; not least 'what teaching is all about' by 'intuition and imitation of personalities rather than pedagogical principles' (Mawer, 1996: 4). Evans and Williams (1989) and Mawer (1996) point to the second most common reason for entering the PE profession (after 'love of sport') being 'the positive influence that their physical education teachers had on them during their own school careers' (Mawer, 1996: 1).

Various PE teachers in the present study indicated that they came into teaching hoping to emulate their favourite PE teachers and this theme permeated a number of their biographies:



(interest in PE came) from school; from my PE teachers in school ... I suppose my PE teachers were my role models. So I looked at them and thought I'd like to do that, be like them.

It is somewhat unsurprising, then, to find that PE teachers tend to replicate, because they feel more comfortable with, 'traditional' approaches<sup>2</sup> to 'traditional' curricula. Thus, the sport- and games-oriented PE programme associated with so-called 'traditional' PE has had a degree of self-replication built in to it and, as such, became to a significant degree self-fulfilling. The 'traditional' emphasis upon competitive sport and physical fitness encouraged those who enjoyed and experienced success in sporting activities, especially team games, to pursue teaching careers:

Many teachers come to physical education teaching because they have had particular experiences of physical activity that are often, in themselves, reproductive of existing orthodoxies (George and Kirk, 1988: 154).

A strong relationship appeared to exist between teachers' own experiences of PE as pupils and their orientations towards PE - in other words, the 'philosophies' which they favoured as PE teachers. Given that a *self-selecting* and *self-replicating* process seemed to be at work, it was not surprising to find many teachers committed to 'traditional' PE, and the values underpinning it.

Nevertheless, not all prospective teachers viewed their own PE teachers as models of 'good practice'. On the contrary, some teachers' recognised that their practice and 'philosophies' were, in part, a *reaction* to their experiences at school ('I had a very positive experience at school, but I know an awful lot who didn't at the same school'). In some cases, it encouraged a desire on their part to provide their pupils with a broader range of sporting experiences:

I can remember looking in the stock room once at school and seeing all these new hockey sticks that had been there for a year or two and we never played hockey. I mean, thinking about it, that's one of the things that gives people the wider range, not too thin, you have to balance it out and ... that's something that sticks in my mind.

A female HoD's keenness on activity choice reflected her experiences of PE at school, which she described as, '*Very limited, very limited*':

my own personal experience at ... a very traditional convent school (where) I didn't experience the things like badminton, basketball, volleyball until I went to College ... I was very interested in sport ... I *always* regret not experiencing other sports at a very early age ... some of these children ... may never find out that they've got badminton skills, that they've got volleyball skills ... (it) is very important to be introduced ... at an early age (in order) to encourage them to go to clubs outside of school (emphases in the original).

For others, their experiences led them towards a 'philosophy' akin to what teachers frequently referred to as 'sport for all':

I was never totally brilliant. I wasn't outstanding at the games and I think probably I've got a viewpoint that my expectations are quite high ... in clubs. But in lessons I can sympathise with children that can't do things because I was never outstanding. And I think sometimes that PE teachers (that) are outstanding ... very often don't have as much sympathy with (those) that can't do it ... they can't all be good at PE ... all we can hope is that they try hard.

As a pupil myself I can remember being given a ball or whatever ... to play rugby ... or football ... whatever we did it didn't bother *me*. But I just thought it would be better if everybody enjoyed it ... As a PE teacher, I thought I could make it more fun (emphasis in the original).

Having identified herself as a sports person who was 'encouraged' and 'taken everywhere at weekends' by her parents, and who played a lot of sport at school, one female teacher commented, nevertheless, that:

I enjoyed (PE) at school but, when I look back on it, I feel that we weren't really taught. It was generally recreation. I mean you were taught the basics but when you got to a certain point, I didn't feel ... as though I really learnt a great deal more.

In this vein, simply being exposed to sporting activity, rather than being taught as such, was another feature of some teachers' early experiences of PE to which they reacted. A female HoD commented that she loved sport at school but *not* the PE teachers' tendency, as she perceived it, not to teach:

I can't even remember being taught ... I can just remember playing lots of games and messing about in the gym but I can't actually remember being taught physical things ... So when I think back to my PE in school I think I'm glad - that's why I've got (these) views now because I don't want to be like *my* PE teachers ... I didn't know ... that I should have been taught (emphasis in the original).

PE teachers in this study were frequently more reflective, even critical, towards PE as they experienced it than is sometimes assumed in the literature on prospective PE teachers' orientations. Nonetheless, inasmuch as they enjoyed, and were successful at, the 'traditional' PE curricula revolving around major games, teachers gave the impression that they were unlikely, so to speak, 'to throw the baby out with the bath water'; that is to say, they appeared quite uncritical of *sport* as the basis for the PE programme. Neither did they offer much indication that they had been inclined to challenge substantially the 'traditional' PE programmes they inherited when they became teachers. This seemed to reflect not only the primacy of their allegiance to sport over their experience of PE, but also the constraints of their



working context; and this is a significant aspect of PE teachers' figurations at the local level which I will return to in the following chapter.

Thus, experiences of school PE did not seem to have undermined the commitment to sport, or PE for that matter, of those already 'locked-in' to sport and physical activity. It merely affected their views on what PE should be about; that is to say, their 'philosophies'. In this vein, it is interesting to note the findings from Placek *et al.*'s (1995) study to the effect that new recruits to initial teacher training (ITT) in PE programmes recalled their own PE experiences as focusing upon traditional team sports, games and fitness programmes with less emphasis being placed upon individual, non-competitive and so-called expressive activities. If what students and newly qualified teachers are emulating is the PE which they have themselves experienced, and if this experience revolved largely around team sports, then they are likely to deduce - from their experience of PE 'on the receiving end' - that the nature and purposes of PE (i.e. what it *should* be about) are to be found in sport and, in particular, in team games. In this context, Placek *et al.* (1995) have observed that, in the USA, teachers frequently act as 'carriers' of a '*de facto* curriculum' (1995: 256). In the USA, school PE programmes were, they noted, remarkably similar, consisting as they appeared to of those activities student teachers had themselves been taught. Thus, Placek *et al.* (1995: 226) argue that 'through their curricular offerings, schools provide powerful messages to recruits about appropriate physical education programs'. The data from my own study support Placek *et al.*'s (1995) claim that teachers frequently act as 'carriers' of a *de facto* curriculum which may, but frequently does not, correspond directly to the intentions set out in policy documents (e.g. NCPE) and academic theorising. PE teachers seemed, to paraphrase Wirth (1960), to carry round in their heads some sort of picture of what PE *does*, and *should*, look like.

Placek *et al.* cite a number of authors who point up the potential significance of sporting backgrounds upon future teachers and the likely impact of teacher training:

Beliefs about purposes are formed in part by physical education experiences and are important to examine because they are *difficult to change* and because they influence students receptivity to teacher education (1995: 246; emphasis added).

This is likely to 'have a long-lasting impact on school programs' (Placek *et al.*, 1995: 247) affecting, it might reasonably be conjectured, the next generation of recruits to PE teaching.

In the same way that it can be claimed a *de facto* 'national curriculum' in PE existed well before the actual NCPE, it might also be claimed that *mentoring* as a means of teacher training also had its *de facto* antecedent. Indeed, the previously identified tendency towards emulation may well have been compounded by the kind of mentoring associated with the introduction of school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT).

The early socialization into PE as sport appears to influence quite markedly teacher trainees' views of what PE is, and should be, about. Placek *et al.* (1995) argue that the socialization process might be expected to provide the basis for an enduring ideology on the part of PE teachers that withstands, to a significant extent, the onslaught of competing ideologies or even the impact of professional training. This analysis is consistent with Evans *et al.*'s (1996: 169) observation of the 'widespread pedagogic traditionalism of PE teachers, whose views are neither shaken nor stirred by their training'.

### Professional socialization: PE teacher training

I have noted the significance of sporting experiences both for PE teachers' initial choice of career and for their more or less unwitting adoption of particular PE 'philosophies' or, rather, ideologies. What is also noteworthy, in terms of its impact on their acceptance of particular PE ideologies, is the seemingly relative *insignificance* of professional training. Love of sport and positive recollections of PE lessons not only encourage young people into PE but also influence their receptivity to teacher education (otherwise referred to as initial teacher training (ITT) or teacher training). Macdonald *et al.* (1999: 33) point to recent research which:

confirmed that students' beliefs about teaching remain largely unchanged throughout their teacher education programme. Some studies have recorded students' comfort with the more traditional games and sports-based forms of physical education.

Equally worthy of note is Evans' research illustrating the *reinforcing* impact of teacher training in England and Wales upon the already existing values and beliefs of new teachers. The perspective of new teachers was, he points out:

the 'sporting perspective' ... a perspective which is subject centred, concerned with the development of physical skills and maintaining standards within a meritocratic system, and with fostering enjoyment and a love of sport amongst all children while securing the potential of elite performers and the more physically able child (Evans, 1992: 239).

Against this background, a number of comments from teachers in the present study added weight to the claim that ITT has little impact on the already established 'philosophies' and practices of would-be PE teachers. A female HoD commented that ITT had no impact on her practice, nor could she recall any impression of what the College's 'philosophy' of PE was, beyond *doing* 'PE and games'. She neatly illustrated the views espoused by various teachers



when she described ITT PE as 'just an in-between'; that is to say, a 'filler' between school and teaching. Very much in line with Armour and Jones' (1998) findings, PE teachers in the present study tended to recollect their ITT period as 'a great social occasion' which had little or 'no impact' - at least, explicitly - upon their views regarding the nature and purposes of PE: 'I can't recollect thinking anything about that (what PE should be about) at all'.

Whilst college<sup>3</sup> 'philosophies' appeared not to have been explicit or were, at best, quite opaque, the presence of what might be termed implicit ideologies was evident to a number of teachers:

(College) was *very* much, *very* much, games-oriented ...*Very* much games-oriented (emphasis in the original).

When I went to (College) it was all about how good I was as an athlete and what we could give to the College and what we could do for the elite.

The prevalence of similar views in Placek *et al.*'s (1995: 258) own work led them to remark upon the limited impact of professional education as follows:

recruits who share a common background consisting of a sport and game-oriented curricula may have great difficulty envisioning alternative curriculum models for physical education. Since so few recruits have experience in models other than that of sports and games, few may accept that such alternatives can exist except in the minds of textbook writers and teacher educators!

Notwithstanding the perception of many teachers that college and teacher training was something of a 'filler', some teachers in this study felt able to identify the direct impact of ITT on their views and practice:

(College) enlightened me as to a better way (of) teaching really, it gave me a much better outlook on it all ... having seen it all taught by college

lecturers in a much better way than I was taught myself ... influenced me greatly.

It is interesting to note that a teacher who acknowledged ITT to have had an impact upon her ('I would have to say that ... my biggest influence, yes, was my college education') claimed, nonetheless, not to have formed an impression of what 'philosophies' they were being schooled into during teacher training:

That was probably one of the theory lectures - that was really quite boring ... (the) three days of practical (were) the biggest influences on the way I teach today.

As with a number of teachers in the study, she seemed to be saying that the biggest influence upon her was the practice of PE rather than the justificatory ideologies or philosophy of PE: being taught *what* to do and *how* to do it rather than *why* it was being done.

It is important to note at this juncture, however, that it is not the case that teacher socialization is a one-way process. Several authors (Macdonald and Kirk, 1996; Mawer, 1996; Schempp, 1989) make the point that student teachers are not always as inclined - or, as Mawer (1996) describes it, as 'tempted' - to imitate their own teachers and may be as likely to reject this apprenticeship and consider alternatives styles and ideologies. This is an empirical issue and it was noticeable that many teachers in this study gave the impression that their 'philosophies' were as much a *reaction* to - as an *imitation* of - their experiences. A male HoD commented that on the one hand he 'was widely impressed by (his) first PE teacher ... (a) brilliant fellow ... (who) had his head screwed on and ... did ... a perfect curriculum'. On the other hand, however, this teacher also described his practice and his outlook on PE as a *reaction* to his early experiences as a teacher:

(but) what happened was completely different (with my) first Head of PE ... the biggest influence really would have been my first Head of Department in PE. The main reason being ... that I didn't like what he was doing! ... I didn't think he had kept himself up-dated ... with the modern-day teenager (and their sporting preferences).

In the same way that some teachers had stereotypical, largely mythical, views of an allegedly 'golden age' of sport and PE, among a handful of teachers there was a very clear perception that ITT had not, in recent years, lived up to their expectations (or, at least, their perceptions of PE teacher training in the past) in producing suitably prepared newcomers to PE teaching:

When we were at (college) we would have a massive amount of gymnastics, dance, swimming, absolutely everything that we could possibly need to know about teaching children here, they showed us how to do it and we came out of there feeling confident we could do it, and we *could* do it! ... (but) the students that we get now: 'Oh! We haven't done that lesson' ... they come out with a degree because they've done all that written work and some of them aren't that good (in practical terms) ... when they get here (emphasis in the original).

The established male PE teachers at one school were particularly critical of the students they mentored or had experience of in one capacity or other. The HoD commented:

One of the problems with PE is the standard of students that go to your (college). Because he (sic) is coming through a mediocre sports programme at school, they are coming to you ill-equipped to be PE teachers. You then have problems at colleges ... your courses are geared more towards theory now, rather than practical. So, when they leave you and come to me as colleagues, or working for me, they don't know how to serve in tennis, they wouldn't know an off-drive from an on-drive in cricket, they can't throw javelin, they can't teach hurdles. PE teaching is probably at its lowest ebb since I started in 1972 ... in 1972 there were incredible PE teachers all over the place ... they could



demonstrate all the sports - they were gifted teachers, they were motivated, they were willing to work with the kids. Now I go to (other regions) and nothing is happening ... there is less and less and less cricket going on in schools year by year; it's getting harder to get a cricket match. Now, cricket is one of our national sports. *Surely, it's my job as a PE teacher to promote and encourage participation in one of our national sports?* If not it's going to die ... if cricket is not being done in schools how can we have the broad base of the triangle, with the England/national team at the top ... because it's not being done in school anymore ... and that's happening in Rugby ... the governing bodies have taken control of those sports ... away from school teachers *because school teachers have failed* ... we are succeeding in mediocrity. The country had never been adrift of the world's leaders in sports and ... a large group of us think it's because of the mediocrity of PE in schools (emphases added).

This was a view shared by a male colleague at the school:

Well ... I went to one of the best colleges ... (they) get used for the right traditions but unfortunately other colleges don't seem to (do) it that way ... You now find the majority of PE students that come in - and this is the so-called better end - are unable to perform or to demonstrate what they are required to do to be a PE teacher. And they're supposedly the better ones at sport - they have selected PE as part of a job.

Whilst such strongly held views were not widespread there were, nevertheless, indications that a number of teachers (especially the older male teachers, but by no means males alone) appeared to view PE teaching and sports coaching as almost synonymous. This was apparent in the manner in which they frequently juxtaposed sport with PE as well as their consistent references to 'sport' when making points about teaching PE:

(a) lecturer ... told us ... 'If you were going on to be a PE teacher you need to be able to do this, that and the other. This is what we are going

to put on in order to help you do that'. And it was basically coaching courses ... and we have been taught how to coach certain sports.

With such comments in mind, it was interesting to note, however, that very few of the teachers - whether commenting critically upon ITT or not - were critical of SCITT. The handful that did have negative comments about the emphasis upon the relatively recent shift of emphasis (required by government policy) towards locating the core of ITT in schools - teacher training at the 'coal-face', as it were - were invariably newly-qualified and they tended to focus upon the practical consequences of SCITT rather than the related 'philosophical' issues:

To be honest you were just thrown in and you didn't have time to think about it ... (ITT) was very, very much about getting children into the evaluation process and very much National Curriculum guidelines and that side of things.

Thus, whilst a more-or-less critical view of ITT was also shared by some recently qualified teachers, they tended to see themselves as having particular weaknesses rather than being generally weak with regard to sport; for example, 'it didn't prepare me how to cope with mixed-sex PE'.

In the same way that the significance of theoretical definitions of PE for teachers' 'philosophies' and practice is frequently exaggerated, so there is also frequently an over-emphasis upon the significance of training in this regard. In this context, the negligible impact of professional socialization on the ideologies of prospective PE teachers is particularly evident. The aspect of ITT that appears to have a more substantial impact on PE teachers' 'philosophies' is, unsurprisingly, teaching practice; that is to say, the time spent actually teaching under the tutelage of an established teacher-mentor.

## *Teaching practice*

One teacher, several years into teaching, commented to the effect that he had been more influenced by a six-week teaching practice than anything else he had experienced prior to teaching itself:

I had a 'philosophy' from the school I went to (on teaching practice) when I was doing my ... PGCE ... I learnt a lot ... about the sort of approach to inner-city schools ... Those philosophies were (developed) over a six-week period - there was no formal lectures or anything else that came with it.

He was by no means an isolated example. Some found additional role-models whilst on teaching practice:

When I went on teaching practice and I started to watch ... Miranda<sup>4</sup> teach, who I think is a fantastic teacher, and I watched how the children interacted with her ... she was quite influential really ... They have got quite a young department and they do very different things and they mix it all up and I think that had an impact on me ... my thoughts are theirs, almost their thoughts, really, because I've seen it work and ... it seems quite good ... That definitely had an impact, I think.

I had one school teaching practice that was horrible ... It was horrible ... the facilities were awful, the staff were really old fashioned ... but then my second teaching practice was brilliant and I got my future (teaching models) out of that.

Some teachers perceived their experiences on teaching practice as confirming their prior orientations ('the Head of PE was a role model because I thought he was brilliant - he was very good at everything'). Others, however, implied that they were encouraged by their experiences on teaching practice to reflect and react:



The Head of PE that I had when I first started as a teacher, he was a very strict disciplinarian ... seeing how the children were with that ... the fact that he was a strict disciplinarian probably helped in certain areas but it also put some others off.

I've been on teaching practices and it's been very sort of elitist ... it was just ... sort the good ones from the bad ones. And for the bad ones: 'There's the ball, go and ...'. (And) I don't think it's fair on the other lads because they are just not gaining anything. (They) see PE as a boring lesson ... (I want) people to enjoy it (PE) ... rather than put them off.

What was noticeable about many of the examples was that, to the extent that teaching practice encouraged them to reflect on their teaching, this reflection had as much to do with the practical consequences of the situations they had witnessed as much as the associated philosophical implications:

my role model was my Head of Department ... she was a stickler ... they (the pupils) went through the motions. It was very dictatorial really. So that was my role model and I taught like that but now I wouldn't (approach) teaching like that.

### Professional socialization: 'on-the-job' experiences

The socially constructed development of PE teachers' 'philosophies' is, of course, a process and, as such, does not cease on completion of teacher training. Making sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies' requires appreciation of the ways in which prospective teachers' sporting and PE backgrounds interact at one level with their occupational socialization and then with the broader professional and socio-political contexts, as well as the prevailing ideologies found therein. One teacher described these 'on the job' experiences as follows:

with my experience at school I've realised that there was more (than) ... traditional games and that there should be variety and that children

should be able to experience different aspects. That really stuck in my mind. And then I've experienced that in the schools I've been in.

Thus, what physical educationalists think, as well as what they do, may at least partially be explained on terms of dealing with the constraints of the day-to-day practice of teaching or, as Fejgin (1986) puts it, 'solving functional problems':

I've learnt a lot actually on the job ... I've learnt a heck of a lot here.

I think I've formed all my opinions really through being in schools like (this).

Illustrating both the need to conform as a beginning teacher and the *processual* nature of teaching, one teacher added that at first she:

was definitely imitating a role-model. And I think you keep that role-model with you to a certain extent and then your personality comes out and what you believe is important comes out and then your teaching changes.

She agreed that her emphasis had changed from performance to participation. Whilst this may represent an after-the-event imposition of a linear rationale that does not accurately reflect the nature of the development, it is a useful way of illustrating how the constraints of one's position affects not only what one *does*, but also what one *thinks*.

It was apparent, then, that the 'philosophies' of teachers in the present study were processual; they appeared to have amended their views and practices in accordance with their perceptions of surrounding contextual constraints. The comments of one teacher offered a neat illustration of the manner in which the common-sense (sporting) ideologies of some teachers developed to incorporate the constraints of practice as they were experienced:

I thought that being a PE teacher was about getting these wonderful teams together ... because PE college is all about playing for a good team and representing; but perhaps that's me ... because I like to achieve ... But then I realised that not all children are like that ... initially, you come very naively into PE ... as you progress through teaching you change tremendously from your initial thoughts ... when you have been teaching a few years you start to develop (your) ideas ... As you mature, yourself, you talk to the children and try to find out what they want and what they hate ... It's partly when you come out of college ... you are working at such a high level ... you think that every child is going to have that innate ability. So that when I first went into teaching I was going to turn them all into champions and over the years you get more realistic so you look individually more at their levels and you are just trying to push that child at their level.

Of particular interest, then, was the manner in which teachers' comments reflected the processual nature of knowledge. Many teachers' 'philosophies' appeared to have developed, more frequently, at a subliminal level and in line with changes they had felt constrained to make to their practice. Comments such as, 'when I first started ... football was the main thing everywhere ... I just lived and breathed football', mirrored an apparent tendency on the part of many teachers to enter teaching with an implicitly 'traditional' view of PE - a sport and team games oriented 'philosophy':

When I first started my main aim would be acquisition of the skills necessary to play netball or whatever ... (but) it's probably now more important (to emphasise) the process they have gone through to acquire those skills ... rather than ... whether they have acquired those skills or not.

Teachers in the study reported a variety of (potentially related) reasons for the developments in their practice and 'philosophies'. These are best described as developments rather than changes, because they represent adaptations that have emerged out of, rather than broken with, their previous practices and



views, as they themselves have developed in relation to their life experiences. There are vestiges of difference but, at the same time, there are frequently striking continuities. This is one reason why these 'philosophies' frequently appear confused if not contradictory.

It became apparent that many teachers' 'philosophies' had developed in relation to their life course and associated experiences. These life experiences took many forms. Some teachers, for example, felt that their views had changed as they had grown older in the job:

I think age makes a difference ... your viewpoints do change ... you're developing as a person yourself ... you can see a progression in yourself.

basically, it's about enjoyment, appreciation of skills that they could use later on in life. And really, I change a lot in my attitude as I get older about this.

More typically, teachers' predispositions towards PE - their habituses - seemed to have developed in particular directions (that were more or less in line with particular ideologies) as they had become constrained to amend their practices.

Despite such observations from a number of established teachers, various relatively younger teachers offered views to the effect that older teachers were likely to be wedded towards providing 'traditional' PE centring upon sports and team games:

I don't think that ... the older teachers think about different ways of teaching different skills. They tend to just teach the same skills in the same fashion ... I think they are quite reluctant to change because they haven't got the drive to do that, and be reflective.

The 'old school' ... saying, 'Right, this is how you kick a ball'.

Male teachers in particular were viewed as more likely to be wedded to 'traditional' views the older they were. In this regard, a teacher who commented that the older men in her department were more conservative in their outlook and practice identified an older female colleague as potentially more open to change.

Several teachers suggested that their practice reflected in part their appreciation of the 'changing times' or, what Roberts (1996b) would refer to as 'youth's new condition':

I've probably moved with the times ... when I first started ... football was the main thing everywhere ... I just lived and breathed football ... I found, really, that I wasn't catering for all the kids in my school and when I started talking to some of my colleagues and perhaps some of the Heads of Departments ... they also felt the same thing ... I think, basically, that we have changed as a society haven't we? When you think everybody played football, everybody played cricket in the summer. What did families do before telly and Sky TV? You know, they went with dads, picnic, watched the cricket, played cricket, while dad played - that sort of thing.

It was evident, however, that the more common reasons cited for developments in practice as well as 'philosophies' had to do with reactions to the context in which teachers found themselves teaching. Frequently, these were constraints operating at the local level of the school:

At 21, when you first start teaching, you've not really had a lot of experience of working with kids. I mean, you might think you had, but when you look back at it ... at 21 you come in and you want everybody to get in netball teams, you want everybody sprinting down, and everybody throwing their discus miles. And then you stop and you think, 'Well, it's not working!' and then you have to stop and

think ... how are you going to get them to feel as though they are winning ... I don't know when it starts!

At other times they were national<sup>5</sup> constraints operating upon all PE teachers, such as pressure to engage in health promotion in one form or another:

Up to this year or last year, we were very skills orientated and then we realised that a lot of pupils (were not successful). We looked at our 'philosophy' again about being active and (realised) we need to get people a bit more active so that (a) they're using their energy, and (b) they see it as a more active subject.

It was noteworthy that other 'biographical' factors appeared significant in terms of their impact upon teachers' 'philosophies'.

For some teachers, developments in their careers in the form, for instance, of new posts of responsibility or particularly influential professional development courses had, they claimed, made a mark on their 'philosophies', on their outlook upon what they were trying to achieve through PE. The claimed PSE and developmental aspects of PE had become particularly prominent in one teacher's perceptions of her developing 'philosophy': something she attributed to her involvement 'on quite a few motivation-type courses'. She added:

I think that had quite an influence on my overall view of life as well. And I think that sport is one of the ways that you can easily achieve goals etc. ... I think, when I left college, I had this view or this idea of play being important and competitiveness not being essential. And I think my idea of competitiveness has altered; that having competition is quite a healthy thing - that we shouldn't always say, 'Oh, well, it doesn't matter if we can't do it'. We should be pushing to make sure they can achieve ... the idea that you are relating it to life has always been there.



Several female PE teachers commented that family responsibilities and experiences had an impact on their thoughts and practices. Illustrative of this was a teacher who commented:

I think it's having kids of your own ... my daughter is ... not very physically active; well she is, she's a good swimmer, she doesn't like running, she's a good dancer, but she doesn't like doing gymnastics. So she's got mixed (interests) ... but she won't run to save her life ... unless she's playing football with the lads and she'll play football for hours ... and I think that just changes your outlook as well.

In this manner, various female teachers commented on the inevitability of their own sex or gender continuing to impact upon their perceptions of PE.

## Conclusion

Regardless of whether or not teachers are likely, at any stage in their careers, to reflect upon the nature and purposes of PE, it is clear that their past school and sporting experiences play a significant part in their developing 'philosophies' of PE. Equally, there appears little doubt that by the time many teachers reach the training stage they have become accustomed to associating PE primarily with 'sport in schools'. There is a tendency towards conservatism present which Placek *et al.* (1995: 248) describe as 'a primarily custodial ... orientation toward the profession' - custodial in the sense that teachers view their role as conserving and passing on skill-oriented and sport-dominated curricula. Teacher trainees and 'beginning' teachers (McCormack, 1997) are, according to Placek *et al.*, oriented toward 'reproducing and preserving the physical education they have experienced' (p. 248). This tends to be a perception of PE centred upon sport, and especially team-games and fitness for performance. This implicit 'philosophical' orientation of PE teachers towards sport and games means that they are already facing in the direction that recent developments at the national (particularly official and

semi-official pronouncements) and local developments have encouraged them to move.

It is clear that their professional socialization, in the form of teacher training, by and large has a negligible impact on prospective PE teachers' 'philosophies'. At the same time, however, it is equally clear that PE teachers' predisposition towards a sporting ideology can be modified or re-inforced to a greater or lesser degree by their professional socialization in the form of practical experiences of teaching. Placek's work (1992; cited in Chen and Ennis, 1996) suggests that in the USA some PE teachers were 'struggling'; that is to say, they faced difficulty coping with a 'traditional' PE curriculum based upon teaching sports skills that contrasted markedly with their own 'philosophies'. Some teachers in the current study manifested symptoms of such a 'struggle'. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this tended to be not so much a zero-sum struggle between sport and other 'philosophies' but a struggle to combine concerns for health and so on alongside their intuitive and pre-existing commitments to sport.

According to Elias, it is 'the web of social relations in which the individual lives during his (sic) more impressionable phase, during childhood and youth, which imprints itself upon the unfolding personality' (Elias, 1994; cited in van Krieken, 1998: 156). The biographies of PE teachers, and particularly their early and profound attachments to sport, tend to create in various PE teachers a typical orientation towards PE in thought and in deed; that is to say, both in terms of what they think PE should be about as well as what they actually do in practice. Hence, it is important to bear in mind that some of the constraints on teachers' 'philosophies' and practices are internally imposed constraints; e.g. the constraints of past experiences - of sporting traditions and so forth. 'Childhood', van Krieken (1998: 156) adds, 'is thus the main

“transmission belt” for the development of habitus which characterizes any given society’ and, one might add, particular social groups such as PE teachers.

For Elias, van Krieken (1998: 49) suggests, ‘habitus and culture are very slow to change, making it impossible to understand social life except over longer spans of time’. Such longer spans of time would, of course, involve more than the life-spans of individual teachers or, for that matter, the relatively young history of PE in schools. Nonetheless, the notion of emergent and developing habituses helps one appreciate the fact that PE teachers do not arrive for teacher training as *tabula rasa*. Rather, they arrive with particular dispositions towards PE that, among other things, incorporate a ‘second nature’ tendency to view PE as primarily to do with sport. As these teachers move into the world of PE teaching and their figurations expand and become more complex, so their habituses inevitably become connected to their emerging social relations. Thus, it is at the local and national levels of these figurations, when PE teachers’ dispositions are impacted upon by the figurations of their working context, that PE teachers’ intuitive orientations towards PE can be more or less challenged or reinforced.

It is important to note that, just as there tends to be an undue emphasis upon the significance of theoretical definitions of PE for teachers’ ‘philosophies’ and practice, there also tends to be an over-emphasis upon the significance of training in this respect. PE teachers’ ‘philosophies’ may well owe more to their previous sporting and PE experiences, as well as the context in which they find themselves teaching, than those employed in training them might like to believe. For teachers, themselves, it is likely that ‘practice’ may be perceived as significantly more influential than ‘training’. In one, very broad sense, education and teacher training can be clearly seen to matter, to make a



*difference*. This is the sense in which the difference between a qualified teacher and a non-teacher is that the former has been educated/trained to teach. In relation to this, and in order to gain academic or professional qualification (and licence), people change or amend their views, learn the things they are obliged to learn, even believe the things they need to believe - or, at least, they appear to do all of these things - in order to achieve a desired outcome; in this example, teach PE. However, at a lower level of generality, education appears to make no difference; that is to say, the difference between teachers with varying 'philosophies' is unlikely to be explainable in terms of their training. Indeed, the development in prospective teachers' thinking that might appear to take place during the period of their training does not necessarily signify a substantive change of values, beliefs and attitudes at a deeper psychological level. Neither, for that matter, does it necessarily help explain teachers' behaviours. This is precisely because it may be more apparent than real. When viewed sociologically, what people think, as well as the behaviours they are inclined towards, are best explained in terms of a blend of more deeply-seated values, beliefs and attitudes and the context in which they operate. In particular, what tends to make a substantive difference to practice (as opposed to theory or philosophy) are differences in people's *circumstances*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This point will be developed in the later section on experiences of teaching practice.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that not only the predisposition but also the style of practice is based upon young people's experiences of PE and PE teachers.

<sup>3</sup> College refers to either a four year Bachelor of Education degree or a one year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education.

**4 All names are pseudonyms.**

**5 The local and national dimensions of PE teachers' figurations will be focused upon in succeeding chapters.**

## Chapter 7

### **Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: the Local Dimension**

In this chapter I intend to explore those aspects of PE teachers' figurations, at what might be called the local level of day-to-day practice in schools, that appear to influence their 'philosophies' of PE, as well as their professed practice.

One point which is worthy of note at the outset is the extent to which any analysis of professional workers - such as PE teachers - at the local or micro level is bound to take into consideration groups of people both within and beyond the immediacy of the workplace. As the network of relationships in which PE teachers are enmeshed becomes ever more complex, their chains of interdependency lengthen to incorporate not only their pupils and fellow teachers but also the pupils' parents, local community groups and so forth. Some of these will represent school sporting, educational and religious traditions handed down through generations of governors and teachers, for example, as well as professional interest groups representing PE teachers. In addition, teachers need to take into account more generalized 'public' views of them and their subject.

After an initial outline of the more salient and immediate aspects of PE teachers' figurations at the local level, the rapid growth of examinations<sup>1</sup> in PE will be presented as a particularly informative case-study which illustrates PE teachers' orientation to their ever-more complex networks, as well as the inevitable impact of these upon their everyday 'philosophies' of PE. This will be followed by an extended outline of what, it will be claimed, are a



particularly significant element of their figurations; namely, concerns regarding their status within their schools, the teaching profession in general and in the eyes of the public at large.

Firstly, I will deal with the constraints upon PE teachers' thoughts and practices of a range of 'significant others'. I will begin at what might be seen - with regard to power-ratios at least - as the epicentre of schools, namely headteachers and senior managers, and move 'outwards' through colleagues, pupils and parents. It will be noticeable that, in terms of the 'philosophies' and practices of PE teachers, power-relations are neither linear nor, for that matter, do they constrain teachers to face in a single direction.

### **Constraints: significant others**

#### *Governing bodies, headteachers and senior managers*

As one might have expected, teachers saw headteachers as presenting a particularly significant constraining influence - both in terms of the provision of resources and the headteachers' expectations - on their actions. Each of the following examples represents various teachers views on each dimension of school management:

De-motivation. You wonder why you're doing it sometimes ... you put the time in the children enjoy it but nobody seems bothered whether it goes on or not. I'll give you another example, we had a school mini-bus. Somebody had an accident and it was written off. Staff, children and parents put together ... and the Governing Body has decided they didn't want to spend that type of money ... on a mini-bus, they want to spend it on computers. But that means we're going to have to stop going on activities.

If you had a really supportive headmaster that left an awful lot up to you.

Senior management won't let us take them away on (water-sports) trips and things like that ... There's so much out there for them to do and we are fortunate because we are in such a nice area our children can afford ... things like that and they would love to do it. And I don't think we'd get that many problems either because generally they are nice children. And they are missing out all the time because ... and that's Senior Management!

I've got quite disheartened with it ... (the) lack of opportunities ... some schools get a better deal ... I just wish (the) school would put more importance on it (PE).

Not only did school managers, and especially head teachers, appear to have a significant impact (directly or indirectly) upon the status of PE within the schools but they also influenced the orientation of the PE programme. A male teacher in the only grant-maintained school in the study aired his concern about his headteacher spending £3,000 on a new cricket wicket when, he claimed, the school only played a handful of games. He implicitly explained this in terms of the constraints surrounding headteachers themselves, such as the school being grant-maintained and needing to appeal to would-be parents. Indicating the 'Hobson's choice' he viewed himself as facing, he added:

the Headmaster has got some money lying around ... and he's going to offer it to you, you take it ... you would spend it in a different way, given a free hand, but you can't look a gift horse in the mouth!

Many teachers (and especially HoDs) commented upon what they perceived as their head teacher's view of PE, and many commented upon the head teacher's inclination to 'interfere', directly or indirectly. Several recognised that the headteachers were themselves operating in contexts that constrained their behaviour - whether in the form, for example, of government policy

statements or the internal market in education that had emerged from previous legislation:

I think it (league tables) is steering the whole of the school!

The Head(teacher) (introduced rugby league) ... (she) wanted another major game ... because she was concerned (about) the National Curriculum and what the Government at the time (wanted).

Much, in the eyes of the teachers, appeared to revolve around how supportive they viewed their headteachers as being. In concrete terms, the pressures on teachers from headteachers and senior managers often took the form of expectations of sporting success for their school; for example:

(the new Headteacher) expected our teams to do very, very well, whereas I'm afraid that's not my philosophy.

The extra-curricular stuff, if you like, is what people look at as our 'sport for excellence' ... when I do the extra-curricular here we have a lot of pressure put on us to have (good) team results.

One particularly interesting exchange concerned the perception of the teacher in the grant-maintained school. He reported being 'called in', as he put it, to explain what the senior management team perceived as a relatively restricted range of fixtures on offer in a major team game and then, subsequently, to account for the relatively poor performances (results) of the teams in these fixtures. The teacher perceived these meetings as constituting a very thinly-veiled threat couched in terms of the impact of the ostensible lack of commitment to extra-curricular activities (particularly fixtures) for the appearance of the teacher's curriculum vitae and, thus, by extension, his future career. He made clear the constraining influence that this experience had had on his practice and his views regarding what he was trying to achieve in PE:



So fixtures take precedence for us because that's what he (the Headteacher) judges as our exam results ... 'How many did you play? How many did you win?'.

Many teachers, but particularly the HoDs, often appeared aware of the constraints on the school's management team, for example, in terms of utilising sport in the school's interest; for example: 'basically we want to get more parents to send kids here rather than send them to ...'. This concern for the prestige of the school in the educational market was particularly evident with regard to the constraints teachers felt themselves to be under vis-à-vis extra-curricular PE. It was clear that many PE teachers perceived themselves as bound to 'work really hard to keep their teams going'. It became equally apparent that, frequently, for all parties concerned, an important dimension to this development with extra-curricular PE was sporting competition with other schools:

I think we were looking at the other good PE schools, good sporting schools, and to compare with the top schools we thought we needed to compete at that kind of level.

It was noticeable that for various teachers and, by implication, their managers, developments in extra-curricular PE were driven by status concerns related to success in inter-school competition. And despite being conscious of the impact of such an emphasis upon curricular PE, as well as what might be termed the more recreational elements of extra-curricular PE, many teachers felt constrained to accept that focus.

#### *HoDs and senior colleagues*

HoDs appeared particularly likely to notice and comment upon the expectations of headteachers and senior teachers in the school management

structure. By the same token, for many teachers, HoDs were an additional layer of constraining influence to contend with. And, as with all levels of managers, power-relationships between main-grade teachers and their HoDs were inevitably constraining, either directly or indirectly:

a lot (of what you do) depends on your Head of Department.

I also feel (that) sometimes within a department ... you don't get to develop yourself as I want to teach. I teach very much the same as (my HoD) because she has taught me and I wouldn't be the teacher I am without her ... but I can't find myself; and it's what I want to do very much.

The constraints that many teachers below the level of HoD perceived, in particular, were in two main areas: how the HoD interprets the NCPE and extra-curricular PE:

(what happens in practice) comes down to the individual Head of Department really ... and what they want to do.

Many younger teachers in the study felt particularly constrained by being 'a junior member of staff':

Sometimes, it's better not to say anything at all.

I wouldn't dare suggest it ... I've got no say, I'm just a 'pleb' ... I'm just here to teach.

It should be emphasised, however, that HoDs, as well as ordinary members of those departments were also constrained by relationships with other teachers. One HoD, for example, commented thus:

Sometimes I think the philosophy of what you want to do does get pushed by the way-side with practicalities ... We tend to get together to design the programme for the year based on how we felt this year had

gone, so there always seems to be a pull towards everybody's specialisms or ideals of what they think ... and, of course, different people enjoy different things and feel that certain things should be included in the time-table, so it's a constant readjustment of ... where the emphasis should lie.

### *The gender dimensions of staffing*

The local constraint of staffing expertise or, and more usually, staffing preferences, was illustrated by teachers' perceptions of the constraints related to gender. There was a clear gender dimension in relation to both *what* was taught and *who* taught particular aspects of the PE programme. For example, at one school, while both boys and girls did dance as an activity area, it was not taught by both male and female members of staff:

Yvonne does the dance because I'm not happy with dance at all. And I feel that (she) has got far better experience to do it. I've got the orienteering. I'm far higher, experience-wise, in orienteering than Yvonne, so I tend to fit round the ... quality of the staff, basically. (Before) we had two boys groups and two girls groups which we did boy-type things and girlie-type things and never the twain shall meet. The lads would never have done netball or dance and the girls not football or basketball either. So, I think it's better they do everything because more and more (there are) ... girls football teams and basketball teams and just about everything. (There is) very little that's a no-go area for girls now.

In the above case gymnastics remained a mixed-sex activity. According to this teacher, however, whilst colleagues in the department wanted to extend mixed-sex grouping to the teaching of swimming, they felt constrained by a shortage of staff in relation to the requisite supervisory roles.



### *Non-PE colleagues*

PE teachers' colleagues do operate as indirect as well as direct constraints upon practice. A number of teachers cited practical constraints to do with staffing in particular, but also time and resources, as significant reasons for the relative lack of emphasis on 'recreational' activities, especially, for example, during extra-curricular PE:

The main problem is staffing at the time. I mean, it would be great to have parallel groups - one selective, one non-selective ... in a particular sport, but we haven't got the staff or the time, really, to do that ... some have to be selective because we want some competitive elements ... I'm not one (who would say) '(If) you want to play for a team you play' ... and we get beat 17-nil!

in the curriculum I give them opportunities. After-school it all depends on the staff and what you have. I have to go with five male members of staff, say, for football, because that's what the kids really love and we run football fixtures there. I run tennis fixtures, cricket matches and obviously in athletics.

Notwithstanding teachers' perceptions of such constraints, it occasionally seemed as if staffing shortages and areas of expertise were often used as a convenient excuse for orienting practice towards teachers' and HoDs' preferences.

Whilst the impact, in one form or another, of colleagues on teachers' thoughts and practices appeared readily identifiable, it was evident that teachers were interdependent with more than simply their immediate colleagues. The figuration of which teachers are a part includes groups of people beyond the immediate confines of the school setting. The interdependency networks of PE teachers do not end at the staffroom or gym door. Local dimensions of the networks incorporate the impact of pupils and parents on what PE teachers do and what they think about what they do.

## *Pupils*

Many teachers in the present study commented frequently - and occasionally extensively - on their perceptions of the pupils' expectations in general:

Teacher: We are all aware we do too much games ... but nothing ever happens about it.

KG: Why?

Teacher: Because that's what the kids enjoy.

The significance of pupils' preferences (and particularly boys' widely asserted preference for full versions of games (Waring and Almond, 1995; Brooker *et al.*, forthcoming)) as a constraint on teachers was evident in many teachers' comments; for example:

always, from the year dot, kids want to have a game. And they won't know what the hell to do and they still want a game. So I like to encourage (them with) a game, or condition a game of some sort, every lesson.

It was noticeable how concerns regarding the pupils often appeared to act as a more dynamic constraint on thought and practice than the more removed, yet potentially more powerful, influence of OFSTED. A male HoD commented that when OFSTED visited the department they commented that too much games was being done in Years 10 and 11:

I said, 'I'm sorry, but I need to make sure that my kids are taking part. If I start saying you must have an option on badminton ... weight-training etc. then I will get a lot of kids not taking part'.

The constraining impact of pupils' expectations and concomitant behaviour was particularly pertinent for those teaching in schools in relatively deprived areas. Here, the 'type of kids', in conjunction with the area in which the

school was located, were offered as especially irresistible influences on teachers' thoughts and practices:

Look at this area. This is a *very, very* deprived area. Look at our school and I would say 30 or more per cent of our kids are on free (school) meals, we've got a large, large percent(age) (of) one-parent families and a ... lot of them are (on) income support as well ... they've got problems either behavioural, emotional or educational (emphasis in the original).

Teachers who perceived the pupils in their schools as being under-privileged frequently described them as potentially difficult to manage. When they spoke in terms of their 'philosophies' and their practice, these teachers made frequent reference, for example, to the pupils' likes and dislikes as well as their expectations of, abilities in and commitment to, PE:

(there is a) mismatch ... (NCPE) doesn't work for a large percent(age) of our kids; this curriculum (NCPE) doesn't work ... (It) was implemented ... without any consideration (of) the type of kids we've got, the area we've got, what sports are available for kids in and around the area and, basically, what the parents want.

Interestingly, a number of teachers (including many HoDs) commented openly on their inclination to adapt or amend NCPE (despite its status as a legal requirement) to meet what they perceived as the peculiar demands placed upon them by their environmental constraints:

A number of teachers, and particularly those working in so-called 'deprived' catchment areas, viewed PE as pupils' 'only chance' to engage in a meaningful way with a variety of sports and physical activities (ironically, despite often feeling restricted by what pupils wanted to do; e.g. football):

Since I've been here it's been my view because I look at our children and I think, 'Well, if you didn't learn about sports from us then ...'. To



have a background our children have and the way their parents think about sport, then if we weren't here to (enable them) ... because you must be active, you must have a healthy lifestyle.

Several teachers commented that PE offered teachers an opportunity to provide youngsters with an attractive alternative to the reality of their lives in the form, for example, of recreation:

Basically, my role in life is to be getting (the pupils) less stress, (a) at home, and (b) during academic work. My lesson is the release-valve ... That's how I see PE to a certain extent. That's why I try, through my PE activities in school, that it's something everybody likes, somewhere - it's a case of finding it!

I think most of those children need some enjoyment and achievement without having to write it down ... or work it out.

The 'type' of pupils not only influenced what some PE teachers considered they were trying to achieve, but also affected their views on what constituted a satisfactory outcome:

sometimes I'm just pleased at the end of the lesson if they've just done it.

Rotating activities after relatively short blocks of work and offering 'activity choice' was implicitly, and occasionally explicitly, seen as a practical means of ensuring a breadth of experience whilst keeping the pupils 'on board', so to speak. In the case of several teachers, the constraints imposed upon their role by the 'type of kids' in their schools weighed heavily and, consequently, were perceived of as especially compelling:

All we do all day is get hassle. We get notes, we get abuse off parents when we try to make the kids do it. What do we get out of it? This is why I'm saying, 'Is PE taught in the right way?' ... Why do we do the things we do? Why don't we do things that are more geared towards

life and what (they're) doing? I just don't see why we do it. We've got clubs, we've got the elite side of it ... so why are we trying to force it on people, you know, why don't we teach more of ... what they want to develop at school, and the health side of it? ... I've just lost heart with it.

The 'kind' of pupils was frequently offered by teachers in disadvantaged schools as a constraint on the success and take-up of extra-curricular PE as well as curricular provision: 'I work every night of the week putting on clubs, not all of them are very well attended'. Commenting upon the ostensible lack of matches in extra-curricular PE, a female HoD pointed to a lack of commitment, unreliability and relatively poor behaviour on the part of the pupils, rather than a lack of sporting acumen, as constraining factors:

the type of children that we have, we don't sort of have the quality of kids to be able to go out and compete with other schools.

Teachers' perceptions of their pupils also impacted upon the composition of extra-curricular PE as well as its likely success:

in this area there is no tradition, there is nothing ... and the kids (that) stay behind (are) probably ... the footballers ... We are desperately trying to get more and more kids involved (in extra-curricular) but it's just very difficult.

It is worth noting that a number of teachers, whilst inclined to deny that the 'nature' of the pupils impacted on their thoughts or practices ('No, not really') subsequently made comments confirming the constraining effects of pupils' circumstances. When asked if she considered that there were any differences between her school and schools from more socially and economically 'advantaged' areas, this female HoD replied:

Yes, I think so. In some ways I do because (of the lack of parental) support and things ... and most of our children are not involved in

clubs and things like that ... and one of our things is trying to introduce them to clubs. It's difficult.

In this vein, many teachers offered examples of social and economic constraints that went beyond changing youth cultures:

(the) kids qualify for County schools competitions in athletics but nobody turns up because of transportation problems and things like that ... (e.g.) lack of ... funds at home.

On the whole, then, those teachers in under-privileged catchment areas saw themselves as what might justifiably be termed 'outsiders' looking in on mainstream PE. They tended to be acutely aware of the impact which their schools' catchment areas have had upon their 'philosophy' and practice. Even the teacher who appeared most implacably opposed to the prescription of NCPE freely acknowledged that his view of NCPE would probably change with:

(a) different area, different type of pupils, different type of school ... I'd be able to offer a wider, broader range of National Curriculum because those type of kids .. down there ... are a lot brighter, they are generally so eager to take part ... (they) don't have the non-participation problems that we've got here. So, therefore, my National Curriculum down there, and what I would offer, would be completely different to what I would offer, and am offering, here.

It is interesting to note the implication here that the curriculum is, in a practical sense, not truly *national* as such. Many of the teachers from disadvantaged schools, asked about whether they thought they would teach any differently at other schools, acknowledged, on reflection, a likely adaptation in their practice of PE and thus their thoughts on the subject, often in accordance with the particular constraints of the differing circumstances:



KG: Do you think your view of what PE should be about would change if you were at (that) school?

Teacher: Very much so ... Well it depends. I would still want 'sport for all'. I would still want a large number of children involved but (I would probably feel constrained by) parents ... There is a real demand for success there.

What was perceived of as 'pushing' pupils in terms of participation, providing a range of sports and health-promotion, were proffered as particularly important aspects of the job of being a PE teacher in areas with what were deemed particularly disadvantaged and, thus, frequently difficult to manage, pupils.

It was a feature of various teachers' comments, then, that their 'philosophies' had, in line with their practice, changed somewhat as a consequence of teaching in a disadvantaged school:

My view has changed since I've been here ... I found ... that I wasn't really catering for all the kids in my school and when I started talking to some of my colleagues and some of the heads of departments ... they also felt the same thing.

Teachers in schools where participation was not a major problem often had little in the way of empathy for colleagues in more deprived areas. Indeed, from these 'insiders' looking out, comparisons were sometimes made contrasting rough schools with successful sports programmes in other regions and those who were 'failing' locally:

(that school) has the national finals - football, cross-country, basketball. Now (their) children are the roughest, ill-prepared kids you could ever meet ... however, if they've got a teacher who is ... gifted, enthusiastic, motivated ...

The tension between official expectations (e.g. NCPE), the reality of teachers' situations as they perceived them and aspects of their 'philosophies' was neatly illustrated in a passage from an interview with a teacher from a relatively deprived school in a new town. She made clear her commitment to encouraging lifelong participation and activity choice and added that, at her school, they offered more choice than NCPE appeared to allow for. She added:

and I know that's not fulfilling (the National Curriculum) but ... they come every week ... that's what they want to do and that keeps them happy and having the choice makes some of the ones that wouldn't particularly want to do it, do it.

In this regard, it was evident that in many teachers' eyes one, and frequently *the* major, constraint on their practice as well as their 'philosophies', was the issue of class-management and control ('(it's) control rather than teaching too often') and that such concerns were immediate and all-pervasive ('(we're) just pressurised ... (if he does not) want to do it you can't make him'). Various teachers acknowledged that their PE programmes as well as those of other teachers were heavily influenced by pragmatism rather than principle and that, in this respect, their 'philosophies' as such tended to be 'based on what works'; for example:

some people (teachers) play football all the way through to avoid hassle.

The constraints of class management, in relation to the differing 'type' of pupils as perceived by teachers, was neatly illustrated in teachers' comments on girls' PE:

They (girls) have got themselves into a position now where they feel 'I'm not doing PE no matter what you do, what you say, what you offer, I'm not going to do it'.

girls (have) particularly limited involvement. Parental support just back(s) them all the way ... if they don't participate in PE they will give them a note or ... ring up.

you do actually see a pattern. I've got a couple of big girls in my form ... and when they are ... indoor, i.e. swimming, aerobics, whatever, they are in. When they are in the team things outside - team games ... things like netball (they are missing).

the physical fitness regime in PE. I've had an awful lot of trouble with girls not doing PE - them not bringing their kit.

This was particularly true with regard to mixed-sex grouping and co-educational PE. An established male HoD commented:

We don't have mixed lessons ... for the simple reason - the boys dominate. The girls are subservient ... And the girls are so embarrassed they would not do anything we tried ... We did try mixed groups but we found it was holding the boys back and holding the girls back in a different way. The boys wanted to be 'macho' and dominate and the girls wanted to be quiet and it just didn't quite work. So, we keep them separate. *But they do get the same opportunities* (emphasis added).

(dance is) mixed-sex, yes. Right the way through to Year 9 we do it ... it's all mixed except for the games lessons: we have single-sex games lessons. So the girls do netball and we do football and we do mix the basketball at Year 9 but then, because of timetable difficulties, we separate them in Year 10 ... the boys do basketball and the girls do aerobics and things.

This male HoD offered timetabling constraints as a justification for the separation of boys and girls. He acknowledged that 'in the main' the boys and girls do traditional male or female activities, but added:



The girls do football ... that's being introduced ... they do play matches after school and that's quite strong in this area which is good, I like that. But the trouble is Frances gets upset because it takes them away from netball, because they've got a good strong tradition in netball too.

Several established female teachers commented upon the classroom management 'problems' associated with teaching mixed-sex groups:

I'm not in favour of teaching it in mixed surrounding(s). I've done that, I've been there and I feel a lot of times you pander to the boys; you keep them happy and so the girls don't get the benefit ... they should ... But I am in favour of boys' dance, because I feel that it's a vibrant way of developing a creativity - they don't have to be 'sissy' doing it. If it's boys, they can do it in a very lively basis.

When I teach single-sex groups I feel I can cope with that. When I teach mixed groups I can't ... There's no enjoyment there ... because the boys are fooling around and the girls' enjoyment - I'm just thinking of Year 9 the other day: they just pleaded with me not to have mixed lessons ... they were embarrassed ... you know, not doing it properly and the boys laughing at them if they dropped the ball.

I'm dealing half the time with trying to get (them) to interact well with each other, as well as practising their skills ... in a mixed group ... the boys would be getting at the girls.

It was interesting to note that a number of teachers' comments supported Green and Scraton's (1998) observation that where co-educational PE was still to be found, it frequently took the form of mixed-sex groupings and had more often than not emerged for reasons of pragmatism rather than principle:

all the groups we have are mixed. It has been forced on us for a while now ... there have been three PE teachers with half a year and the only logistic(al) way of sorting that out sensibly is to have three mixed groups. So, we all taught everything. So, I would do netball, I would do dance, I would do football.

In addition, for equally pragmatic reasons, many of those persisting with coeducational lessons were in the process of changing back to single-sex. A male HoD commented:

We're going back to single-sex ... they're (the pupils) not coping with mixed-sex PE.

In light of Green and Scraton's (1998) commentary on co-educational PE, it appears just as likely that the difficulties experienced by the teachers themselves have been a significant factor in the decision to turn away from this development. Various teachers commented that mixed-sex PE led to girls absenting themselves from lessons more, a situation that they claimed could be reversed by returning to single-sex lessons.

Examples of pragmatic responses to perceived constraints and/or personal preference dressed-up as principle were common. A female HoD commented that her department did mixed-sex teaching in gymnastics and dance until two years ago then 'we reviewed the situation and decided it was much more beneficial to do single-sex teaching'. However, the decision to do mixed-sex teaching in the first instance appeared to have been driven by feelings of compulsion rather than 'philosophical' reflection as such:

We were in a situation where we had to because we had three teaching groups and three teachers. We had to have the balance correct ... and time-tabling as well came into it.

Indeed, the teacher acknowledged the pragmatic, as opposed to the 'philosophical', justifications for the development:

In dance, in particular, the girls were very much conscious of the boys within the group and vice-versa. The boys either were very hard to deal with - because they became equally self-conscious of what they had to do and didn't feel happy with things they were expected to be

doing. In gymnastics in particular, there was a *huge* difference in ... tension, posture, finish, flow, there was a *huge* difference in boys and girls. So you were actually teaching two different types of lessons within the lesson ... yet, when we went to the single-sex groups we could see (the ability) ... coming through; that there were good boy dancers and they were progressing at the right pace.

Both female and male teachers perceived differing contexts constraining them to adapt their teaching, especially with regard to the apparent reluctance of older girls towards PE:

by Year 10, quite a few of my girls aren't into playing ... games any more and particularly the lower ... ones, and they absolutely love doing aerobics ... They would give me so much more effort throughout the year if they were doing aerobics the whole time ... So, I'm really torn between keeping the games going because they are good, but what about all these others that are only giving me 60%?

In this vein, the significance of the continuation of traditional gender stereotyping in PE departments as a constraining aspect of PE teachers' at the local level, was exemplified with respect to extra-curricular PE provision. The comments by teachers in my study tended to confirm Penney and Harris's (1997) observation that the provision of extra-curricular PE for boys and girls is 'invariably ... dependent on support from female and male staff' (p. 47). In this regard, it was particularly interesting to note that there appeared to be *less* equal opportunities outside the formal PE curriculum rather than more; that is to say, perhaps unsurprisingly, extra-curricular PE tended to reflect, more than did PE in the curriculum, traditional forms of gender stereotyping. Thus, more gender differentiation was to be found in extra-curricular *sport* than in NCPE as exemplified in the following statement: 'pretty much (all extra-curricular clubs are) single sex and that's our (male) Head of Department's choice'.



## *Parents*

Associated with, and working in much the same direction as, the constraints associated with the perceived threat of pupil disaffection were the expectations of parents. According to a large number of teachers, parents were an increasingly constraining factor. Parents were said to be crucial in some areas because, as one teacher succinctly put it, they are viewed by teachers as likely to say: “my son doesn’t have to do this if he doesn’t want to”.

Broadly speaking, parents were viewed as taking more interest in competitive sport than recreational exercise: ‘if there were teams involved or competitions or prizes they (parents) come in droves’. Parents of pupils at relatively affluent schools were perceived by teachers to be particularly keen on competitive sports and especially team games. Ironically, however (given the relative failure they often experience in sport and particularly team games), parents from lower socio-economic groups were also viewed as advocates of competitive sport, games-based curricula and extra-curricula PE:

because we’ve got such a big catchment area, a lot of children are bussed in and I feel that there is sometimes pressure from the parents that if it’s not an actual match against other schools ... You know I struggle sometimes (getting) the children turning up for just for practices.

Thus, it was suggested by several teachers that parents were less inclined to collect their children after school if they had not been taking part in competitive activities, and inter-school matches in particular. It is hardly surprising, then, that Penney and Harris (1997: 48) suggest that, ‘in conditions of competition between schools for pupils, PE teachers may be encouraged to respond to parents’ views’. Many teachers held that parents’ expectations

were largely in line with the expectations of the pupils themselves. Parents and pupils, it was claimed, expected to be in matches:

and also, we get a lot of flack ... from parents of children who are not up to team standard.

Our children are really interested in playing for a team.

Ironically, and as if to highlight the existence of confusion in her thinking, this teacher, when asked if she would revise the orientation of extra-curricular PE away from team competition towards recreational activities in line with her professed concern for participation, replied 'No. I'd add to it, I think!'. And she was not alone in finding that extra-curricular sport frequently took precedence over curricular PE:

I think our 'philosophies' became a bit mixed-up there because, at the end of the day, I know ... that what I should be concentrating on is my teaching ... teaching should be number one. But sometimes, you know, your teaching goes (out of) the window.

### **Constraints: other roles**

#### *Additional Roles*

Various teachers commented that a number of PE colleagues had additional duties that limited their contributions, to extra-curricular PE. In addition, some pointed to the decline in non-PE teachers who were able or prepared to volunteer to assist with PE. This was viewed as having an inevitably deleterious affect upon the quality, as well as the quantity, of provision:

the other two members (of male PE staff) (are) both Head of House (so) the amount of time for running clubs (is) not enough time, basically. And other members of staff are not ... coming forward. They haven't got much time as well. So ... there's plenty of extra-curricula activities but it's not as good as it could be for those reasons.

Commenting upon the range of other school commitments of her PE colleagues, a female HoD said, 'They don't put it (PE) into priority, I don't think'. She added:

Because, even though they're PE trained, they have got other responsibilities which take up so much time, they haven't got the time or energy. It's sort of left to the ones further down the ranks, like me!

It is important to note that the additional roles that PE teachers performed were not always beyond PE. Some of these roles (e.g. as coaches) were associated with PE (albeit frequently not directly related to their roles as PE teachers; e.g. activities undertaken outside school). Whilst some of the school roles (e.g. Year Head, teaching a second subject) directly impacted on the role of PE teaching, others (e.g. representative coach or team manager or external coaching roles) impacted indirectly. Indeed, it was also apparent that the impact of these roles was not merely practical and tangible, it was also ideological and intangible. Coaching roles, in particular, appeared to be in the process of influencing some teachers' practice as well as their views of PE. Sometimes, this was towards a more health-related and recreational conception of their subject. More often, however, it was towards an emphasis on competitive sport and sports performance. In this regard, it was worthy of note that several teachers, when talking of coaching roles, frequently conflated the roles of PE teachers and sports coach.

Teaching in other areas of the curriculum and, in particular, areas such as PSE (and, in one particular case, being Head of Careers) was reported as enabling teachers to view their pupils from different perspectives. The consequence of such differing perspectives appeared, nonetheless, to be adaptations in these teachers conceptions of PE to fit with the (practical constraints and associated habituses) of these other roles.



### Constraints: the inheritance of tradition

Whilst there are a number of significant practical constraints shaping the practice of PE teachers, and the make-up of the PE curriculum on offer, it is also important to recognize that PE teachers, headteachers and governors *in the past*, as well as the present have influenced the context and the constraints in which contemporary PE teachers work.

#### *Sporting tradition*

The on-going influence of custom and practice was apparent in the comments of many teachers. As indicated by the following examples, many teachers (and more often women than men) harboured reservations about the constraining influence of 'tradition':

I think, at times, teaching in school you tend to create good teams in this and good teams in that and, the other things such as gymnastics and dance tend to get pushed by the way-side ... I am supposed to be a dance specialist and I do hardly any dance now because my time is spent in running teams because, at the end of the day, people see the success of the department often by how well your teams do ... We do a lot of games. But I feel that the (pupils) shouldn't just be (given) team games, we have to do a wide range of games.

This teacher indicated that what she does in practice has been influenced by what she has inherited and what she feels she is allowed to do. Another female teacher commented that 'When I came here it was what they did, so I've carried on what was already established'. Others pointed to the logistical constraints ('it's such an organizational nightmare trying to avoid all the matches') or the potential conflictual situations facing anyone considering pressing for change:

If I suddenly change things - 'Why? Why?' It's not worth the hassle. These things have always been done the same ... I get the impression that's why we do it.

When pressed to explain the potential contradiction between claims of openness, 'sport for all' and the apparent emphasis on teams and performance, many teachers expressed a perception of feeling backed into a corner regarding competitive sport and 'traditional' team games:

I would suggest that we do more for the team player purely and simply because we're in so many leagues and so many tournaments ... for example, we've got nine netball teams and it's difficult to fit it all in.

These perceived constraints took several forms. Firstly there was the inheritance of 'tradition':

I think the trouble is with ... PE in our country - we are expected to ... set a certain standard ... city or county ... the curricular side in the skill that they have been getting to a certain standard and then ... promoting the team situation ... (in) extra-curricular ... All the time I feel the pressures externally. I do feel the pressures (are) unreasonable and a symptom of the sporting situation in this country (whereby) you have these external pressures on ... (for example to) help transport (pupils) to matches in Cumbria, Dartford and give up your Saturdays to help coach.

Pressure also surfaces from within, for teachers have their own expectations of sporting involvement and success among the pupils: 'there's no pressure here to be successful, but it's a personal thing: if we do well we feel great about it'. However, at the same time, this teacher claimed that she would not want to go 'down that road ... the elitism. I think the whole of our department would be very annoyed if that situation arose'. Several exchanges illustrated the fact that sports performance ideologies were often rather messily

entwined with ostensible commitments to broadening involvement in sport and physical activity through curricular and extra-curricular PE:

KG: Is there any pressure on you to produce winning teams?

Teacher: No, but we put pressure on ourselves.

KG: (Both) male and female teachers see that as being important?

Teacher: Oh yes - very!

KG: Why?

Teacher: It gives pupils opportunities to reach high levels. Because, if the aim in lessons is to give everybody an opportunity, very often the ones that are excellent ... (don't get the chance to) really shine

.....

KG: So, is extra-curricular club- or team-based?

Teacher: Yes ... anybody can come along -we don't actually turn anybody away, we never did ... we never turn anybody away ... we try and accommodate anybody that wants to come along.

### *Religious tradition*

It was noticeable that in those schools with strong religious affiliations, the religious dimension also brought a tradition to bear on all aspects of the curriculum:

the Catholic schools ... as soon as you walk in the door ... you read any mission statement from any Catholic school and first and foremost is the well-being of the pupil. And you are asked whenever you write anything - handbook/policy document - to relate it through to the Mission Statement. And that gets you to think about, 'What am I offering, apart from some coaching tips?' And then you find yourself thinking, 'Well, yes, I am here to educate the whole pupil' and through whatever activity we are doing we want to educate the whole pupil ... I can come out with the standard statement where I say, 'We need to educate the whole pupil: body, mind and spirit', and they say: 'What do you mean ... how do you educate the spirit in a PE lesson?', and you will say, 'Well, it's social values, moral values and ... you can teach them throughout your lesson'. But then I would like to think, and I actually know that, Catholic school or not, each staff do(es) that.



Some traditions, such as religion, appeared to constrain teachers to provide what amounted to *ex post-facto* justifications for their practices; 'philosophies' that were, in effect, 'bolted on' to what they already did without having felt the need to provide justifications of that sort. This did not, however, prevent the teachers concerned appearing to believe the rhetoric themselves.

Not surprisingly, teachers were also constrained by developments within the wider world of education. The most obvious illustration of the inevitably influential constraints of academia came in the form of discussion surrounding the rapid growth in schools of examinations in PE or, as I will term it, 'examinable PE'.

#### **Constraints: professional status and public standing**

A significant aspect of PE teachers' practical considerations revolved around their individual and collective concerns with what might be viewed as two sides of the same coin: professional status and public standing. In responding to the question, 'Why do you do examinable PE?', many teachers volunteered responses that had a good deal more to do with the status or standing of PE, particularly within the school-community, than with various abstract philosophical justifications; for example:

KG: Why did you bother with examinable PE?

Teacher: I agree, why bother!

KG: So why *have* you bothered?

Teacher: Credibility of the department.

KG: Has it worked?

Teacher: Yes ... we're quite fortunate that we've had three years - well, certainly two years - of very good students.

KG: Why are you doing examinable PE?

Teacher: To increase the profile of PE within school ... people are seeing us now not just as (sports) people ... because now we can be classed properly

as an academic subject it does have a knock-on effect, especially when the results come through.

in terms of credibility, I think it would definitely up that a bit.

Examinable PE was perceived as having the potential to raise the status of PE teachers and their departments, especially if they were involved with 'the "A" level'. In line with this comment, several teachers suggested that the more demanding the theoretical aspect of the work the greater the status attached, both in the eyes of colleagues and 'clients':

I think it raises the profile of PE, not just (with) students but for other members of staff as well.

pupils can't believe how much theory and written work they have to do - it's a big shock to the system. So ... it does give us credibility.

This was a common response; the greater the degree of academic difficulty contained therein the greater the level of esteem attached to it:

When they (colleagues) look at the paper at invigilation, they are astounded; at the amount of physiology that's involved and also the fact that they are looking at ... psychology ... and acquisition of skill (as) ... And people (colleagues) are so unaware of the content of some of the stuff we cover ... some of the comments you get from the other staff are: 'At least we're working with an intelligent PE department'!

This teacher went on:

I think that since they made it a degree course, and since they incorporated the 'A' level into the courses that PE staff were doing, I think PE staff probably thought that it was a really good exercise for us to do ... 'they're academic people, it's just that they've chosen to do a practical based subject'. And so I think that it was the natural progression; that we are academic just in the same way that all the

other teachers ... are. And I think that was important to show to everybody and I think that was the drive behind it.

The rapid growth of examinable PE has brought with it a growing pressure on PE departments in other schools to consider a similar development:

half of the department would like to do it ... I think ... they feel loads of schools are doing it and, therefore, they feel we are getting left behind if we don't do it.

It was interesting to note that another younger teacher was aware that the emphasis she was prepared to place on examination developments might compromise or run counter to the PE as education for leisure 'philosophy' that she had earlier articulated. Her response was simply to assert that she valued both. Examples such as hers appeared to reflect the existence, not so much of a plurality of values in Reid's (1997) abstract, intellectual sense, but rather the existence of a variety of expectations and constraints on PE teachers that manifest themselves in the practical *need* for teachers to hold a plurality, or rather, a loose and poorly integrated amalgam of values or, more accurately, ideologies. The perceived requirement to do what 'needs' to be done rather than what one might ideally do was a frequent cause for concern amongst PE teachers in this study. The ostensibly relatively reluctant acceptance of pragmatism over principle was evident in the air of resignation exemplified by the following response:

it probably does ... give you a sort of status (as) an academic subject. But it shouldn't have to ... The status of it in school is very low down. You get the jibes about all you do is play all day ... but I think a lot of PE teachers are quite academic in a lot of ways ... Probably one way of proving it is the fact that we take an academic subject (examinable PE) and get success in it. But, it's a shame it has to be that way. It's a shame people don't see *PE for it's worth* (emphasis added).



### *Pressure from within*

Whilst there is substantial reason to view status concerns as having been, and continuing to be, a significant source of support for examinable PE among PE teachers, developments in the late-1980s may well have reinforced the academicization of PE. The internal market created by the *Education Reform Act* of 1988 heightened competition between schools which were increasingly able to control their own income and expenditure, not least by competing for potential pupils as if vying for a market share.

Unsurprisingly, headteachers and school governors have become acutely aware of the financial implications of particular developments, especially in terms of recruitment. Headteachers have always appreciated the recruitment potential of examination success and - according to many teachers in this study - most have begun to recognise the potential in examinable PE beyond the age of compulsory schooling, for example, at 'A' level. Unsurprisingly, having become attuned to the appeal of examinable PE to pupils and, as a result, to headteachers, PE teachers have also become sympathetic to the lure of examinable PE:

suddenly you find you're attracting people - last year we had five students come from ... other schools - who wouldn't have been here otherwise. And they're bringing parcels of money with them ... and that goes down well with management because you're attracting students.

According to the teachers, the development of GCSE and then 'A' level examinations in PE have enabled schools to keep and recruit more pupils, especially financially lucrative sixth-formers. In the case of one established HoD, the recent development of 'A' level PE at his relatively disadvantaged school:

kept us more 'A' level students, more 6th formers than we would have done. Because every year there were two or three who went to another establishment to do 'A' Level PE because they couldn't do it here. So, now the Head's pleased because it's another £2,500 for every sixth former that comes in ... It was the Head who insisted on doing the 'A' Level part of it. I was a bit 'iffy' about whether we should go straight into it. I wanted to spend a bit of time getting into the swing because we've changed each year ... but the Head wanted to start as soon as we could.

It appears, then, that PE teachers (and particularly HoDs) are heavily constrained by the extent to which their senior management support or resist examinable PE - directly or *indirectly*:

that was one of the things that got thrown at me (by the Headteacher): 'We need to justify why PE is on the timetable' and I said, 'Why?' I said, 'You don't have to justify PE. PE is recognised as a subject and we do it for fitness, health and all the reasons, you know: how to mix, how to play etc, how to interact'. 'Yes, I know', he said, 'But we still need to have some form of justification'. So, I felt then that he was pushing me to do GCSE PE and I said 'fine'.

The relatively subtle, frequently indirect, but seemingly persistent nature of the pressure on many PE teachers and departments to pursue and make a success of examinable PE was readily reported by teachers. Having initially said that GCSE was not forced upon the department, one HoD acknowledged that another pressing practical issue had been at the forefront of their minds when considering their response:

If there are any lessons that need manipulating it would be easier to manipulate a non-exam subject ... shifting them or if they want an extra lesson for Business Studies or an examinable subject then they need an extra lesson and it would be easier to throw a non-examinable subject out.

Various teachers suggested that both they and school management had identified the scope for practically-oriented pupils to achieve hitherto unexpected examination success in PE, with the concomitant benefits for school status and profile that may result:

KG: Why does the department do examinable PE?

Teacher: Pressure for one.

KG: From?

Teacher: From management. And we've got quite a good pass rate so a lot of people opt - we've got two groups this year.

Even in some schools where the position of PE had previously been justified in more 'traditional' terms, such as sports performance and character-development, additional and equally tangible benefits to the school were identified in examinable PE:

next year we're next up ... to do GCSE PE. Why? Because, basically, we've got to get points ... the boss thinks that because of the kids' interest in sport that they will do well on the practical side, perhaps the academic side might let them down a bit, but that if you balance it out, (we) will get the points that will make our league table (position) look a lot healthier. And it's as simple as that. I've been against it all the time because I think I've got enough to do ... it will be a massive burden.

I can't see why it should raise the status but I can see from the hierarchical point of view, yes, it has raised the status of PE. Because they have got kids studying GCSE PE and they are getting the As, B, C and Ds ... so it has raised the profile now. But to me it's another option that the kids can opt in to.

Unsurprisingly (given their particular personal and professional concerns for status) pressure was said to have been brought to bear from HoDs as well as senior managers - especially from newly incumbent HoDs who were perceived as having recognised the potential in examinable PE for raising the



status of the subject and the department and, thereby, enhancing their own career prospects:

KG: Why do you do (examinable) PE?

Teacher: Because the Head of Department when he came here wanted that to go on the timetable and it's become very successful.

KG: Why did you do examinable PE?

Teacher: We were told to do it.

KG: By?

Teacher: Head of Department.

KG: Why?

Teacher: Because he wanted to put PE on a higher footing, in with all the other GCSEs ... (and the fact that, at the time) ... there were a lot of other developments, innovations and that sort of thing, and if we weren't seen to be doing a GCSE course then we would be seen to be left behind and maybe not as important, you know, as the other subjects.

It is important to note, however, that pressure to do examinable PE has not only come from within the profession.

### *Pressure from without*

The multi-faceted nature of the figurations in which teachers find themselves unavoidably enmeshed is illustrated in the manner in which pressure towards examinable PE has arisen from 'below' as well as 'above'; that is to say, from parents and pupils themselves as well as from school management and HoDs:

we tend to feel pushed towards doing it (PE) as an exam subject here, which we don't actually do at present ... by parents at the moment.

Pressure from outside really. Pressure from parents in that people are asking, 'Why aren't you doing GCSE PE?' ... Because they think their children will get another GCSE because they're good at sport - but it's not always the case.

The networks of interdependency that link PE teachers with a breadth of groups *within* (to traditionally powerful groups such as headteachers, HoDs and colleagues amongst others) and *without* (to increasingly powerful groups such as parents, government inspectors, sports governing bodies, the media and the medical profession to name a few) involve them in ever more complex (and, consequently, opaque) figurations. The varying power-balances between PE teachers and each of the aforementioned groups are rooted in differing kinds of power - persuasive, economic or coercive (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming). The tension between pressures from within and without was illustrated in an exchange with a male HoD. Having acknowledged that his department might bow to pressure from the parents and the pupils to do examinable PE, he suggested that there was no internal pressure for him to do it. Indeed:

there are people in the school that don't want me to do it (examinable PE) because it's another examination subject; it's more pressure on the children.

#### *Resistance from within*

Some teachers reported that there was no internal pressure in the school or, for that matter, in the department to do examinable PE. Some commented that, as a department, they had no need to raise their profile because, 'we've got good results and the Head likes good results ... on the extra-curricular side of things'. In the eyes of many of the teachers, head teachers' perceptions of 'good results' usually took the form of numbers participating but also, and more typically, *results from inter-school sporting competition*.

Headteachers and senior management in academically successful schools (usually located in more middle-class catchment areas or which were targeting middle-class children) seemed less likely to encourage - or even, in a

number of cases, allow - examinable PE, and teachers recognised this. Indeed, proportionately more teachers at these schools appeared to be less keen on the idea and were more likely to identify pitfalls or drawbacks, particularly with regard to the traditional role of the PE teachers vis-à-vis fixtures and sporting competition:

The school is very successful. The Headteacher is very happy for me not to do it ... the kids don't need it ... I now, on a regular basis, have schools ringing me up at this time of year saying, 'We can't come next week to the athletics match because I'm up to my eyes', and so what is PE about for goodness sake?

(W)e, here, don't do GCSE PE and 'A' level because we feel, and the Headteacher has the same view, that she would prefer us to be active and do the larger extra-curricular programme. I mean the wider school attracts pupils - academic and sport - that's why they wish to come here, that's why we're over-subscribed.

I think the Headmaster is quite against it ... he doesn't feel that the students need to pick up yet another piece of paper, if you like, for yet another subject. And I think he prefers us to work on the 'philosophy' that we're trying to educate them all without just concentrating on a few.

Headteachers and senior managers in these schools could clearly afford to concentrate on 'proper' academic subjects without penalising themselves in terms of recruitment or results. Reading between the lines of a number of teachers' comments, it appeared that headteachers' views on the role of PE within their school was also shaped as much, if not more, by practical constraints than any broadly philosophical analysis. Whilst they may or may not have valued PE, they appeared, as one might expect, to have had one eye on making the best use of PE in relation to the network of constraints (e.g. financial considerations, timetable pressures, established academic subjects, governing body and parental expectations) within which they had to work.



The following exchange illustrated PE teachers' awareness of the position headteachers found themselves in:

Teacher: It is such a big provision within the vast majority of schools nowadays. A lot of Headteachers give that ... (a) high profile ... I disagree with (that) ... but a lot of Headteachers and a lot of senior staff don't really appreciate physical education until it has an examination attached to it.

KG: So, why is it not being promoted here?

Teacher: The Headmaster's view is that here - it's for fun. (Those are) the exact words he (uses) - 'PE is for fun'. He's not open to the older age (pupils), the more academic ones (doing it) ... because he feels that would be an added burden to them ... instead of PE being a release-valve ... to help them with other subjects.

plus the fact that he'd then have to look at the options: at what it (examinable PE) was going to be put against and how that would affect their results.

Most of the schools resisting the development of examinable PE were relatively advantaged and successful schools. The comments of many of the teachers in the study suggested that they strongly supported the development of examinations in PE. Nonetheless, one particular exchange highlighted the need for a caveat to this generalisation, for it cannot be straightforwardly assumed that schools with a strong academic tradition and record of examination success will automatically resist examinable PE let alone view the role of the subject as essentially recreational or performance-oriented. This particular school achieved especially noteworthy success at 'A' level, as measured by the Governments 'league tables' (*The Guardian*, Tuesday, December 1st, 1998). Possibly because of, rather than despite, this level of examination success, the school's management were perceived as having pressured the PE department into developing examinable PE. The positive views of examinations in PE propounded by OFSTED were seen as having

added to the pressure. The HoD pointed out that the school OFSTED report included the comment that 'the standard (of the pupils) was very high and we should be looking at GCSE PE'. 'So', she concluded, 'there was a lot of pressure, then, from Senior Management ... to do GCSE, because of the points'. Indeed, she pointed to a veiled threat from Senior Management at the school in the form of the prospect - hinted at by the Headteacher - of several additional lessons of disaffected Year 10 pupils as the likely alternative to an examination group. The HoD suggested that both she and the department had taken the view that examinable PE would serve the very practical purpose of avoiding that eventuality. The issue of classroom management was clearly a very real practical constraint in teachers' eyes.

Notwithstanding the varying degrees of enthusiasm with which PE teachers welcomed examinable PE, as well as the variety of justifications offered for such a development, PE teachers were keen not to appear to be implicitly accepting the view that PE could only justify its place on the curriculum by donning an academic 'cloak'. The tension between what some PE teachers felt constrained to do and their concerns that this might be misinterpreted as full support for examinations in PE was evident in a number of comments, exemplified here:

I think the feeling is we just, you know, *play* sport, the recreational side and they feel that perhaps ... they need an exam subject as well. Whereas, I think I feel that the subject (PE) is important within its own right without having necessarily to take an exam in it (emphasis in the original).

Once again, it seems reasonable to conclude that Reid's (1996a, 1996b) claim that the rapid growth of examinable PE represents a widespread acceptance of a 'new orthodoxy' overstates the case somewhat. As much as they had a 'philosophical' commitment to the idea and all it represents, PE teachers

frequently appeared to feel constrained to take on examinable PE. Indeed, one of the less obvious but more compelling constraints on them has to do with the career benefits teachers, and particularly the relatively younger teachers, perceive as potentially accruing from such a development.

### *Support from within*

In the interviews several younger teachers noted the career potential associated with examinable PE. Some even suggested that the rapid growth and popularity of examinable PE left them with 'Hobson's choice', if they were not to harm their career potential. In a conversation about her career prospects, as one teacher escorted me to the school exit, she revealed (off-tape) that she thought she had hampered her career chances significantly by not being involved in teaching examinable PE. This perception of an increasingly direct association between being involved as a teacher with examinable PE and career prospects was frequently evident:

KG: Are you involved in (examinable) PE?

Teacher: Oh yes, definitely. That's one of the reasons they took me.

Commenting on the ostensible reluctance of his present headteacher to sanction the introduction of GCSE, one teacher said this was:

one of the big reasons why I've taken a sideways move ... they're doing GCSE PE ... and I must at least have the opportunity for my career and personal development.

He added, 'You go to schools where GCSEs are taught and one of the first questions they ask you is, "What are your experiences of GCSE PE?"'. He recalled an interview he was involved in for a HoD job in which an 'unfancied' colleague got the job much to everyone's surprise ostensibly - according to the teacher's interpretation of post-interview feedback - because



the appointee had established a GCSE course in his own time in his previous job.

Interestingly, though, whilst this teacher was evidently appreciative of the extrinsic benefits - in terms of potentially enhanced promotion prospects - he also pointed to the intrinsic benefits of getting into the classroom and 'out of the gym' and this was a perspective quite common among other teachers doing examinable PE: 'I would actually enjoy a break from teaching outside to teaching in a classroom'. Several teachers concurred:

KG: Why do you think examinable PE is done here?

Teacher: Well, they never did until Glyn (relatively new HoD) came along ... I personally do it because I get to teach it and *I like it and my reasons for doing it are very selfish* (emphasis added).

After initially justifying examinable PE basically 'because the kids were showing an interest', a young teacher added that he had taken GCSE PE at school and subsequently 'really enjoyed' teaching it. It became clear that for a number of teachers, examinable PE provided a refreshing change from conventional PE, a refreshing change that brought with it other possibilities:

From my point of view, having taught games and PE for many years, it's sort of intellectually stretching a bit more to do some 'A' level work and it's nice to do it. I actually get a lot out of it and I use it; it makes me reflect on my teaching, you know, so when I'm doing skill acquisition ... I reflect back on sessions I taught.

So I can get paid marking - genuinely!

There was, then, clear evidence that many teachers were weighing up the 'pros' and 'cons' of examinable PE. At the same time, they perceived themselves as very much at the mercy of significant others in their networks - particularly HoDs and headteachers. This notwithstanding, many also

expressed what might be termed more altruistic views, usually to do with the interests of pupils.

Whilst acknowledging the primacy of status concerns, many teachers were keen to claim more altruistic and educational justifications for the development of examinable PE:

I think all (PE departments) ... are looking to broaden ... their curriculum ... for the sake of their status ... generally. I say status, but I don't want to give too much emphasis to that because that's not why we're doing it, that's down the list. We're doing it because we know the kids will enjoy it and respond to it and we as a department are keen.

Amongst those who appeared equivocal about examinable PE and who were quick to identify the pressures constraining them to accept its introduction to their department, were many teachers who identified positive aspects of such a development, particularly in the form of opportunities for those pupils keen on PE and sport, as well as those apparently less 'academically able', more 'practically-minded' pupils; for example,

KG: Why do you do examinable PE?

Teacher: We've just started it this year, GCSE ... Basically the Head thought it was a good idea. But I think it gives ... another window for someone who's interested in PE - who did PE to get some success ... they can't get elsewhere.

Increasing opportunities for those with ability in PE was offered as a common justification for examinable PE:

Teacher: Because we have some extremely talented children.

KG: In sporting (terms)?

Teacher: Yes ... Being good at sport ... they can almost get a grade C.

we have children with a lot of talent and I think it's important that they should be able to manifest ... (what) they have talent in.

Well ... it's about choice and pupils are given a choice and we want to offer them that extra choice.

A related justification was the alleged opportunity examinable PE provided for pupils to obtain a qualification in something that they were good at and which might have vocational benefits:

it's good for them (the pupils) that they can get a qualification in it ... This school is very vocational. I think they're a lot more ... physical than they are academic and it prepares them a (preparation) for leisure industry and PE teaching.

Oh! brilliant; I think it's far too late coming ... jobs ... are available. There are so many opportunities in the leisure industry ... just what the children want.

It was noticeable, at the same time, that altruistic reasons were often bound up with more pragmatic justifications:

Because we've got kids who are not necessarily top academically - they are very mixed in terms of ability ... So, because they are struggling academically, it would be considered to be a good option for them: 60% practical and 40% theory, and it's something they could achieve in ... We decided to trial it for two years and see how they got on and we got some good candidates.

I knew that there (were) pupils here ... that (would) excel in it and I knew we were going to get (good) exam results ... (and the grades) are getting better every year ... and now we've introduced 'A' level. And all the time it's having a positive effect on the PE department and it's giving pupils something they have not had before.



However, several teachers perceived examinable PE as something that somehow contradicted NCPE. In the words of one HoD:

(It's) not got anything to do with what I would call the National Curriculum side of it (PE) but I feel it's got a lot to offer some of those pupils that will opt for it. They will opt for it because they have enjoyed PE, they have enjoyed the experiences of PE and they want to study and get more knowledge of those areas which they have enjoyed ... (and) for a career base.

Several teachers commented that examinable PE might not draw the clientele they desired:

When I first started here I was very keen on doing examinable PE ... when I was at school I would have liked to have taken a GCSE in PE ... I am more aware that my views have changed over the years totally - totally, you know ... it is very theoretical ... But the way it is at this school at the moment ... we would not necessarily be getting the children ... (able to cope) doing it and ... *I'm not happy to do it if we are just going to get the (less able) kids obviously* (emphasis added).

Broadening opportunities appeared, for several teachers, to extend only so far. It was easy to form the impression that the alleged benefits for pupils were frequently a secondary concern; that is to say, that the 'educational' justifications were, in effect, a justificatory ideology for something that was primarily to do with personal and professional status. In effect, PE teachers appeared to have been engaging in what might be termed a 'cost-benefit' analysis of examinable PE at personal and local levels.

Several authors have commented upon the reduction in curriculum time allocated to PE in recent years (Hardman, 1998; Harris, 1994a). Virtually all the teachers in this study pointed to lack of sufficient time as a major constraint, in the delivery of NCPE in particular, but of PE as a whole. On the

face of it, examinable PE appears to be one more time 'cost' that one might expect teachers to be reluctant to consider. However, a number of teachers recognised and commented upon the complexity of the situation they were in when confronted with the time 'costs' in juxtaposition with the status 'benefits' associated with the development of examinable PE. They perceived themselves as trapped in something akin to a 'Catch-22' situation - particularly with regard to extra-curricular PE:

I think it would take up a lot of our time that we give to extra-curricular sport ... doing clubs and things. You would have to do a lot of marking, really. I think that would take up a lot ... curriculum-wise ... (but) I'm really in the balance, at the minute, because I can see both sides of it and, in some ways, I think it's good because it ups the profile of PE to have it in (an) examination and a lot of kids benefit from doing an exam in PE. But I still believe that it's important to get them out there and get them active and it's too much to expect them to sit down ... we don't want to lose the time we've got to classroom. We don't want to end up having to sit in a classroom.

A HoD, with many years of experience, observed:

a number of things have impacted upon our time ... the development of exams in physical education ... you're in a bit of a (quandary) really. You want to give your subject a bit of enhanced status and so you have to look to have it accredited externally ... Suddenly you're finding the preparation and marking load in running these exam courses is affecting what you're doing in terms of extra-curricular activities.

'But', he added:

I did ... bring it here, and I suppose I knew what I was letting myself in for but I just felt it does enhance the status of the department you know. People take you a bit more seriously than if you haven't got these things running.

Several teachers spoke of the difficult situation they found themselves in: damned if they did introduce examinable PE to their schools and damned if they did not. At the same time, some teachers commented that for senior management it was a 'win-win' situation, inasmuch as even though PE teachers felt obliged to press ahead with examinable PE - not least for reasons of status enhancement - this was unlikely to be at the expense of their traditional commitments, such as extra-curricular PE:

I think you're probably having your cake and eating it - as a senior manager - if you've got somebody running a PE exam course and they're still doing a full range of extra-curricular activities.

We didn't want to do GCSE because there were only three specialists in the department, and ... we thought this would affect our extra-curricular programme if we were taking on GCSE as well, because we knew there would be a big take-up ... they knew it wasn't going to affect the extra-curricular because *they knew that we were very professional and that we would still carry out the same duties*; which we have done. But it's been a great strain on the department (emphasis added).

Several teachers were aware of the consequences for the pupils:

I always thought, 'Yes, we should do 'A' level PE' but talking to people (I have come to the view that) taking children who are so good at PE ... (who) think, 'Oh, I can do GCSE' ... and they come and do it and they fail miserably ... I think we've failed them ... because they think they are going to do really well and they don't. And the other thing is ... thinking they are going to do practical all the time and ... they are just not and I don't think they quite understand that.

On the whole, PE teachers engaged in, or even considering offering examinable PE, were by degrees conscious of the tensions in their practice and the implications for their erstwhile 'philosophies'. Having said that, they frequently appeared less, rather than more, conscious of the contradictions or



tensions between what they said they thought PE should be about and what they found themselves doing. Whilst there were times, during the interviews, when this appeared to cause some discomfort for these teachers, their justifications were more often couched in terms of 'constraints' and the realities of practice. One such ever-present constraint concerned maintaining the interest of, and controlling, pupils - a similar reason to that proffered for 'enjoyment' as a guiding principle:

we found that a lot of them were switching off because they weren't getting their reports so why should they try? And that was undervaluing PE ... (so) we've been talking about introducing Certificate of Achievement to give them something to work towards.

In addition, the interview data suggested that actually *doing* examinable PE was leading to a change in the teachers' ostensible 'philosophies' and, in some cases, to the development of a 'philosophical' stance on examinable PE that they probably did not have previously ('teaching the 'A' level has had a big influence on my view of PE').

#### *Contradiction: academic versus practical justifications*

Questioned about the apparent contradiction between their emphasis upon enjoyment, health and other such justifications for PE and their support for examinations in the subject (e.g. 'How does examinable PE fit in with your emphasis on enjoyment, increasing heart-rate, on-going participation, developing sports skills etc.?' ) some chose to identify them as two different strands:

That's a bit different ... GCSE (PE) ... some pupils will (do) well at but wouldn't do well in other areas, so we wanted to give them the chance to do that ... Their best subject is PE but they don't do an exam in it, then ... I thought we were letting them down a bit there.

Others suggested that they were different and unrelated but not necessarily in conflict with each other: 'I think it's important that they know the theory side of things as well as the joy of competing'. Others argued that examinable PE reinforced mainstream PE:

because GCSE is all about that (health and fitness); all about that ... they are having more time on practical PE, therefore they are getting more enjoyment out of the sport ... specialising ... acquiring new skills. And their fitness is obviously going to be affected if they are doing more sport.

(examinable PE is) to do with ... reasons why people take part in PE; health reasons.

#### *The unanticipated consequences of the growth in examinable PE*

Ironically, some headteachers appear not to have bargained for the unanticipated consequences of giving PE teachers more room for manoeuvre. One HoD observed that 'the Head' appeared to see examinable PE as 'mopping up' the difficult pupils and had not foreseen the possibility that it might 'take-off', that success of the GCSE PE might develop into pressure to pursue 'A' level and PE vying for a place on the exam curriculum at the school:

Well, we took great pains in choosing our syllabus; a certain exam board that you can pass with your eyes closed! ... not too easy, not too hard and hopefully get good pass grades.

Arguably, it is with the development of examinations in school PE that the *discrepancy* between academic views of PE - characteristic of philosophy - and the practice of PE is being transferred to the context in which PE teachers find themselves.

Macdonald *et al.* (1999: 38) argue that 'developments in schools have seemed to follow developments in tertiary institutions' in the form of more academic (particularly more scientific) PE and sports science degree programmes. Nonetheless, the reasons for the rapid growth of examinable PE may be somewhat more complex than implied by either Reid (1996a, 1996b) or Macdonald *et al.* (1999). Rather than representing a widespread acceptance of a 'new orthodoxy' at a philosophical level, it may be more accurate to describe developments in examinable PE as the outcome of a coming together of the wider academicization process with pragmatic responses by PE teachers and academics to a number of practical concerns, notable amongst which was the threat of *marginalization* in relation to teachers' concerns for professional status. Many of the views expressed by teachers in this study explicitly or implicitly echoed the comment of one teacher that 'I feel sometimes we are looked at as the Cinderella area ... because we don't slot neatly into any set role, any set position'. Whilst theoretical justifications are frequently utilised and, indeed, hotly debated (e.g. Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Carr, 1997; McNamee, 1998, Parry, 1998) by those - especially at the academic level - who are keen to bolster the place of PE in the curriculum, those at the grass roots level (PE teachers) usually have less prosaic, more pragmatic, reasons for favouring examinable PE.

The views of PE teachers in this study, regarding examinations in PE, were often an amalgam of justifications within which concerns of a practical nature featured prominently amidst otherwise quite idealistic rhetoric. The following response was quite typical: having said that the main reason for doing examinable PE would be to provide pupils with 'another opportunity', and that 'it wouldn't be for my glory', a teacher then acknowledged that other teachers/subjects 'would probably think it would raise the status of (PE)'.



## Conclusion

The growth of examinations in PE cannot adequately be explained in terms of the ascendancy of an academic ideology alone. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, a reflection of PE teachers' desire for increased status, particularly at the local level, alongside the practical day-to-day benefits it is perceived as bringing to PE teachers.

PE teachers arrive at school with generalized dispositions towards PE. They have more or less clear ideas regarding what they expect to be doing that are, in part, infused with the norms of their training, but which frequently owe more to their prior socialization - the 'habits' or habituses acquired throughout their young lives. As teachers, they find themselves enmeshed among a variety of practices, constraints and expectations and the socialization process continues. In this vein, the longer spans of time incorporated into Eliasian use of the concept of habitus (van Krieken, 1998) involve more than the life-spans of individual teachers or, for that matter, the relatively young history of PE in schools. Nonetheless, the notion of emergent and developing habituses helps one appreciate the likelihood that PE teachers do not arrive for teacher training as *tabula rasa*. Rather, they arrive with particular dispositions towards PE that, among other things, incorporate a 'second nature' tendency to view PE as primarily to do with sport. As these teachers move into the world of PE teaching and their figurations expand and become more complex, their habituses inevitably become connected to their emerging social relations. Van Krieken (1998: 148) describes 'communities' such as the school and departmental communities that teachers are members of, as 'particularly important types of figurations which structure many of the interdependencies between human beings'. He adds that groups display 'different degrees of social cohesion and integration, and a particular ideological construction of the relative status and worth of each group' (1998:

148-149) and comments that status distinctions 'are rooted in an uneven balance of *power*' (p. 149; emphasis in the original). Thus, it is at the local and national levels of these figurations - when dispositions become configured with contexts, such as the constraints of the 'job' and the departmental, school and professional communities of which they are a part, that PE teachers' intuitive orientations towards PE can be more or less challenged or reinforced.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> The growth of examinations in PE is an issue which might reasonably be considered at the national as well as the local level. I have chosen to deal with it at the local level, however, because, whilst recognising its potential significance for the public status of PE, many teachers spoke initially and, indeed, primarily of the consequences for them at the local, or school, level.

## Chapter 8

### **Physical Education Teachers in their Figurations: the National Dimension**

An adequate appreciation of ideological developments within PE over time - including contemporary views on the nature and purposes of PE - requires an account of broader socio-political developments that have shaped the development of the subject in school as well as the habituses of PE teachers. Hence, in this chapter I intend to deal with what might be described as the over-arching, or 'national', aspect of PE teachers' figurations<sup>1</sup>. This national dimension is intended to complement the personal and local dimensions of teachers' figurations discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

A number of major changes in the world of education in recent years have had significant implications for PE, not least because of their interconnections with broader developments in other spheres, such as sport. Here, particular attention will be paid to three salient aspects of the national dimension of PE teachers' figurations: the NCPE, OFSTED and governmental interest in general, and the sports 'lobby'.

The 1988 *Education Reform Act* (ERA) heralded the emergence of a national curriculum for state education in England and Wales, as well as other significant developments such as the local management of schools, the demise of the advisory service, and changes to initial teacher training (Capel, 1996b). At the same time, various other unfolding situations at the national level led to the creation of a context of renewed concern for sport among influential public and political groupings. Particularly noteworthy features of this emerging context have been the emergence of a new government department



(the Department of National Heritage (DNH))<sup>2</sup> which took over political responsibility for sport from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE); the (ongoing) reorganisation of the Sports Council (associated with which had been a reprioritisation away from 'sport for all' towards emphases on youth participation and particularly the enhancement of sporting excellence); the dramatic growth of sports development at governing body and local authority levels; the rapid rise of National Vocational Qualifications in coaching and the attendant 'professionalization' of the latter, and increased funding for sport through, amongst other things, the National Lottery.

Two particular, and related, aspects of these developments are widely acknowledged to have had a major impact upon PE. The *revised National Curriculum for Physical Education* (NCPE) and the Conservative Government's policy statement (*Sport: Raising the Game*) of 1995, encouraged speculation that a process of revision was underway in PE in the latter part of the 1990s (Penney and Evans, 1997, 1998; Waddington, Malcolm and Green, 1997). This, it has been claimed, is tantamount to a significant 'shift' back from the growing pre-eminence, at the turn of the decade, of a health-related ideology in PE (Green, 1994a) towards a renewed emphasis on team games in schools. For Penney and Evans (1997, 1998) these two developments have served to reinforce what they refer to as a 'privileging' of a 'traditional' PE curriculum, revolving around 'the conventional, traditional diet of games and sports' (Evans and Davies, 1986: 17); that is to say, something closer to the popular image of PE as essentially, if not entirely, to do with sport.

## NCPE

It was clear from the comments of teachers in the present study that they perceived NCPE as a major constraint on their practice in recent years. It is worthy of note, however, that NCPE did not operate as a constraint on

teachers in the way that the ideologies (as outlined in Chapter 4) might do. Whilst it contains ideological elements, NCPE is a legal requirement and operates as a different kind of constraint; that is to say, it has a more direct and tangible and, therefore, pressing effect on PE teachers. In this regard, it is worth making one further point in relation to ideologies and 'philosophies' at large within the subject-community of PE. It is important to recognise that, unlike the academic philosophies of PE, NCPE is something that - whether they have read it or not - PE teachers simply cannot wholly ignore. This marks a significant difference between NCPE and academic conceptions of the nature and purposes of the subject: NCPE is a very real daily constraint on what PE teachers do and, as a consequence, it will be argued, it inevitably affects their views on the subject.

It is also important to note that whilst NCPE can be said to have introduced new constraints (e.g. requirements for the involvement of pupils in 'planning' and 'evaluation' and the indication of certain prescribed activity areas), it has, at the same time, tended to exacerbate many existing constraints (e.g. time-pressures, facilities and teaching expertise). In this manner, the exaggeration of already existing constraints offers a useful illustration of the way in which processes at a national level can be seen to interrelate with constraints operating at the local, or operational, level.

Under development since 1987, implemented in 1992 and revised in 1995<sup>3</sup>, NCPE established a statutory curriculum for pupils aged 5 to 16 involving four Key Stages at 7, 11, 14 and 16 years of age; the latter two of which comprise the secondary years of schooling. Alongside the *core* subjects - English, Mathematics, Science (plus Welsh in Wales) - are *foundation* subjects, one of which is PE. Each subject has 'Programmes of Study' (content) and 'Attainment Targets' (learning objectives). Over the course of their school

lives, NCPE requires pupils to experience six areas of activity: athletic activities, dance, games, gymnastic activities, outdoor and adventurous activities and swimming. The indication of certain core activities that must be experienced, as well as recommended programmes of study, is ostensibly intended to ensure that all children, regardless of ability, gender and geographical location, for example, receive a 'broad and balanced' experience through NCPE. However, as this study will indicate, whilst many teachers appear to favour a broad and balanced curriculum, in principle, at least, there is a significant body of dissent among teachers; this suggests that the claims of the then Prime Minister in *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995), regarding the alleged desire of teachers to return to a more 'traditional', games-oriented curriculum, can be said to have some substance in fact. Indeed, even among those favouring breadth and balance beyond the 'traditional diet', disenchantment and confusion was frequently evident.

*The revised NCPE of 1995 and the renewed emphasis upon games*

Opposing the recommendations from the Working Group on NCPE for a reduction in the amount of time spent on the activity area of 'games', Government emphasis on the personal and social significance of team-games and sport duly triumphed in the form of the *revised* NCPE of 1995. In practice, the upshot of this revision was the establishment of 'games' as the only one (of six) activity areas that young people *must* experience at each and every one of the four key stages. The Curriculum Committee of the PEA described this as 'a structured bias towards competitive games' (PEA-UK, 1994: 6) and Capel (1996a: 33; emphasis added) observed that games 'moved from being one of six activity areas in the NCPE in 1991 to being the *central* part of the NCPE in 1995'.



The impact of direct political interest on PE has been noted and commented upon by several authors in the 1990s (Capel, 1996a; Evans, 1995; Evans, Penney and Bryant, 1993; Penney and Evans, 1997, 1998; Roberts, 1996a, 1996b; Talbot, 1998).

Whilst the second review of the NCPE - currently in progress - proposes a diminution of the emphasis placed upon games (Casbon, 1999; Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999), the 1995 revised NCPE confirmed a significant ideological shift back towards a renewed emphasis upon sports performance and the alleged benefits of the 'traditional' PE diet of sport and team games. This development was bolstered by intervention on the part of the Conservative Government of the 1990s; most tangibly in the form of the aforementioned policy statement, *Sport: Raising the Game*.

#### *PE teachers' views on NCPE: pragmatism over principle*

A prominent theme of this thesis has been the prominence given in PE teachers' 'philosophies' to personal preferences in configuration with practical concerns, rather than abstract justifications. Teachers seldom offered much in the way of philosophical justification for NCPE nor did they appear to know much about the official rhetoric underpinning it. Typically, PE teachers' views on NCPE bore little or no relationship with either academic philosophy or official definitions. Instead, their views tended to be grounded in perceptions of pragmatism rather than principle; they were, indeed, more like common-sense, everyday, world-views than philosophies *per se*.

With this in mind, it became increasingly clear during the research that many teachers remained unsure what the NCPE 'stands for'. In answer to the question 'What do you think the philosophy behind NCPE is?', one HoD replied, in effect, for many when he commented, 'I really don't know to be

honest'. This particular male HoD admitted to not having paid much attention to the official rhetoric. This was by no means unusual. Several teachers observed that, whilst they believed it had something to do with offering 'a broad and balanced (PE) curriculum', neither they nor their colleagues knew much about NCPE beyond the day-to-day implications. Thus, teachers appeared more concerned with the practicalities of NCPE - in terms of what requirements they were bound to fulfil - rather than any ostensible theory or philosophy underlying it. Such a partial understanding of NCPE, in combination with an over-riding concern for the practical implications of the development, was further illustrated in the following interchange with a female HoD:

Teacher: To tell you the truth, *I haven't really grasped National Curriculum PE ... that seems to be a big thing ... the individual skills and team skills ... As to what's expected, I wouldn't say I was 100% aware of. I mean, I go in the with the view of what I expect to get out of PE and I've got the curriculum in front of me ... I've got a knowledge of what's expected of pupils but ... I would not go home and study National Curriculum documents!*

KG: So, you are quite sure, in your own mind what you are trying to achieve?

Teacher: Yes - *a well known philosophy (of) working in schools and seeing what staff are doing, rather than looking in documents (emphases added).*

In the light of ongoing debate at the level of academia, this exchange is particularly interesting for, if they have only a limited awareness of what they are *required* to teach, one would not expect PE teachers to take much, if any, notice of what PE philosophers or even teacher trainers think they *should* be teaching. Indeed, one might add, if this is the case with HoDs it would seem even less likely that ordinary teachers would be cognisant of such matters.

Unsurprisingly, then, an over-riding concern with the practical implications of NCPE - rather than any underpinning philosophy - was evident among main grade PE teachers as well as HoDs:

I know what the National Curriculum is and what you offer and things, *but I've not really gone into ... what's behind it and why we're doing it ... Obviously I've got my own views* on whether we should be doing this or that (emphases added).

Once again, this teacher could be said to speak for several younger and less well-established colleagues when he observed that if he wanted to gain promotion he would undoubtedly have to 'gen up' on NCPE. However, he described himself, for the present, as 'happy just to teach' and viewed the effort required to become familiar with NCPE as unnecessary and 'not worth the effort'.

Nearly all the teachers in the study expressed a range of keenly-felt views on various aspects of NCPE - such as its prescriptive nature, the 'pros' and 'cons' of 'breadth and balance', the impact on 'standards', the ostensible emphasis upon planning and evaluation as well as performance and, last but not least, the political nature of its emergence and development. The significance of NCPE lies, nonetheless, in the manner in which it has shaped PE teachers' practice - and the 'knock-on' effect of this for their 'philosophies' and the social bases of support for particular ideologies in the subject-community - rather than the extent to which they perceive it as being more or less in line with their thinking about PE. Thus, NCPE has been a constraint upon what teachers' *do* more than on what they *think*.



## The constraints of NCPE

PE teachers' perceptions of the constraints of NCPE took a number of forms and I want, now, to explore some of the more prominent examples: the impact of resource constraints (time, 'paperwork', money, facilities, staffing) as well as two further aspects of the apparently prescriptive nature of NCPE - 'planning, performance and evaluation' and the activity areas themselves (especially dance and outdoor and adventurous activities).

Many PE teachers in the present study identified resources (physical and material) as a key constraint on doing their job as a whole but also in realising the one aim of NCPE with which they appeared reasonably familiar; that is to say, achieving 'a broad and balanced (PE) curriculum'. One teacher, for example, said:

I don't mind it at Key Stage 3, it's alright, it is quite broad ... but you are going to choose (activities) ... in terms of what you've got at school and we are very fortunate here - we can offer them (the pupils) a lot.

### *Resources: time*

A perceived lack of time has been an issue for PE teachers since before NCPE (Harris, 1994a) and continues to be so (Cale, forthcoming). Whilst exceptions were evident ('we are very fortunate with the amount of time we get on the curriculum ... we can offer a great deal'), time pressures remained a significant issue for many teachers in this study. Most teachers commented upon the apparent reductions (or 'cut-backs') in the amount of time made available to PE on the school curriculum in recent years, a trend perceived as having been exacerbated by the advent of core subjects in the National Curriculum:

the amount of hours we have at Key Stage 4 we don't ... we can't meet it (NCPE) ... That's not the department's fault; it's not necessarily the

school's fault ... (it's) National Curriculum on the whole ... they (the pupils) have to do so many hours in each subject and PE seems to be the one that you end up with very little.

In addition, the requirement that teachers cover certain amounts of prescribed content in NCPE ('the department is always pushing the fact that we need that time to cover the National Curriculum') was viewed as a major time-related constraint. Concern regarding time-pressure was heightened among teachers by the perceived failure of NCPE to specify, rather than guide, time allocations:

one of the problems with the National Curriculum in PE is that it doesn't lay down (that) you must have two hours a week. And if it did I think it would be so much more useful - (if) the amount of time was realistic.

Time was especially an issue with regard to pupils moving towards end-of-school national examinations; that is to say, as pupils progressed through the secondary years from Key Stage 3 to 4 ('they don't get as much time in Years 10 and 11: you only get 1 1/2 hours per week. In lower school they get two hours'). The tendency towards a squeezing of time for PE as pupils approached the national exams that, for many, mark the end of compulsory schooling, was particularly pronounced in schools with strong academic identities and reputations: 'as they get older the academic side of things sort of comes in. So, they only get, for example, in Year 10 ... one hour of PE a week'. Even in cases where teachers made clear their view that 'the school recognises the importance of sport within the curriculum', it was equally clear that this did not prevent indeed, it often coincided with, 'differences (between philosophy and practice) because of the constraints we're under here'.

As one might expect, given many teachers' predilection for, and predisposition towards, sports performance, developments directly associated with NCPE (e.g. emphasis upon 'planning' and 'evaluation' as well as 'performance'; additional paperwork) are seen by many as exacerbating already existent time pressures and constraints:

I am very keen on getting that 'physical' in; so, the 'cons' for me are (planning and evaluation) ... taking up too much of the 'physical' time.

However, it has not simply been the introduction of what are perceived as broadly theoretical elements (such as 'planning' and 'evaluation') that have added to time pressures. The introduction of a broader curriculum (although welcomed by many) is perceived as having 'costs' as well as 'benefits' in the eyes of some teachers:

I think we are at fault, here, for ... doing too many activities with not enough time.

it's all crammed in.

It is worth noting that many teachers expressed particular concern about meeting the requirements of NCPE at Key Stage 4 as much, if not more, on practical, as on ideological grounds:

that theoretical 70 minutes can be cut down to 35-40 minutes of actual activity time. So those time constraints are a problem ... If we had those kids for two hours a week we could use that time so much more flexibly and the kids would get a lot more benefit from it.

*Resources: 'paperwork'*

An additional concern of significance which was frequently mentioned in relation to time pressures, was the perceived growth of 'paperwork' associated with NCPE ('Well, it's asking a lot of work - and "paperwork"').



'Paperwork' was seen as a particular burden inasmuch as many teachers saw it as 'getting in the way', so to speak, of *delivering* PE:

in some ways there's too much time to record now. What I don't agree with is the fact that we've got to record everything and ... waste valuable physical time on actually writing and everything. I agree with grading - I think that's important - but I think actually spending time on recording ... should be kept to a minimum ... especially when we don't get as much time in school ... Assessing is very, very important, but it shouldn't take over; it should still be physical activity.

we've spent weeks now doing a handbook ... showing all the lesson plans, all the learning outcomes, which for ... our pupils is a load of baloney; they will not relate to it. But I've got to have it in place because of ... the external (inspection).

It seems reasonable to assume that the teachers of most, if not all, other school subjects are accustomed to, and likely to be more or less accepting of, the need for 'paperwork' in their subject. It is interesting, therefore, to note PE teachers open hostility to academic administrative work. It suggests that PE teachers are, indeed, different from - specifically, they are less academic - than most teachers.

One HoD's comment - that there were times when he 'resent(s) it (NCPE) strongly' because he did not think it was what PE was 'about' - was shared by a number of teachers, both young and old but, more frequently, the more established male teachers: 'it's just a joke really ... ('paperwork') it's just a waste of time'. This perception of the over-burdensome demands of bureaucracy reinforced some teachers' perceptions that newly-trained teachers spent too much time on meeting the 'theoretical' requirements of NCPE:

we now want people to write about it rather than do it. And a lot of teachers (are) very good at writing about it and (are) very good at talking about it but when you actually see the performance of their pupils: they can't do it. Why? Because they (the teachers) have not been taught how to do it properly.

Once again, it is worth pausing to reflect upon whether one would expect teachers of other subjects (for example, mathematics, English or even an ostensibly more practical subject such as music) objecting to the theoretical requirements of their subject. In the light of this, the emphasis, in many PE teachers' comments, upon 'doing' as opposed to 'knowing' was very striking.

It was interesting to note that several younger teachers commented upon the ostensible aim of the PGCE year to prepare them for teaching in accordance with NCPE. Yet, as aspirant teachers, this had not matched the concerns they had developed during teaching practice. These had more to do with the day-to-day realities of the teaching process and such views were subsequently reinforced by their experiences as qualified teachers.

In this regard, it was particularly interesting to hear one teacher - just completing her second year of teaching - comment that she felt her teacher-training tutor had placed a good deal of emphasis upon the planning and preparation aspects of NCPE. This was, she commented, quite 'out-of-kilter' with what she found herself doing in practice. She had been prepared for NCPE by the PGCE year but she was not being expected to deliver it as foreseen, nor was she frequently in a position to deliver it in the manner implicitly anticipated by her teacher trainer<sup>4</sup>.

*Resources: money*

Probably the best example of teachers' perceptions of the impact of financial constraints on the NCPE curriculum was the activity area of swimming ('We don't do swimming ... since we would have to pay for it ourselves ... (and) we can't really'). The comments of many teachers suggested that there was a large measure of consensus over the worth of swimming:

Money being no object every school in the country should be teaching swimming to people. Obviously that doesn't happen because of financial restraints.

*Resources: facilities*

Swimming can also be seen as an extreme example of the broader impact of the limitations of facilities on PE teachers' outlook:

Maybe they've (other schools) not got the sort of resources or facilities to do those things - *all* activities - or swimming or things like that.

not all schools are in a position to deliver, not all schools have the resources to do it, the equipment to do it ... the facilities to do it and it all depends on what (you've got).

Thus, before, or to be more precise, *instead* of, thinking about what they *ought* to do PE teachers tended to consider (at a conscious level) what they *could* do as well as (at a subconscious level) what they *wanted* to do:

we've tended to (do) swimming because we've got the facilities - we've got the pool on-site - so we tended to (do) that (activity) area.

As with 'time', some PE teachers felt relatively well-placed in terms of financial and physical resources whilst, at the same time, acknowledging that they were fortunate by comparison:



We have the money for the resources, we've got the associated equipment. It's easy for us to meet those (NCPE) demands but not all schools are as privileged as we are.

Availability of facilities was a particularly pertinent constraint in 1998 - the year of the study. An unusually wet summer exacerbated the difficulties teachers experienced trying to keep their outdoor programmes running effectively in order to meet the requirements of the NCPE ('we really, really struggled this summer term because we haven't got everything done because of the weather'). Many teachers expressed the view that the kinds (as well as the quality) of facilities they possessed inevitably constrained what they could offer:

Well, here we have to have an emphasis on games. So, even if there wasn't an emphasis on games in there (the NCPE) there would be here because of the facilities we've got ... one gymnasium ... a sports hall ... two astro-turfs ... lovely playing fields. So, the emphasis is going to be on games; there's nowhere else to put it, I think.

The data suggest that the relative abundance of games facilities, coupled with the renewed emphasis upon games in the revised NCPE of 1995 (Penney and Evans, 1997), played into the hands of the many teachers inclined towards a sporting ideology. In this regard, physical constraints, more or less exaggerated by the requirements of NCPE, had the unplanned consequence of encouraging teachers in particular directions that they were, ideologically, more or less inclined to travel and which were, to a greater or lesser degree, congruent with wider developments in youth culture:

we're struggling very much, just for example, ... with hockey at the moment because our field has deteriorated and has really made hockey quite unsafe to teach at times ... (So) we've moved away from hockey and we've started doing a lot more girls' soccer and things; *things are changing* (emphasis added).

In addition to suitable teaching space, 'equipment' was identified as a significant resource constraint:

resources for the school - financial resources as in equipment ... the facilities ... could be better.

we have difficulty with the gymnastics (NCPE) in that ... some of our (equipment) has been condemned.

Teachers' views on resources were substantiated by OFSTED's (1998) relatively lengthy reference to the significance of resources for the delivery of PE. Whilst acknowledging that '(R)esources for physical education ... are generally satisfactory', OFSTED (1998) referred to 'the increased burden' upon PE departments in some schools caused by loss of teaching space, inadequate facilities and 'outdated accommodation'.

Poor facilities were construed by various teachers as an indicator of the relatively low status of PE in some schools. A number of teachers commented that raising the status of PE might lead to the allocation of more resources by management.

### *Resources: staffing*

Staffing levels in relation to the size of classes and the ratios of pupils to teachers, for example, was another constraint on teachers that pre-dates ERA and NCPE. Once again, however, NCPE appears to have heightened difficulties in this respect over recent years, not least insofar as it has required coverage of particular activities that teachers might regard, for practical reasons, as problematic:

We have one group that's got 46 children in ... that's a constraint ... because there isn't (a big enough) area to play and they haven't played

tennis this year. Two years ago I had a group of 42 which I couldn't play hockey with because there were far too many to supervise. We have very large groups in PE.

This teacher was quick to contrast the situations PE teachers found themselves facing, in relation to the staffing ratios, with the situation in academic subjects, especially among examination groups: 'There's a lot of people (teachers) ... who teach 1 or 2 in the sixth form'. This was something she perceived as having being exacerbated by NCPE and other developments associated with the ERA. In this respect, many teachers in the study perceived class-sizes, commonly claimed to be in excess of 30, to have worsened with the advent of local management of schools (LMS) and the emergent 'market' in secondary education. Such developments were offered as significant constraints on PE teachers' ability to deliver certain aspects of NCPE.

Among those teachers keen to maintain a degree of 'activity choice', the alleged staffing 'problems' associated with LMS, NCPE and related developments, were viewed as reinforcing pressures away from 'activity choice' and the recent past when 'we had ... more of a rotation of things'. Unsurprisingly, staffing levels were also commonly viewed as a restriction on extra-curricular, as well as curricular, PE:

justifying taking ... badminton, you know, one member of staff going to an event with ... six children ... compared to taking 52 to a netball match ... a whole coach load.

As with the staffing of curricular PE, however, it was not simply numbers of available teachers that were seen as having constrained the pattern and form of delivery, it was also staff *expertise*: '(it) all depends on the staff ... and what



you have'. One particular HoD pointed out that he structured provision around available expertise. He argued,

it's no use me saying, 'We're going to do such and such a thing' and I haven't got the staff. I have to sort of tailor what I can do (provide) to the staff (expertise). I have and it's changed drastically over the last few years.

Whilst by no means all, many teachers (including HoDs) shared similar views to a female teacher who was adamant that teachers in general were happiest, as well as most successful, when teaching their specialist areas. With regard, for example, to teaching girls' soccer, she commented, 'I'm just not motivated because I don't know how to teach them properly'.

The gendered nature of much staffing provision inevitably impacted on the PE curriculum. One teacher commented that girls' PE (particularly extra-curricular PE) at her school revolved around netball because it depended upon 'a lady whose strength was netball'. The following comment from a male HoD was typical of several teachers' comments which served to illustrate Waddington *et al.*'s (1998) observation that the division of teaching in some activity areas (notably O&AA and dance) usually falls along gender lines: 'the outdoor education is taught by me only and, at the moment, the health-related fitness is taught by (my female colleague) only'.

Staffing expertise, preferences and availability were widely seen as inevitable constraints on provision of NCPE; constraints that it was very difficult to ignore. The view that it was difficult to have broad based curricula if the 'abilities of teaching staff don't allow that' was commonplace among teachers in this study; for example:

Soccer was introduced here (to girls) probably because the newest member of the department joined us two years ago and it's (her strength) ... Some of the girls are getting a lot out of it.

Teachers of academic subjects were viewed by PE teachers as either 'not keen enough or just snowed under with their own subjects'. In all schools, but particularly the supposedly more academic ones, an unanticipated consequence of the apparent growth of paperwork associated with National Curriculum has been the loss to PE of a hitherto invaluable 'reserve army of labour'. As one PE teacher commented regarding his academic colleagues:

the pressure of the amount of marking and what they have got to do in the present climate in education means that we're not getting the help in the PE department for extra-curricular which we used to do in the olden days ... The way it's going, everything is more paperwork. So these people haven't got the time, so you get less help, therefore not as many teams or clubs can be run.

Staffing had become a particularly prominent issue as the demands of NCPE had begun to impact on those teachers of academic subjects who might have been expected to assist PE teachers: 'it's not because we don't want to do it, it's just that there aren't enough staff to help'.

*You do what you do that you must ...*

Whilst some of these constraints operated singly, or were more or less pre-eminent in the thinking of teachers, more usually they were part of an amalgam of resource and other such practical constraints (e.g. 'We've not got the facilities or the time'). Thus, for a complex of reasons, PE teachers' practice ought not to be viewed as a straightforward reflection of the intended outcomes of NCPE. In this vein, Curtner-Smith (1995: 50) observed:

Individual teachers' interpretations of NCPE are influenced by some or all of the following factors: (a) their perception of the government's

interpretation of NCPE, (b) their perception of the original working group's interpretation of NCPE, (c) their own biographies, and (d) other teachers.

My own findings suggest that it is the latter two factors that are more significant in explaining PE teachers' outward responses to NCPE, not least because many teachers appeared to have limited perception of what the Government have been trying to achieve with NCPE, let alone their 'interpretation' of it. More specifically, and based upon their professed practices, it seemed that PE teachers had altered little of their customary practice - both in terms of lesson content and teaching methodology - despite the apparent demands of NCPE: 'they (PE teachers) just modify (the) programme ... the minimum to get by really'. Thus, PE teachers' primary concern appeared to be managing NCPE in relation to the constraints, as they perceived them, of their particular working situations ('as long as we offer them a game we're alright'). It appears, then, that even the advent of a *national* curriculum for PE has not brought the ostensibly much sought after consensus of thought or deed or, to put it another way, of philosophy or practice. Uppermost in PE teachers' minds seemed to be *adapting to* or, rather, simply *coping with*, the additional demands of NCPE on their day-to-day working lives:

there's an awful lot of stuff to do ... some ... we can't fulfil ... At Key Stage 4 we're definitely not ... getting in-depth study ... because of this one hour business ... (at) Key Stage 4 we definitely have a problem.

It was apparent that, on the one hand, national developments, such as NCPE, whilst not *determining* PE teachers' thoughts and behaviours, certainly *constrained* them. On the other hand, however, it was equally clear that people are frequently in a position to more or less resist such constraints and PE teachers were inclined to do so. In the present study, many PE teachers



expressed a predisposition to modify their practice to the minimum extent allowable. There seemed a tendency towards inertia among PE teachers with regard to developments that they perceived as either unnecessary and/or tangential to the day-to-day demands of doing PE, vis-à-vis their custom and practice. Many teachers appeared to view NCPE as an obstacle course, a series of hoops to jump through, more or less reluctantly:

I just don't feel I need it. *I feel it gets in the way*, that I have to do certain things to make it (the curriculum), as it were, legal (emphasis added).

We do what we have to do. We're up to date ... we get all the paperwork done but the extra-work that's involved ... we put into extra-curricular.

For some teachers, NCPE is more of a constraint than for others. In the following example, it was evident that the teacher's preferred view of PE was 'in tune' with that of his HoD and, it seemed, colleagues beyond the department:

we fulfil the (National) Curriculum because we have to ... do we really need to do orienteering? You can do map work in Geography and you can do cross-country in PE, so why do you need to do orienteering? ... things are in (NCPE) that don't really need to be there. If they want to read maps, go and read them in Geography. If they want to run they do it in PE.

This is a particularly interesting comment, in light of Waddington *et al.* (1998) observation that O&AA is seen by many PE teachers as marginal to PE and one aspect of this marginality is that it can be pushed into other subject areas.

For PE teachers, doing what they 'had to do' frequently meant doing the minimum which was seen as necessary to meet NCPE requirements (particularly with inspection by OFSTED in mind). It was apparent that a number of teachers thought that their colleagues viewed NCPE in much the

same way that they did and, just as they did, persisted as much as possible with their preferred custom and practice:

Teacher: People in the department do what they *prefer* to do.

KG: And what would you say that was?

Teacher: Football, tennis ... *Games* first (emphasis added).

It was clear from teachers' comments that whilst, on the one hand, they were very much constrained to teach NCPE, on the other hand, they were also able to modify or resist aspects of it. Some teachers' determination to satisfy the pupils' interests or 'needs' - as the teachers' perceived them - led them to work around 'the system', as in the case of this female teacher:

Teacher: I've had them doing badminton in the squash courts - don't tell anyone! ... we (had) ... a problem ... they (pupils) were just standing there, so nothing was happening, so I felt 'Right, a few small groups' ... and they were absolutely delighted.

KG: Does that contravene National Curriculum?

Teacher: The idea with National Curriculum is if you get found out!

In this respect, PE teachers' situation vis-à-vis teachers in general is particularly interesting. It would be hard to imagine that teachers of other National Curriculum subjects would find it as easy to 'cherry-pick', or put to one side, aspects of the curriculum that, for one reason or another, they are either disinclined or feel unable to carry out. When placed alongside other revelations, such as teachers' emphasis upon 'enjoyment', such tendencies appeared as indices of the particular, not to say peculiar, situation of PE teachers: as if they are not fully 'locked-in' to the educational 'debate'. In this regard, it is worth reminding ourselves that, notwithstanding their tendency to adapt or resist its requirements, teachers are legally required to respond to the demands of NCPE (to a greater or lesser degree). By comparison, they do

not *have* to respond to the philosophical writings of academics or for that matter the proselytising of teacher trainers.

It was clear from their comments that teachers' perceptions regarding resource constraints were closely associated with, and in most teachers' minds could not be separated from, the limitations of the prescriptive nature of NCPE. Two particular aspects of NCPE provide useful examples of the simultaneous operation of opportunities and constraints in figurations: 'performance, planning and evaluation' (PP&E) and the activity areas of dance and O&AA. It is to these that I will now turn.

### Planning, Performance and Evaluation

PE teachers' responses to a central aspect of NCPE (Theodoulides and Armour, 1998) - namely, requirements in NCPE for pupils to 'plan' and 'evaluate' as well as 'perform' activities - deserve to be looked at in greater detail because they demonstrate two things of note: firstly, how teachers have been constrained to change their practice by NCPE but, secondly, the degree to which teachers have been inclined and able to resist these changes. There were several striking features of teachers' responses to questions about the PP&E aspects of NCPE which are worth dealing with separately. These are:

- (i) the confusion evident in teachers' apprehension of PP&E;
- (ii) the extent to which teachers considered that planning and evaluation were already taking place and were implicit in much of what they did on a day-to-day basis;
- (iii) the extent to which teachers saw some activity areas as being more conducive to or, to put it another way, as the 'natural' home for planning and evaluation;
- (iv) the manner in which, rather unsurprisingly, teachers remained primarily concerned with performance as the 'essence' of PE.



Individually, and taken together, it is argued, these common features appear indicative of the strength of PE teachers' long-standing, common-sense ideologies about PE.

Whilst a number of teachers were evidently confused by what PP&E actually required of them ('I think it's asking me to have more of an input ... let them play their own game'), the vast majority gave the impression that they considered they had as much a grasp of its requirements as was necessary and claimed that it was an affirmation of what already happened, implicitly, in their day-to-day practice:

When this particular area of the National Curriculum came to the fore, I think there was a lot of confusion about it, and then people sort of took a step back and said, 'Well, that's what we do anyway!' And it's very much the case that you do ask people (pupils) in every single lesson to perform and you do ask them to plan and you do ask them to evaluate ... Until you actually take a step back you don't realise how much you do that anyway.

planning and (evaluating) I think they do whether they realise it or not. I think they have a little think about how they've done things.

The levels of uncertainty, not to say confusion, evident in teachers' responses to questions regarding PP&E suggested that they had not spent much time (beyond that which was absolutely necessary) considering the rationale behind PP&E in NCPE. Their comments also gave the impression that teachers' conceptualisation of planning and evaluation, in particular, was largely the outcome of (a desire to reconcile) an *ex post facto* rationalization which served to reconcile what was required of them with what they had hitherto been doing in practice. Hence, the frequency of claims to already be delivering PP&E even where their understanding of PP&E was not very clear:

I think I've always taught where a kid wants to improve their own performance and view it ... so evaluating things and certainly in the gymnastics and dance - we've always planned the sequence to dance, we did the basic moves and they sort of plan it; put it in themselves and work it out.

Hence, also, the apparent confusion, not to say contradiction, in some claims:

I think the planning's always been there but it's not been in the games ... but we put it into the skills of football and rugby and basketball as well now ... we were certainly doing it in the gymnastics and dance, but it wasn't picked up that we weren't doing it in the games.

On the games side I think the planning has always been there ... (although we've) ... had to integrate it more into the games.

#### *PP&E as an aid to the teacher*

It appeared from teachers' responses that both planning and evaluating (as PE teachers conceived them) were frequently incorporated as an aspect of the class management style of teachers, rather than being introduced in their own right subsequent to the implementation of NCPE. Thus, requirements for planning often took the form of supplementary questions introduced to provide a focal point for small group practices in lessons; for example:

You might give them a particular practice to do, and it might be very regimental, but then it's down to them to expand on that practice in relation to their abilities ... So the planning is going on constantly and you can even specifically ask them to plan something: you can leave them with questions - 'From there to there, what's the best way of doing it?' ... through questions and practice sessions you can get them to plan.

By the same token, evaluation was often presented as part and parcel of a 'normal' lesson:

and the evaluation - kids are extremely good at evaluation - quite harsh as well. And so they evaluate all the time; they are probably more willing to evaluate other people's performances than their own. So our job is to bring them around to that ... so they get a whole picture of evaluation.

I would say that within the lessons, yes, the children sort of (are) part(ly) assessors. We don't plan the lessons, but in the lessons we might plan how to perform a sequence ... in gymnastics, or plan a scoring system for a small-sided netball game or something. And then evaluating - we've done quite a lot of that self-assessment ... but we do it on an everyday basis and sort of talk to them about 'How could that be better?', 'What can we do to improve it?'.

Of those who commented on PP&E, many felt that in their day-to-day practice they were inclined to require pupils to 'evaluate more than plan' in their lessons:

they (the pupils) actually made the mistakes, learned from their mistakes, and then came back and told us what they (had) done and why they had done it ... and they made up their own games to show they actually understood what we had been talking about.

It was noteworthy, then, that similar to teachers' views regarding 'enjoyment', PP&E was often viewed instrumentally, in terms of its utility in achieving other, more practical objectives, for the teacher:

In the planning as well, I find in gymnastics if you try and get around every single person you've wasted a whole lesson. And if you see somebody at the beginning by the time you get to the last person the people in the beginning that you've seen are bored. And so I actually involve the pupils themselves in looking at other people's sequences and helping them to evaluate.

(they take) on the role of the P.E. teacher.



Well, I personally find it a great help because I can't get round and see everybody all the time ... I find that a great help, the evaluation, certainly.

It is worthy of note, however, that several teachers observed that the requirements for PP&E had, indeed, made them 'more aware of ... planning and evaluation'. The over-riding impression, nevertheless, was that teachers' preferred practice (whether influenced by constraint or personal preference) had a telling impact upon their conceptualisation of the nature and positioning of PP&E:

I do do it (PP&E) an awful lot in things like gym and dance ... I think I always say, 'Now, what do you think?' and get them to talk about what they thought about and what could have been improved and what was really good and what they liked and things like that. I find that really easy in gym and dance. I don't find it that easy planning and (evaluating) ... in games. I think I fall down on the evaluation side because of a lack of time I think. We get so engrossed in what we're doing (and) extend the game a little bit longer.

#### *Dance and gym as the 'natural' home of PP&E*

From their comments, it was apparent that teachers viewed some activity areas as more conducive to meeting the NCPE requirements for PP&E:

planning and evaluation has become something which you associate with certain subjects (activities) ... So, you're thinking, 'Well, that will be a good area to do planning and evaluation, that won't be' ... There are more opportunities in certain subjects (activities) that we do here, that lend itself to that (PPE). The other activities can have an evaluation aspect to them but the performance (has) a far heavier weight to (it) ... The natural one to use is things like gymnastics, recently badminton, dance, orienteering - that's a good one!

The claim that certain activity areas - most notably dance and gymnastics - were 'natural' homes to PP&E frequently appeared to reveal teachers'

preferences and perceived constraints, far more than any conceptual reflection as such. Many teachers, but particularly males, appeared to offer practical constraints - to the effect that 'it's much more *difficult* to involve (pupils) in those activities, where(as) in the dance and gymnastics it's easier' (emphasis in the original) - for what frequently seemed personal preference; that is, a preference for teaching particular activities.

For some, especially female teachers of dance, NCPE provided affirmation of an approach they had adopted with dance for a number of years:

I was quite surprised when the first National Curriculum statements came through and I thought, 'Yes! I want to do that; that's what I've been doing for years' ... It was the actual planning and evaluating ... through the dance background ... that was what I was doing and I was using it in every other area as well, especially in gymnastics - the planning, the evaluating. Evaluating each other was a very important part of my lessons and I thought, 'I'm on the tracks they want!'.

### *Performance as the essence*

It was also apparent that many PE teachers (especially males, whether established or not) were quite equivocal about PP&E and were likely to view planning and evaluating as getting in the way of the 'essence' of PE, namely, performance:

I guess it (evaluation) is (important). I guess that they (the pupils) should evaluate what they do and think about what they do ... I guess I should, really, but to me what's important ... is they come away and they have a go and achieve something and like what they've done *and not necessarily think about it too much*' (emphasis added).

from departmental meetings we have said that that's an important part of it (PE), that we've got to start including it more and more, really ... *As long as it doesn't actually cut into the actual performance time* ... As long as we weren't spending too long on that side of things ... if it's part of

the lesson and you are just sort of stopping them very quickly and saying, 'Look at that. How can we improve on it ... let's try it', rather than sitting down and discussing (emphasis added).

It was equally apparent that some were more committed to the rhetoric of PP&E than others:

Planning and evaluation as part of the curriculum? Yes, I do, I would say, in the last few years. When I first started, I did allow the children to plan quite a lot and I have always encouraged them to evaluate because I think evaluating (is important) ... I think you learn a lot by watching other people and how they perform ... watch and observe ... I would think evaluation is a big part of my lessons, every lesson virtually.

I do feel that there's too much of this emphasis on planning and evaluation.

Once again, there was a gender dimension to the split. More women were likely to be supportive of PP&E in their 'philosophies' and, ostensibly, in their practice. Older teachers, particularly older *male* teachers, were perceived by others as evidently more reluctant and less likely to change their practice in general, but especially with regard to PP&E. Indeed, the more established teachers often volunteered comments to this effect themselves.

In this regard, a number of the same teachers were keen to stress that they were committed to planning and evaluation ideologically. Once again, they were more likely to be women than men, in part, perhaps, because women teachers were more likely to have taught dance and 'educational' gymnastics in which planning and evaluation have tended to find greater favour over the years.



OFSTED's tendency to identify PP&E as an area of weakness, in their verbal and written reports to PE departments, was frequently commented upon by teachers and was a persistent feature of OFSTED reports, as illustrated in OFSTED's national report:

The most persistent weakness over the four years is the inability of a large proportion of the pupils to plan for and evaluate their own work and that of others in order to improve their attainment. Much of the weakness in pupils' understanding of the essential process skills of planning and evaluating in relation to performance can be attributed to the failure of teachers to give sufficient emphasis to this central requirement of the National Curriculum in PE. Some teachers, however, do this very well.

Crutchley and Robinson's (1996) small scale study of *Teachers' Perceptions of 'Planning', 'Performing' and 'Evaluating' Within National Curriculum Physical Education* reinforced the impression that teachers have a tendency to lean towards performance. They commented that,

(teachers) considered PP&E to be important elements of NCPE ... a majority considered performing to be the most important element ... (and) had little difficulty incorporating the notion of performance (p. 46).

The findings of Crutchley and Robinson were, then, broadly in line with those of the present study, to the extent that both suggest that the 'playing' aspect of PE is more influential - either for ideological or pragmatic reasons - than the educational dimension. Of note, here, is that the revised NCPE of 1995 has, in response to *Sport: Raising the Game* and the government-led clamour for renewed emphasis upon playing sport, served to emphasise the performance aspect of PP&E.

Teachers' comments upon PP&E were particularly interesting inasmuch as they demonstrated how teachers have been *constrained* to change their practice by NCPE, as a whole, and by aspects of it, in particular, such as PP&E. However, teachers have been able to *resist*, to a greater or lesser degree, these changes. Another interesting example of the juxtaposition of constraint and resistance was to be found in teachers' responses to two particular activity areas of NCPE, namely, dance and outdoor and adventurous activities.

### Dance and O&AA

Teachers' responses to questions about the NCPE were particularly interesting with regard to the activity areas of dance and O&AA. This was so because it was with regard to these activities that teachers' ability to avoid or adapt the apparently prescriptive aspects of NCPE, as well as their tendency to dress ideology up as constraint, became readily apparent. In many cases teachers, by their own admission, were doing one or the other of dance and O&AA as the lesser of two evils, so to speak, in order to meet NCPE requirements:

in reality we pay 'lip-service' to particular aspects of the document, such as O&AA.

KG: Why do you do dance?

Teacher: To cover the National Curriculum; because we haven't got a swimming pool and we haven't got a long enough lesson or the opportunity to do outdoor education ... I'm teaching it (dance) now although it wasn't something I wanted to even specialise in. Anyway, it's something I'm teaching now because I have to and basically that's down to the other member of the department (not being prepared to teach) dance ... Not one of the teachers here (is) a dance specialist yet we have to do it because National Curriculum says we have to do it.



## Dance

Frequently, especially in male-led departments, other activities were incorporated into the boys curriculum seemingly in order to avoid male teachers having to teach dance to boys:

In the first couple of years we did not comply because we were missing an area ... so I went to the Head and the Chairman (of governors) and said, 'Look, I've been in (PE) since 1977 and no parents have ever asked me why boys aren't doing dance'. The girls met the criteria, the boys didn't. And what we've done now is ... we slot in orienteering (for boys).

we've tended to do girls' dance, basically, because the male PE staff are not happy about teaching it and we don't teach mixed-PE - we keep it to single-sex - and the boys do gymnastics and they tend to mix it with formal (Olympic-style) gymnastics and educational (gymnastics).

I don't do dance. I have done over the years but I don't like it. I am crap at it anyway. I just don't have the enthusiasm.

The upshot appears to have been a reinforcement of the tendency towards traditional gender-stereotyping of dance as a *de facto* activity area for girls and O&AA as a *de facto* activity area for boys ('Well, we don't do it (O&AA) on the girls side. The boys do it, but they don't do dance'). There were, however, several notable exceptions to this pattern. One male HoD and a male teacher at a different school pointed out that, in their departments, dance was done by both boys and girls at Key Stage 3 and it was taught by both male and female teachers. However, even here gender stereotypes appeared to lie just below the surface for, at Key Stage 4, O&AA (or another activity) replaced dance for the boys and it was apparent that some male teachers were refusing to teach dance. This was a common occurrence among male teachers in the study. Indeed, it seemed that men were more likely to teach dance where the



dance was more 'modern' ('I'm happy, I learnt to rock and roll myself and I now teach rock and roll (in) historical dance to Year 8'):

I don't mind it, actually I enjoy it ... I think they (children) quite enjoy it and especially if you stick to things like doing sporting actions or ... do 'Thriller'-type things.

In these handful of cases, where male teachers were actually involved in teaching dance, their greater willingness appeared closely related to the alleged degree of comfortableness both they, and their male pupils, felt with 'modern' dance. Nonetheless, these teachers represented something of an exception. More usually, male PE teachers expressed stereotypical views of males vis-à-vis dance:

we have a ... lady/woman dance specialist, so she dances with the girls, but the boys don't dance ... the male staff are longer in the tooth than me ... and therefore there's real resistance there to doing dance ... It's a question of 'Do you want to shoot me and take all my teeth out rather than take dance?' Really! ... if you think of public school games, I think that that's very much the diet, with gymnastics sort of thrown in and some indoor court games as well - badminton, basketball - that's the sort of staple diet they (the male PE teachers at the school) would expect.

the only thing (in NCPE) I would disagree with (is) boys dance, because we do gymnastics so there's no need to do dance really - sequences to music - there's no necessity for that to be in the National Curriculum. But we don't actually do dance, we do ... orienteering to fulfil the curriculum ... for boys; the girls do dance ... the girls fulfil the (National) Curriculum by doing the dance ... we fulfil it by doing orienteering.

I don't want to come down harsh on dancers - say it's rubbish outright - because I have done my homework, I have been on the courses and I've taught (it) in the past; this is the only year that I haven't taught it - because other members of the department are happy to do that. I have

to say I enjoy teaching it and getting a response out of the pupils ... it's very rewarding ... but I think all of that (which is learnt through dance) is met through gym as well ... and ... from a personal point of view ... it does cause problems (in terms of discipline, as well as) areas to teach in ... I wouldn't give anyone the nightmare of teaching anyone dance at Year 9. Some schools do it. Some schools do it to Year 11 ... because they have the right people in the department ... we're very games-oriented.

It was interesting to note this teacher pointing up the constraining nature of NCPE - 'I can't consider not doing (dance) because I wouldn't meet National Curriculum (requirements) ... The only reason (dance) is on the curriculum is because otherwise we wouldn't (satisfy NCPE requirements)' - whilst adding a caveat implicitly suggesting that it was an obstacle to be circumvented if reasonably possible ('It just makes it a little bit difficult that's all'). Unsurprisingly, this teacher added that he would choose to do O&AA in preference to dance. Again, the views of this HoD illustrated the manner in which the 'official' rhetoric that teachers - particularly those in middle-management positions - espoused co-existed alongside, whilst being at odds with, their preferred practices. Having previously identified the requirements for 'breadth and balance', incorporating an 'aesthetic' element, as a strength of NCPE, this HoD proceeded to illustrate ways in which he sought to circumnavigate the requirements for dance: '(it) doesn't always ... work with Year 9 on the dance; so, we've put the boys back to double gymnastics rather than dance'. As with many teachers (and especially males), his 'true colours', in the form of his emotional attachment to sport and games, became increasingly apparent:

I personally am a games man. And I would have 90-100 per cent games. But the National Curriculum says that we should have a balance across and I think that - you *are* provoking me! ... and I do fall into party line here, we've agreed that, yes, they should have gymnastics for all-round development, and we have a member of staff



who is strong at dance ... and because she's strong then we have a fair amount of dance as well. We feel that when we're inspected we can say, 'That's what we're doing and we feel good about it' (emphasis in the original).

Asked if he actually taught dance, he replied: 'Oh no! I personally believe we should have games, games, games'. Once again, in this regard, his views appeared typical of a number of established male PE teachers, not least in terms of the manner in which pragmatism was frequently 'dressed-up' as principle:

I see the need for gymnastics and body development ... and I would have to put my hand up and say that my training never, ever gave me any dance (training) ... so I don't feel confident to run dance sessions ... And it's been convenient also for my partner here to take the dance and I've swapped with hockey or whatever.

I don't see it as a strength, personally, and I don't particularly enjoy it. And I think it's like everything else ... you teach better ... with the subjects and the sports that you enjoy.

However, it was not just men who perceived such responses as 'natural'; one woman teacher was quite adamant that this made sense:

KG: The boys do orienteering but the girls don't. Why not?

Teacher: Because they prefer to do ... dance - the creative side.

Indeed, some female teachers were not happy with including dance, even when it had been one of their particular performance specialisms:

We used to do dance here and, then, perhaps for the wrong reasons really - the type of children we have - we stopped doing it for a while. But we re-introduced it again (to fulfil NCPE) to girls and it's gone really well and we really enjoy it ... but not to the boys as yet.



Interestingly, it was evident that a perception of PE (as largely to do with sport and little to do with activities incorporating so-called aesthetic elements) was evidently not confined to males. Even though this HoD described herself as a dancer at college, when asked if she would include dance on her ideal curriculum regardless of NCPE, she replied:

I don't think I would, no ... I'd have it linked with Drama ... dance and drama ... (the) more creative side of things ... I'd probably have games and gymnastics and possibly ... or health-related fitness in Key Stage 3.

Many HoDs and teachers expressed the view that they thought it better for teachers to teach to their 'specialisms' wherever possible. The preference for teaching their specialist practical areas, coupled with the fact that teachers appeared more willing to teach outside their specialisms when that involved teaching games or more 'traditional' PE activities than dance, or even O&AA, suggested that many of the 'problems' with staffing dance in particular had as much to do with teachers' personal preferences as any logistical problems surrounding the provision of dance. This appeared to be particularly the case as far as male teachers were concerned; for it was noticeable that female teachers lacking experience in dance appeared more prepared to teach dance than males who perceived themselves as lacking the necessary expertise:

I never did gym and never did dance at school because I was a team player through and through. And now, when I come to do it (dance), it is one of the most enjoyable things I do. I really like doing it!

### *O&AA*

Not surprisingly, perhaps, O&AA is alleged to be a particularly problematic activity area in terms of facilities and staffing expertise for many PE departments. However, it often appeared that such constraints provided a convenient and more acceptable justification for reluctance towards O&AA based on gender among other ideological considerations.

Time was also claimed to be a major constraint:

In this school I think it is very difficult to do outdoor education properly. Because to do it properly you've got to go away, you've got to do weekends away and things like that and the constraints in this school don't allow that and ... often we're bashing our heads against a brick wall to get things like that done ... 'As long as you do things in your own time, dear, that's fine'!

It was noteworthy that it was often when talking about dance and O&AA that teachers frustration, even annoyance, with the prescriptive nature of NCPE were most apparent:

very few schools will cover outdoor education and the way (a)round it is to do it on a one week basis ... a lot of schools are working around it. Why do kids have to work around something? (If) it's obviously that much of a problem, it's not the schools' fault that they can't provide for a half-unit within that area.

Those departments that cover O&AA as an activity area perceived themselves, for the most part, as constrained to deliver it as a 'block' in extra-curricular time (e.g. weekends or weeks away from school) ('we do outdoor and adventurous activities but only during an activities week and a couple of weekends in the summer ... (for) Years 7, 8 and 9') or, 'in combination with another block such as HRE', or, as in the case of one school (with an ex-HoD with a strong commitment to climbing), O&AA (in the form of climbing) as an *option* teamed with trampolining, for example, because they have a climbing wall in the gym. In addition, O&AA frequently requires a financial contribution from parent(s). Unsurprisingly, a number of teachers pointed to the impracticality of doing O&AA:

I find the outdoor and adventurous (activities) a difficult one, especially in our economic area - the social area that this school is in ...



it is very difficult to ask children to pay for educational activities like that.

Consequently, which aspect of O&AA is delivered is ostensibly dependent upon teachers' perceptions of what can, in practice, be delivered at all. However, bearing in mind that participation in O&AA is heavily gendered (Waddington *et al.*, 1998), it is worth re-iterating the point that whilst O&AA does present real practical difficulties, these frequently appeared to be seized upon by teachers as a convenient excuse for not doing it. Whereas men seem to *want* to overcome the practical difficulties, women do not. O&AA, like dance, is a significantly gendered aspect of PE practice.

In this vein, what is claimed as 'deliverable' in O&AA terms more often than not, is orienteering:

because you have to cover outdoor and adventurous activities you would choose to do orienteering because it's easy to do. Now, how well that's done (is another matter)! Because you're restricted as to where you can go and what you can do ... perhaps time (would) be better spent doing something else.

Once again, however, it was evident that O&AA, like dance, is not something that many PE teachers would choose to do in PE if they were not required to do so by NCPE: 'there's no way we would do that if we didn't have to do it!'. An illustration of the pressure towards pragmatism was illustrated by one teacher's observation that her department had chosen to do O&AA in order to 'kill three birds with one stone', by providing an activity area for NCPE that could at the same time be utilised for GCSE examination work as well as a Duke of Edinburgh award. The pragmatic nature of the choice was evident in her following comment:



we don't do swimming ... we do mountain and moorland walking. The reason we do that is because it's an easy one to get good marks in (for GCSE) - (that's) the bottom line.

Having explored NCPE as a particularly significant national constraint impacting upon PE teachers' at the local level, I want now to explore an aspect of the national dimension of PE teachers' figurations intimately related to NCPE and, thus, a significant constraint on their views of their subject as well as their practice; namely, OFSTED.

## OFSTED

It became increasingly clear from PE teachers' comments that they viewed OFSTED as a particularly salient constraint on their practice, if not so much on their 'philosophies'. This was the case, not least insofar as OFSTED represented one more link in the chain of 'accountability': 'it's all these league tables isn't it, and reporting back to parents; that has sort of taken over ... the powers that be!'.

Comments from teachers created the impression that high on the agendas of visiting OFSTED inspectors had been what OFSTED (1998) refer to as 'standards of achievement', the relative success of examinable PE and the delivery of the NCPE - particularly the 'planning' and 'evaluation' elements and the activity area of games. Responses of teachers, to this effect, were borne out by the particular interest, not to say preoccupation, of OFSTED (as indicated by the comments both in their summary report (OFSTED, 1998) and in the individual schools' reports) with 'standards of achievement', 'skill development', 'major games', 'representative honours' and examinations in PE.

References by OFSTED to extra-curricular PE in these reports, however brief, gave the impression that OFSTED inspectors also held a taken-for-granted view of extra-curricular PE and 'other sport-related activity' as intimately related, if not one and the same thing. The impression one forms of OFSTED's particular concern for sports performance, is reinforced by numerous comments in their reports to schools emphasising the 'considerable success ... achieved by individuals and teams' within extra-curricular PE. This impression is reinforced in a comment - regarding developments in curricular PE - in OFSTED's (1998) summary report in which they comment, with apparent approval, that the 'move away from the "recreational activities" and "activity choice" approach is also raising achievement levels in Key Stage 4'. Concerns regarding the impact on 'standards' of a broadening of the curriculum are apparent in the OFSTED (1998) report where reference is made to instances of '(S)hallow coverage and superficiality' that 'result from the introduction of too many activities in Key Stage 3 in short bursts of time', as well as an implicit call for 'longer blocks of time' which allow a 'greater depth of knowledge, better understanding and higher skill to be achieved'. OFSTED's apparent preference for traditional team games is also evident where the report offers the following extract (from a 1995 report subtitled *A survey of good practice*) as evidence of good practice:

One good department had given much thought to the planning of a balanced curriculum, and to the games activity area in Key Stage 3 ... They sensibly decided to devote games lessons in Key Stage 3 to the teaching of traditional team games, thereby avoiding the dangers of introducing too many new games before skills in traditional team games had been established (OFSTED, 1998).

In this regard it is interesting to note the potential for confusion, if not contradiction, in the pronouncements of OFSTED with regard to their



ostensible concern for sporting standards when set alongside their additional pre-occupation with 'breadth and balance':

The revision of the National Curriculum in PE was undertaken against a background of pressure towards traditional games in schools; this adversely affected the internal logic of the original curriculum which balanced the six areas of activity. The outcome was an over-narrow curriculum experience, especially for boys. Typically for pupils in Key Stage 3, games now occupy between 50 and 70 per cent of the available time. The other three chosen areas of activity required by the National Curriculum are squeezed into the remainder, leaving too little time to develop them fully (OFSTED, 1998).

Many teachers gave the impression of sharing this latter view:

having to narrow down in Key Stage 4 ... I would like to give them a broader base at Key Stage 4. I mean, they've covered the basics in Key Stage 3 and I think we do focus, we do concentrate, we do work intensively within Year 10 and 11 ... they get enough football anyway. I do feel that some miss out and that it's constraining that the boys can't do badminton ... I would like to give them the opportunity to pick up things they had not done previously or further activities that they've done previously (and) get to a better level that they could perform outside and after school.

it's very narrowing in Key Stage 4, because ... you only have to do two activities, one of which is a game.

OFSTED's tendency to identify PP&E as an area of weakness in their verbal and written reports to PE departments was frequently commented upon by teachers and was a persistent feature of OFSTED's individual school reports, as illustrated in their national report:

The most persistent weakness over the four years is the inability of a large proportion of the pupils to plan for and evaluate their own work and that of others in order to improve their attainment. Much of the weakness in pupils' understanding of the essential process skills of



planning and evaluating in relation to performance can be attributed to the failure of teachers to give sufficient emphasis to this central requirement of the National Curriculum in PE. Some teachers, however, do this very well (OFSTED, 1998).

A number of teachers appeared acutely aware that OFSTED were exerting pressure upon them to place greater emphasis upon aspects of NCPE that they had been inclined to ignore or play down:

we've just had an OFSTED inspection and, basically, I had one line of criticism ... basically, it was to say that I wasn't giving the kids enough opportunities to plan and evaluate what they were doing.

there is a real push ... for the aesthetics ... we were OFSTED'd not long ago and we had to justify our time given to the games element ... The games is weighted a little bit heavier but we justified that inasmuch as we've got extra time given to PE, unlike other schools.

It was particularly interesting to hear one very well-established male HoD comment that the only lessons the OFSTED inspector had seen were the 'outside' ones and because he had not been to a gym lesson the inspector had not witnessed the children engaged in planning: 'And he accepted that but he said, "Well, I had to put it down"'. This comment was interesting at several levels but perhaps most significantly insofar as the HoD appeared to have formed the impression that the OFSTED inspector, himself, felt constrained to comment on PPE.

Comments from teachers suggested that OFSTED inspectors had been keen to encourage teachers to maintain and extend examinable PE. When placed alongside inspectors' informal comments to teachers themselves, the following comments from individual OFSTED reports underlined OFSTED's support for the academicization process in PE:

Results in A-level examinations were very encouraging.

Recruitment levels for the GCSE course are good.

It is unfortunate that there is no opportunity for pupils to take PE as an examination subject.

Hence, with regard to examinable PE, pressure from the Government's inspection arm appeared to be working in the same direction - towards academicization of PE - that many teachers in the study were moving. And this was a noticeable feature of the national dimensions of PE teachers' figurations, inasmuch as they could be seen to provide both a constraining and enabling context for teachers preferred 'philosophies' and practices. In the cases of examinable PE and traditional team games, OFSTED can be seen to have acted as the kind of constraint that many teachers perceived as positive. At the same time, however, OFSTED's emphases upon dance and O&AA, as well as PP&E, were seen by many teachers as constraints to be adapted to only as and when necessary or even to be resisted, insofar as it was possible to do so. A similar observation can be made regarding another significant aspect of PE teachers' figurations at the national level, namely, the impact of national groups beyond education *per se*.

**Government, the Department for National Heritage, the Sports Council and the sport and health lobbies**

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed growing political and public interest in school sport and the role of PE therein. Roberts (1995, 1996a, 1996b) suggested that the increased interest in the relationship between school sport and PE in the 1990s needed to be understood in terms of an interaction of Prime Ministerial and government interest, 'with the anxieties of some sports governing bodies about whether education is maintaining a sufficient flow of participants' (1996a: 48). It has become increasingly evident that a concern for the alleged



neglect in schools of 'Britain's traditional team games including sports where national success has a purchase in popular culture' (Roberts, 1996a: 49) has emerged among key players in the educational and sporting communities. Significant individuals (e.g. politicians and sporting idols) and groups (e.g. governing bodies) have expressed displeasure with what they allege has been a significant decline in the numbers of young people taking up their sports, let alone remaining loyal to them and progressing to elite levels.

Thus, a broad consensus among a configuration of influential interest groups in the sports policy-community, regarding the alleged 'ill-health' of sport in schools, provided a context in which a 'sporting' Prime Minister was able to instigate and oversee the development and publication of a major policy statement in 1995 - *Sport: Raising the Game*. This more overt interest in school sport at governmental level, and among the sports lobby, interacted with and infused the residual strength of the 'games' ideology among the PE subject-community. Indeed, it was, as Roberts notes (1995, 1996a), the 'presumed decline' in school sport that the revised NCPE and the government's policy statement *Sport: Raising the Game* sought to address on the basis of a preferred view of PE.

Thus, the two major Governmental initiatives of 1995 - the revised NCPE and the government's policy statement *Sport: Raising the Game* - sought to 'extol the virtues, and seek to retrieve a presumed decline in competitive team sports' (Roberts, 1996a: 50) despite substantial evidence demonstrating that (i) within the overwhelming majority of schools competitive sports, and team games in particular, had maintained a dominant place on the PE curriculum (Roberts, 1996a, 1996b; Penney and Evans, 1997, 1998) and (ii) among adults there had been:



(a) decline in partner and team sports ... matched by increased participation in fitness-oriented, non-competitive, individual, flexible lifestyle activities such as walking, swimming, cycling, keep fit/aerobics and weight training (English Sports Council, 1997: 7).

The conjuncture of these two developments has been closely associated with perceptions among teachers that Government were keen to revitalise sport and games in PE. In this regard, *Raising the Game* worked in the same direction and emphasised the revised NCPE re-orientation towards competitive sport, and particularly team games. The Conservative Government of the 1990s sought not only to 're-establish' the centrality of sport in schools, but also to prioritise certain kinds of physical activities whilst marginalising others (Penney and Evans, 1997, 1998). It is worthy of note that recent pronouncements (Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999) confirm suspicions (Houlihan, 1999a, 1999b) that the policy of the current Prime Minister and Labour Government amount to a continuation of the previous administration's inclination to constrain the PE subject-community, in general, and PE teachers, in particular, towards a sporting emphasis within PE; notwithstanding the proposed loosening of NCPE requirements during the latter years of secondary schooling. Carvel (1999: 9) reports that the current Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has 'promised £60 million of lottery funding to revive competitive sports and encourage a will to win in the next generation of sportsmen and women'. Reminiscent of his predecessor's perspective on the relationship between PE and sport, Blair attributes the 'poor international showing in traditional team sports such as cricket and football' to 'a cultural shift in the 1980s when inter-school matches went into decline as teachers became over-burdened by expanding academic and bureaucratic duties' (Carvel, 1999: 9). Prime Minister Blair was quoted as saying, 'we have the potential to do better ... we are under-performers in international sport' (Blair; cited in Carvel, 1999: 9).

According to Carvel, Blair recommends:

the setting up of a team of 600 school co-ordinators to organise matches outside school hours ... (who) will either support teachers in schools where staff are willing to get involved, or provide alternative opportunities for competitive fixtures (Carvel, 1999: 9).

At the same time, the Minister for Sport (Kate Hoey) appears keen to play up the role of PE teachers in promoting what amounts to the Government's preference for the prioritising of a sporting ideology in PE. Hoey is said to 'envisage a more active role for qualified PE teachers' (Davies, 1999: 40) in the Government's attempt to "revise and re-invigorate" competitive sport in schools. Hoey (herself an ex-PE teacher) is quoted as saying that the role of the PE teacher needs emphasising to ensure that "there is more sport in schools, more competition, and more team sports" (Davies, 1999: 40).

It is particularly interesting to juxtapose these developments and pronouncements with the proposed relaxation of the requirement for older pupils (aged 14-16 years) to do the activity area of games. This proposal has been mooted in the current revision of NCPE and is apparently in accordance with Chris Smith's (Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCM&S)) wishes to cater for diverging activity interests among young people; notwithstanding his department's support for the Prime Minister's initiative which Carvel (1999: 9) reports as 'a strong commitment' from the DCM&S 'to restoring the competitive sporting ethic'. The ideological 'spin' in the Department's pronouncement was evident in the spokesperson's comment to the effect that, 'The competitive edge of a school match is what kids really enjoy' (Carvel, 1999: 9).



Notwithstanding such overt governmental involvement, other developments were taking place in the broader policy-communities of sport and PE that illustrated more indirect and less explicit intervention in PE by external agencies but which, nevertheless, provided contextual constraints upon PE teachers towards viewing *PE as a sport*.

### *The DNH, the Youth Sport Trust and the National Junior Sports Programme*

In March, 1995 - the same year that the revised NCPE came on stream and *Sport: Raising the Game* was published - the Sports Council launched the National Junior Sport Programme (NJSP) with the aid of £7.7 million of Lottery Sports Fund money. The avowed intention was to have 'a major impact on the nation's sporting chances' by providing children 'with a pathway from the school playground into the international sporting arena' (DNH, 1996: Foreword). In the preamble to its 1996 brochure, the Youth Sport Trust (YST), established to deliver the NJSP, described its 'mission' as being 'to develop and implement quality sports programmes for all young people aged 4 to 18 years in *schools* and the community' (emphasis added). Significantly for the pro-sport ideology, the YST identified the PE profession as one of a range of partnership organisations including the National Coaching Foundation (NCF), sports governing bodies, the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) and local authorities (LAs) in the development of the NJSP. This, of course, implies the introduction of the NJSP into schools.

The extent of the initial penetration of the YST into PE is illustrated by the encouragement it offered for 'suitably qualified' maintained secondary schools in England to apply for designation as specialist sports colleges, which the YST has a contract with the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to develop. The specialist sports colleges, according to both the YST brochure and a DfEE publication, are designed 'to *raise the*



*standard of physical education and sport in schools'* (YST, 1996, 3; emphasis added) as well as 'strengthen the links between schools sports bodies and the local community' (DfEE, 1996: 2-3).

Both the YST and sports governing bodies appear to be attempting to supplement the PE curriculum with more activity largely, if not entirely, in the form of sport. A number of sports governing bodies are making significant attempts to provide programmes for school PE. Indeed, as Thorpe (1996: 153) observes, in the UK the 'wealthier sports have extensive networks, but still seek partnerships which extend their influence'. In this manner, some governing bodies, such as the Football Association, have reacted to recommendations in the NCPE for partnership by developing a 'Games Assistant Service', ostensibly to assist school PE programmes and NCPE resource packs. Thorpe (1996) points out that an unforeseen (not to say, unintended) consequence of such a development might be the 'de-skilling' of PE teachers, at best, and their (at least partial) replacement, at worst. The potential for such outcomes are underlined in Thorpe's (1996: 146) observation that:

as the structured support for teachers from PE has constricted, with the reduction of PE advisers and advisory teachers, so the support for 'sport' has expanded with the increase of sports development officers.

In this regard, it is interesting to note Alexander *et al.*'s (1996: 29) comment that the development of the curriculum packages for primary-aged sport in schools in Australia have become, in effect, a *de facto* PE programme. Indeed, in this vein, it is worthy of note that the support material provided, by the YST, for primary school teachers in England has come to be seen by primary school teachers themselves as a *de facto* 'in-service' training (Kirk, 1999).

The emergence of external pressure groups for 'youth sport', when placed alongside the re-prioritisation towards 'traditional' PE represented by the revised NCPE and the policy statement *Sport: Raising the Game*, implicitly beg questions about the future role of the quango charged with promoting sport in the UK - the Sports Council.

### *The reorganisation of the Sports Council*

Since its inception as a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (quango) in 1972, the Sports Council has been charged with responsibility for fostering the practice of sport and recreation among the general public (Elvin, 1990). At the same time, however, the Council has traditionally limited its involvement with school children, ostensibly acknowledging that the responsibility for children and young people's PE lay with the PE profession (Houlihan, 1991). Nevertheless, this has not prevented the Sports Council's responsibility for 'sports development' offering them a justification for becoming more pro-active over the years. Indeed, the Sports Council has not been alone; a number of organisations have claimed legitimate interest in the sporting development of young people, including governing bodies of sport and the CCPR<sup>5</sup> (Houlihan, 1991). Other quangos - some, themselves, branches of the Sports Council - have emerged in recent years, such as the National Coaching Foundation and the School Sport Forum, and these, too, have claimed a legitimate interest in school PE.

As might be expected:

each of these organisations brings a different set of attitudes and values into the policy arena and consequently has its own definitions of the issues involved and its own set of preferred solutions (Houlihan, 1991: 225-226).



However, all of these bodies have in common at least two things of consequence for PE. Firstly, and explicitly, they are all primarily concerned with sport, in one form or another and, secondly, and usually more implicitly, they all appear particularly concerned with the place and state of sport in schools; that is to say, in PE. Grounds for more direct interest in PE from these organisations has come in the form of the aforementioned allegations of a decline in schools of team sports in schools, along with pressures (in the form of the National Curriculum) to reduce timetable allocation to PE, as well as the apparent depletion of PE specialists. This tendency towards a more direct and active interest from external agencies has been hastened by the broadening of the PE curriculum and the addition of other activities to the staple PE diet of traditional games, since the 1970s, and the corresponding growth of concern for traditional sport, amongst governing bodies in particular (Roberts, 1996a).

Hence, according to Talbot (1995a: 3), over the last 30 or so years:

there has been a distinct shift away from the position in the 1960s that sport and PE were a matter of individual choice and therefore not a proper area for government involvement.

In recent years sport and PE have acquired a high profile and been on the receiving end of direct government interest and involvement, whether members of the PE subject-community have welcomed it or not.

Growing concern about the alleged drop-out rate from sport (especially 'traditional' team games) of school-leavers ran alongside, and in the same direction as, the growing fears of the governing bodies and their representatives. Consequently, in the 1980s, the Sports Council began to pay even closer attention to the issue of sport in schools. This became manifest in



its strategic planning documents. As Houlihan (1991) observes, the 1982 Sports Council strategy document (*Sport in the Community: the next ten years*) focused, among other things, upon the high drop-out rate amongst older teenagers. This concern led to targets being set and a subsequent publication, *Sport in the Community: Into the 90s* (Sports Council, 1988), focusing upon those areas where progress had not been as expected (since 1982) as a justification for concentration upon 'women and young people as its principal targets for extending participation' (Houlihan, 1991: 228). The 1988 strategic document identified the 13 to 24 age group, in particular, as one of its target groups, noting that although 'nearly three-quarters of school-children intend to participate in sport after leaving school' (Houlihan, 1991: 229) it was apparent that many youngsters did not manage to turn intention into action.

Two documents associated with the work of the School Sports Forum (Murdoch, 1987; School Sport Forum, 1988) looked into the issues surrounding sport in schools in the late-1980s and concluded that a range of agencies should be involved to develop a strategy for school-age sport (Houlihan, 1991). In addition, the Sports Council kept an eye on the world of PE through its Physical Education Advisory Group.

In the eyes of the Sports Council, PE has a significant role to play in the Council's 'sports development continuum'. Their 1992 document, *Young People in Sport - A Consultation Document* (Sports Council, 1992a) indicated which Key Stages of NCPE were believed to correspond to the various stages of the continuum. Indeed, the continuum was cited by one leading PE teacher trainer and academic as linking well with what he described as the sports development 'thrust' of NCPE (Fisher, 1996: 131). Figure 1 of the document's 'Young People and the Sports Development Continuum' described each of the four levels of participation and indicated which of the NCPE Key Stages (1 to

4) might be seen as corresponding to each level of the continuum. It indicated not only the correspondence between levels of the continuum and Key Stages but also the role of extra-curricula PE.

At the same time, Geoff Cooke (1996: 7), former England Rugby Union Manager and, at the time, Chair of the NCF, described *Raising the Game* as highlighting sport in schools 'as the most important element in the sporting continuum'. In similar vein, a report by the SCW (1995) further illustrated what appeared, by this time, a taken-for-granted belief in the legitimacy of external agencies' involvement with PE:

The role of the National Curriculum physical education is, therefore, a vital area of interest for the Council, and pivotal to children's continuing participation in sport and physical recreation into adulthood (SCW, 1995: 9).

Thus, in recent years a trend for external agencies, such as the YST, sports governing bodies, sports development officers (SDOs) and sports clubs, to become involved in extra-curricular PE (and increasingly in PE lessons themselves) has emerged alongside the linkages made between sport and PE by various interest groups.

As part of the recent reorganisation of the Sports Council, the newly-formed English Sports Council<sup>6</sup> has been required to abandon its previous 'brief' of concern for 'sport for all' in favour of a 'commitment to excellence'. It has been directed to concentrate upon two sports development areas: programmes for young people and sporting excellence (Sproat, 1996). The policy statement, *Raising the Game*, reflected the Government's requirement that the Sports Council 'focus on excellence and young people' (Collins, 1995: 26) and concern for the identification and nurturing of sporting talent is a



clear feature of the statement, not least in the form of sport-oriented secondary schools (e.g. sports colleges) as a means to achieve this end.

### **The health lobby**

As previously noted, HRE has come to provide an increasingly important rationale for PE in recent years and it has been a justification underscored by growing governmental interest in the role of education in the promotion of health. Harris and Cale (1997: 64) note that policy statements from the Department of Health, the Sports Council and the Health Education Authority all suggest that 'much faith and responsibility is being placed on school PE to educate children about exercise and to promote lifetime physical activity'.

At the same time, interested parties outside mainstream medicine (such as the AAHPERD) have contributed to the debate, choosing to highlight in particular what was perceived as the strong relationship between health, fitness and activity. At the same time, concern has grown, in particular, among 'professional' bodies with a vested interest (e.g. AAHPERD in the U.S.A and the PEA in Britain). Academics, involved in the newly emerging sports sciences as well as in the PE profession, drew upon the numerous epidemiological surveys that, 'reported an inverse association between adults' level of physical activity and the incidence of degenerative diseases, especially coronary heart disease' (Armstrong, 1991: 139). Seemingly abundant research was utilised to argue that the evidence that appropriate physical activity would improve health-related aspects of physical fitness was overwhelming (Armstrong, 1991). In Britain this position continued to be reinforced by a steady stream of research evidence, such as that supplied by the Health and Lifestyle Survey (HALS) (Cox *et al.*, 1987, 1993).



In this manner, a relatively straightforward and taken-for-granted, medically-oriented, analysis prevailed in health and exercise discourse. In short, the 'health crisis' provided a 'medico-health' context for PE intervention (Kirk, 1992; Tinning, 1991) which, at the same time, encouraged a focusing of concern upon (cheaper) preventative measures rather than (costly) curative ones. Indeed, the discourse facilitated emphasis upon prevention of a particular sort; that is to say, in the form of increased levels of physical exercise. Fox (1993) outlined the orthodox line of thinking and the justification for a PE intervention - in the form of HRE - in terms of the ability of exercise interventions to reduce the sedentary living, which was claimed both to be prevalent among the population and to be a major contributor to the development of disease. Hence, in many schools throughout the 1980s, teachers were encouraged by in-service training courses, as well as the professional and academic literature, to move away from programmes primarily concerned with sports performance (and especially competitive team-games) towards those focusing upon lifetime involvement in 'health'-related exercise.

Government interest fuelled the growing concern among sports scientists and physical educationalists regarding the relationship between sport, physical exercise, health and fitness. In the mid-1980s, a report by McIntosh and Charlton (1985) for the Sports Council commented upon the failure of the Council's 'Sport for All' campaign to have a significant impact on inactive adults. This campaign was the most prominent among a range of developments which Sleaf (1991: 17) describes as 'the disappointing impact of efforts aimed at promoting exercise amongst adults'. According to Sleaf, evidence such as that supplied by McIntosh and Charlton encouraged the exploration of initiatives like HRE. In turn, he argued, this further encouraged a raising of the profile of HRE as a feature of school physical

education. Sleap's analysis appears representative of a view - widely held by the mid-1980s (e.g. Almond, 1983; Armstrong, 1991; Biddle, 1989) - that HRE was by far the best among a number of available options to deal with the perceived failure of 'traditional' PE to confront adolescent drop-out from sporting activity, and its most potent corollary, the allegedly developing 'health-crisis'.

Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, HRE became viewed among many physical educationalists (especially those in academia) as some kind of 'antidote' to the apparently unhealthy consequences of increasingly sedentary lifestyles among children. This was particularly the case among the 'gurus' of the PE subject-community and those involved in the 'movement' and contributing regularly to the discourse (Almond, 1992; Armstrong, 1990; Armstrong, McManus, Welsman and Kirby, 1996; Armstrong, 1989; Cale and Harris, 1993; Fox, 1993; Harris and Cale, 1997).

In this vein, teachers in the present study frequently acknowledged that their views had been influenced over the years as they had become more aware of the issue of lifelong participation and active lifestyles:

I think the general trend is towards encouraging people who maybe wouldn't do it without a bit of a push. And once you have given them a bit of a push and encouraged them ... they might continue it.

It is important to note, then, that HRE represents one area where academics have had a tangible influence on PE teachers' attitudes and 'philosophies'. One aspect of this influence has been the academic and professional literature. However, many teachers in this study commented that they rarely, if ever, read the professional journals let alone the more academic ones. Nonetheless, academic theorising on HRE does appear to have had an impact indirectly



through the many in-service courses provided by the professional associations and local authorities in conjunction with curricula developments within PE and across the school curriculum and in teacher training, as well as the extensive coverage of health in relation to young people, in the national press and media.

### **The process of professionalization in PE**

An adequate appreciation of ideological developments within PE over time - including contemporary views on the nature and purposes of PE - requires an account, not only of broader socio-political developments that have shaped the development of the subject in school, but also of developments internal to the profession. Concern for professional status associated with the partial re-shaping of itself by the PE 'profession' is illustrated by recent developments in HRE and examinations in PE.

A significant facet of the network of which teachers are inevitably a part involves the ongoing concerns of many, if not all, teachers with their status at the local level; that is to say, within their immediate sphere of operation (e.g. schools and the education system). However, they are also concerned with the way they are perceived by groups and individuals at the national level, particularly by the Government itself and interested parties among the general public. Hence, a sociological perspective on the ideological nature of PE teachers' 'philosophies' requires investigation of the ways in which teachers' perceptions of their roles and the nature and purposes of their subject is intimately related to the broader social and political contexts in which they find themselves.



### *The marginality of PE*

A starting point for the identification of the bases of support for particular ideologies in PE (which, it is argued, lie at the heart of PE teachers' 'philosophies') is the traditionally relatively low status of PE both in comparison with other, more academic subjects and in the minds of key players in wider society. The educational status of PE as a secondary school subject has been a long-standing concern for physical educationalists at all levels (Fitzclarence and Tinning, 1990). At the level of school subject, until relatively recently, PE has not been seen as one of the more intellectually based disciplines within schools and 'within the world of education PE, and PE staff, are generally considered to hold low status' (Houlihan 1991: 238). Houlihan points out that this of course limits the capacity of those in the PE subject-community to influence policy discussions and outcomes regarding PE and school sport. It was apparent from the comments of teachers in this study that many of them saw their professional status and the degrees of autonomy associated with that as central to their perceptions of themselves and their subject. This is a perception echoed by members of the profession itself - particularly by academics but also by teachers. Hendry (1976), Evans and Williams (1989) and Kirk (1992a) have all identified physical educationalists' deeply-felt concern with professional status. Concern with achieving academic respectability - on terms implicit in academic subjects - became a steadily growing issue in the PE subject-community alongside the growing influence of liberal analytic philosophy, prominent within which was the 'Peters-Hirst' interpretation of the nature and purposes of education *per se*. Numerous articles over the last decade or so (e.g. Caldwell, 1987; Katch, 1989; Kretchmar, 1989; Baker, Hardman and Pan, 1996) provide examples of this concern - one might even call it a pre-occupation to the point of distraction - with the professional status of PE.

According to Houlihan (1991) and Reid (1996a, 1996b, 1997), among others, the quest for educational status is deeply implicated in the relatively recent emphasis upon the supposedly intellectual aspects of PE (Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) and is illustrated by the rapid growth of examinable PE at secondary school level which has been well documented by Carroll (1998). Both Reid and Houlihan view this rapid rise in the popularity of examinable PE as part of a process towards the 'redefinition of sport away from "sport as skill" and towards "sport as knowledge"' (Houlihan, 1991: 240). Alexander *et al.* (1996: 23) argue that such developments in PE are best viewed against the 'backdrop of subject marginality'. According to Alexander *et al.* (1996: 26), 'PE on most continents is viewed as marginal to the central purposes of schooling and to sport in the culture generally' and this a view shared by others in the field of comparative PE (e.g. Hardman, 1998).

### *Professionalization as a process*

In the process of claiming professional status an aspiring profession commonly lays claim to, and attempts to demonstrate possession of, several characteristics. Typically, these are said to include the possession of a publicly recognised area of expertise and skills (based on a specific and distinct bodies of theoretical knowledge) as well as a high level of control over the education and training of its members (Ellis, 1988; Johns *et al.*, 1994; Slattery, 1985). It is a feature of would-be professions that they attempt to identify an area of activity that sets them apart from other work being done in a manner which is typically described in terms of a service provided for the public (Slattery, 1985). Lawson (1985; cited in Ellis, 1988) claims that there are two major processes at the heart of professionalization; that is, public recognition that the field has 'a monopoly of functions and services defined by the field itself', and, 'the creation of a body of specialised knowledge that reliably solves problems not easily and routinely managed by society' (p. 191).



It is debatable whether or not teaching *per se*, let alone those teaching a particular subject, can claim to have achieved the latter; that is to say, a body of specialized knowledge. However, it is evident that physical educationalists (as PE teachers in secondary schools, curriculum leaders in primary schools and lecturers and researchers in higher education) would, to varying degrees, make claims for involvement in both processes.

In this regard, there is an illuminating parallel between the relationship of police and lawyers, and that of physical educationalists and the medical profession (the former being highlighted in work by Abbott (cited in Waddington, 1995). Abbott recognised an inevitable interdependency of professions insofar as the abstract, intellectual body of knowledge developed by one established profession is seen as necessary to, and thus provides the basis for, the process of professionalization within occupational groups lacking the same degree of expertise. Abbott (1991) points up the interdependency at the heart of the relationship between police and lawyers.

At first glance, this inter-relatedness may appear analogous to that between physical educationalists and the medical profession; not least to the extent that drawing upon the expertise of an established profession allows PE, at the same time, to draw upon the prestige associated with medicine (in this case) thereby bolstering its own status - both within education and among other significant groups within its broad policy community (such as Government, the Sports Council, sports governing bodies and the media). In this manner, the altruistic-sounding claims regarding the provision of a service, commonly found in the discourse of occupational groups, such as physical educationalists, seems to act to camouflage the process of monopolization (Berlant, 1985; cited in Waddington, 1995) that lies at the heart of what may, in reality, constitute a process of occupational mobility; that is to say, it



represents a more or less collective attempt by members of the PE occupation group to secure greater and more effective control over, as well as autonomy within, its working conditions. However, it is important to add a caveat here, for the analogy between the relationship between PE and medicine and the police and lawyers is flawed in one crucial respect. Whereas the relationship between the police and the legal profession involves a large degree of interdependency, that between PE teachers and the medical profession does not; for the medical profession not only have a high level of control over the education and training of its members (in a way that the PE profession does not) they actually put their 'theory' into 'practice', so to speak. The medical profession does not need the PE profession in the way that lawyers need the police 'on the ground', as it were.

Notwithstanding this caveat, in the case of PE, it appears that claims to professionalism also incorporate attempts to enhance its academic and political standing, through the carving out of a clearly defined area of supposed expertise (for example, health promotion or sports development) in response to a particular set of circumstances (such as growing public concern with so-called 'lifestyle' diseases and allegations of national sporting failure).

Thus, the identification of a supposed 'problem' requiring a 'professional' response may provide opportunity for an aspirant profession to identify and lay claim to a 'valuable' niche for itself. Tinning (1991: 44) suggests that there are usually two ways in which 'problems' are defined and responded to, within a putative profession such as PE. Firstly,

the profession recognises certain social trends or conditions which are considered ripe for exploitation and accordingly the profession changes its 'mission' statement to accommodate response to these trends.

Alternatively, the phenomenon is identified as a threat rather than an opportunity, such as 'where a trend in society is considered to be controversial, troublesome or potentially dangerous (to the profession)' (Tinning, 1991: 44). In the case of PE the 'market' appeared, from the 1980s, to be health promotion through exercise. However, since the mid-1990s, it appears that the expertise to which PE has needed to lay claim has tended to have as much to do with sports participation, and especially performance, as health *per se*. It is worth noting that this is a sphere where physical educationalists are coming face-to-face with other (more or less powerful) interest groups (such as SDOs, governing bodies and the NCF) which are engaged in their own professionalization processes and equally keen to make claims for their own putative specialist expertise and social significance.

Whether the PE 'profession's' response be re- or pro-active, for a particular ideology to flower within the subject-community, social bases of support are necessary. This begs questions such as: 'what and where were the social bases of support for the utilisation of HRE and sports performance in the push towards professionalization?' and 'what does this tell us about academic and occupational identity and the process of professionalization?'.

#### *The process of professionalization: the case of HRE*

In the case of HRE, Almond (1983) and Armstrong (1990), among other physical educationalists and sports scientists at either end of the 1980s (e.g. Biddle, 1987; Fox, 1983a and 1983b) and throughout the 1990s (Harris and Cale, 1997; Cale, forthcoming) appear to have recognised the opportunity to use the status of medicine to underpin their own professional activities and have stressed what they perceive as the 'necessity' for PE to respond to the medical professions' identification of circulatory and heart disease, among hypo-kinetic diseases more generally, as major contemporary health



problems. Similarly, these authors have been at the forefront of innovations within PE aimed at promoting HRE and the encouragement of lifelong active participation - so called 'active lifestyles' - (as a preventative form of health promotion) as a central pillar of PE in schools. Thus, growing health consciousness over the last 20 or so years can be seen as having offered an opportunity to PE; that is to say, a number of influential physical educationalists recognised the chance to advance the cause of their subject (and, in the process, their own institutional and career interests) by attaching their subject to a new social concern whilst, at the same time, borrowing from a high-status profession, i.e. medicine. In developing HRE, PE teachers and others have been able to capitalise on heightened concern, among the public and at governmental level, about health and fitness, by adapting, emphasising and improving what it supposedly has to offer.

At the same time as providing an opportunity, HRE can also be viewed as a response to perceived threats (Tinning, 1991: 9), such as the marginalisation and 'de-professionalization' of PE. Potential threats to the PE 'profession' include the risk of being perceived as irrelevant (inside as well as outside schooling) as a means, for example, of either securing the health and fitness of the nation, or ensuring national sporting success. The nascent HRE lobby in the late-1970s/early-1980s (Tinning, 1991) argued that a very likely consequence of ignoring the supposed health benefits of physical activity would be the risk of being perceived as an irrelevant and expensive luxury by central Government, self-managing schools and the public alike. As far as proponents of HRE were concerned, this could be largely offset by claiming a central role for PE in the promotion of health.

Notwithstanding the emerging pre-eminence of an HRE ideology among physical educationalists at all levels over the last two decades, it is important



to note that among teachers in the present study, offering HRE as a key element of PE represented an 'accommodation' (Evans, 1990) to, rather than a radical break with, 'traditional' PE (based on competitive team games). Whilst the ideology of health had evidently gained credibility among PE teachers, it appeared to have been incorporated alongside sporting ideologies in the 'philosophies' of many PE teachers.

Physical educationalists at all levels have sought to establish themselves in the midst of a threatening political climate (Evans, 1990a; Talbot, 1998). This process has taken place within, and arguably been given impetus by, a particularly conservative political context in the UK since the 1980s (Penney and Evans, 1997, 1998). This dominant political climate emphasised the alleged responsibility of individuals for their own welfare (Houlihan, 1991) whilst at the same time placing the onus upon all occupational groups to provide a marketable product or service (Henry, 1993).

Hence, the rise in popularity of an ideology of health within PE since the 1980s can be seen as having provided physical educationalists with both a threat and an opportunity concurrently. HRE ideologies have served, both defensively and offensively, to raise and secure the status of PE and PE teachers by linking PE with an issue (health) of growing personal and public concern. In the process, the PE profession has sought to define and market the role it sees for itself in meeting a particular social 'need'; a 'need' ostensibly defined by powerful groups within the PE subject-community, but which, in reality, is the outcome of a particular figuration of economic and social developments from the 1950s onwards, prominent among which has been the medicalization process (Waddington and Murphy, 1992). Along with Tinning (1991), we might be inclined to agree that the growth of interest in health-related matters has thrown something of a life-line to the PE

profession, enabling it to stake out territorial claims towards health-related education (e.g. Fox, 1992). In the process, the PE subject-community has attempted to enhance its credibility whilst, at the same time, partially fending-off the challenge of the sports lobby, among others, in a time of potentially threatening change (for example, with the onset of the National Curriculum) (e.g. Fox, 1993; Jones and Bate, 1990; Mercer, 1989).

*The process of professionalization: the case of school sport*

It is worth noting the potential parallels between the PE and health interrelationship in the 1980s and the developing concern for sports performance in the 1990s, as illustrated by the Government's policy statement, *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995). Once more, the emergence among various groups at the national level of a concern regarding national sporting success, and associated allegations about the drop-out rate among adolescents from 'traditional' sport, has provided physical educationalists with an opportunity to present themselves as crucial allies to central government in underpinning an important dimension of Government policy.

*The process of professionalization: the scientization and academicization of PE*

According to John *et al.* (1994), individuals and departments in higher education have sought to carve out an identity, associated with what he terms 'intellectual space', that might reinforce, even promote, the claims of PE to be taken seriously both as a bona-fide discipline and as an academic subject. Promoting these claims may, at the same time, have served to further the professional interests and careers of those involved in PE departments, particularly in higher education.

These social bases of support for the professionalization process may well have a generational dimension as well; that is to say, students attending



higher education institutions from the 1970s onwards, would have increasingly been able to pursue 'sports science' as well as PE degrees. In addition, the trend towards the graduatization of teacher-training meant that increasing numbers of new teachers had initially pursued the 'sports science' avenue. Alexander *et al.* (1996: 29) point to 'the scientization of teacher education programmes and graduates' resulting in an increased emphasis upon the content of sports science programmes within schools PE. Arguably, then, an association between sports science and the performance of sport has been increasingly likely to suffuse the habituses of PE teachers and, consequently, their 'philosophies'. Indeed, as the comments of many in the present study who favoured the development of examinations in PE suggested, PE teachers do appear to proffer a justification for a more theoretical approach to PE based upon the need to develop in pupils the so-called 'underlying principles' of sport and physical activity (Reid, 1996a). In this regard, it is worth noting the significance of the status issue to new and prospective teachers. Alexander *et al.* note the 'problematic nature of a career in a marginal subject' (1996: 26). Professionalization may well be a key influence in the development of young teachers. Throughout the 1980s, increasing numbers of physical educationalists were in possession of a sports science background and, consequently, had been subjected to sports science discourse. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find evidence of strong attachments among incoming PE teachers towards an academic or scientific ideology.

Developments in exams are not, then, best conceptualised as PE teachers adoption of a 'new orthodoxy'. Rather, they represent the unanticipated consequence - in practical terms - of the widespread influence of academic philosophy of education allied to status concerns on the part of PE teachers.



### *Professional knowledge as ideology*

Of particular relevance to a study of PE teachers 'philosophies', then, is the influence of important political and ideological shifts in social life more generally. The consequences of these for PE teachers, both individually and as an occupational grouping, are of central importance in understanding how 'particular definitions of physical education have gained acceptance as the orthodox version of the subject' (Kirk, 1992a: 25), not least because an understanding of the ascendancy of particular ideologies to the ideological high ground of the subject-community requires an appreciation of how 'these definitions have advantaged certain social groups over others at particular times' (p. 25).

In tune with a sociological perspective on knowledge, it is worth noting once again that however true or false the HRE or sports science knowledge may be (and recognising that many supposedly professional traits tend to have an ideological, not to say, mythological tinge (Macdonald, 1995)) and however more or less detached the motives of PE teachers promulgating various ideologies may or may not be, it is important to recognise that:

claims of knowledge function as ideologies, and can be evaluated independently of their validity for their part in gaining public and legislative support for an organized occupation (Freidson, 1994: 60).

Thus, claims to knowledge take place 'in an arena of conflicting or competing claims from other interest groups, occupational or otherwise' (Freidson, 1994: 69) and, consequently, it is necessary to recognise the manner in which various groups lay claim to the possession of particularly useful bodies of knowledge in order to advance their own sectional, not to say personal, interests. Almost inevitably, as Freidson (1994: 69) observes,

professional ideologies are intrinsically imperialistic, claiming more for the profession's knowledge and skill, and a broader jurisdiction, than can in fact be justified by demonstrable effectiveness.

At the same time, however, it is important to recognise that such claims are not always conscious or planned. As Freidson points out,

Such imperialism can of course be a function of crude self-interest, but it can as well be seen as a natural outcome of the deep commitment to the value of his work developed by the thoroughly socialized professional who has devoted his entire adult life to it (1994: 69).

Arguably, there is nothing inherent in the practice of PE as it is customarily understood that lends it self-evident worth in the manner claimed by teachers of English, mathematics and so forth. Hence, in order to gain both greater academic and professional status and the degrees of professional autonomy associated with this, physical educationalists perceive themselves as being compelled to advance ideologies of public service (for example, in the forms of significant contributions to health promotion or sporting success). Hence, the tendency of teachers in this study to make claims to the effect that their work is 'doing good' and in the public interest. Thus, when one attempts to explain PE teachers' 'philosophies' and the ways in which they feel constrained to view developments such as HRE and examinable PE, it becomes necessary to explore developments that are, at one and the same time, internal and external to the PE subject-community. This involves an appreciation of the manner in which physical educationalists have sought, to differing degrees and with varying degrees of explicitness, to raise the status of PE and PE teachers by linking the subject with the external context - i.e. staking out territorial claims vis-à-vis areas of growing personal and public concern, such as health and sporting success - and the internal context, i.e.



staking out claims for academic status through the possession of a body of intellectual knowledge.

In this vein, physical educationalists at various levels have sought to enhance the credibility of their subject both externally and internally by resisting or embracing a variety of influential groups such as the Government and the sports lobby, among others, in a time of potentially threatening change. As with other aspiring professions, according to Johns *et al.* (1994), physical educationalists have been attempting to 'define, organize and publicize (their) own specific expertise' (p. 12). In doing so, they were, in effect, trying to lay down and redefine the norms of the practice of PE in particular terms that were intended to identify PE 'as a means of enhancing well-being and personal health' (Johns *et al.*, 1994: 12) whilst, at the same time, claiming a specific role in the development of sports performance in the UK.

As far as sociologists are concerned, rather than viewing the professionalization process in PE as emerging in response to some pre-ordained 'need' or 'needs' (fitness and physical therapy, character training, health promotion and sporting excellence) it is more adequate to see the process as representing the active striving of physical educationalists (including teachers) to re-address their relatively powerless position as individuals and as an occupational grouping through achieving status and autonomy, both at the local and national levels of their figurations.

## Conclusion

What makes the debate surrounding PE particularly interesting, in sociological terms, is the apparent breadth and depth of public and political interest. Commenting upon events in the mid- to late-1980s, Kirk and Tinning (1990: 1) suggested that, 'What is clear from the attention that has been



directed at physical education is that it has been implicated in wider societal events'. What was true of the 1980s remains true in the late-1990s.

It is clear that some of the constraints that PE teachers experience at the local level emanate from developments at the national level and are not always directly associated with PE or even education as such. Developments at both the national and local levels inevitably bear the hallmark of shifting balances of power within but also between a variety of PE and non-PE communities and groups. Of particular sociological interest is the manner in which these wider developments circumscribe and impact upon the 'philosophies' and practices of PE teachers and consequently affect PE as it is experienced by school pupils. Such pressures are an aspect of the reality of teachers' lives (Fisher, 1996).

This chapter has been particularly concerned with the manner in which pressures which have their origins at the national level serve to make more complex and opaque the figurations of which teachers are a part and act to constrain them at the local level of the school. The political and public pressure for concentration in school PE upon sport and sports-performance and results has been fuelled by the greater emphasis required by the revised NCPE and *Sport: Raising the Game* on sport and 'traditional' competitive games in the PE curriculum. Evidently, a 'sport and performance' based view of PE permeates NCPE and *Sport: Raising the Game*. Such a view of PE, it is argued (Evans and Penney, 1995; Penney and Evans, 1997), represents not only 'the privileging of areas of activity over and above permeating themes (such as HRE)' but also, and crucially, an accompanying 'hardening of the hierarchy of areas of activity long established within the subject of PE, in which games is accorded the highest status' (Penney and Evans, 1997: 23). The privileging of games, especially competitive 'traditional' team games,

within the sport and performance discourse has, according to Penney and Evans (1997: 23):

Inevitably ... subordinated other areas of activity and concomitantly the commitment to providing breadth and balance within the curriculum of PE.

As well as serving to re-prioritise sport and team games within the PE curriculum, Government policy statements (e.g. *Sport: Raising the Game*) and recent pronouncements (see Carvel, 1999; Davies, 1999) encourage within schools a sporting culture which, among other things, involves linking schools with sports clubs and rewarding those schools that place even greater emphasis on sport and team games in extra-curricular PE.

The upshot of such developments has been that the health ideology claimed to have been in the ascendancy, both among PE academics and teachers in the 1980s and early-1990s (Green, 1994a), has been challenged if not entirely subdued by the reaffirmation of a sporting ideology at the national level. This development in the 1990s appears to have created a climate in which sports performance might readily be restored to a pre-eminent ideological position within PE, not only at the political level but also among PE teachers. Thus, a context has emerged for teachers that has either reinforced or ran somewhat counter to their own ideological commitments in the form of their preferred 'philosophies' of PE.

As with sport and health, the linking of sport and PE that characterises public policy appears widely and uncritically accepted not only beyond but also within the PE subject-community (Waddington *et al.*, 1997). Government and other official views of PE often appear to view sport as the primary focus of PE (Talbot, 1995a, 1995b) and this view is more likely to be confirmed than



challenged by representatives of the PE subject-community at all levels and including many teachers. By the mid-1990s, the views of the then Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the DNH, the Minister for Sport, the Sports Council, sports' governing bodies, and many PE teachers, were in broad agreement in welcoming the Government's policy statement. Almond, Harrison and Laws (1996: 7-8), responding to *Sport: Raising the Game* on behalf of the Physical Education Association of the UK (PEA-UK), commented that the Association 'is extremely pleased with the public statements made by both the Prime Minister and the Government' and acknowledged that games would 'still have a major and significant role to play within the PE curriculum'.

It is worth noting, once again, that it is highly likely that teachers of other National Curriculum subjects would neither have, nor perceive themselves as having, as much leeway with National Curriculum as PE teachers describe themselves as having. In this regard PE appears as if it may, in practice, be something of a 'special case'. This raises the question of whether PE is viewed as seriously in educational terms as other more overtly academic subjects, not least by PE teachers themselves.

## Notes

1 Some aspects of the national dimension to PE teachers' figurations might reasonably be said to belong at the personal and local levels. Thus, whilst some of the issues considered in this chapter (such as the constraints of resources in the form of facilities) transcend the local and national dimensions of PE teachers' figurations, for the most part, they have been included in the chapter that best describes their emergence as processes rather than where the immediate affects are felt.



2        Latterly the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCM&S).

3        NCPE is currently undergoing another revision and, at the time of writing, has reached the consultative stage. Whilst it is not due to be implemented until 2000, its broad contours are clearly discernible in working documents and, as such has been integrated as and when appropriate within this chapter. The proposals will, however, receive a somewhat lengthier treatment in Chapter 9, the Conclusion.

4        It is worth noting, at this point, that the apparent discrepancy between their expectations (alleged to have been engendered by the teacher trainer) and the reality 'on the ground' as the young teacher found it to be, may itself be largely explained in terms of the constraints experienced by the college tutor in relation to the requirements of OFSTED regarding the content of teacher training courses vis-à-vis the NCPE.

5        CCPR have ostensibly acted as the representative voice of the governing bodies.

6        Now entitled 'Sport England'.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

The ample literature of the last twenty years or so, theorising education from philosophical and pedagogical perspectives, frequently incorporates an implicit assumption that the primary purpose of education is the transformation of young people's thinking in a manner likely to enhance their understanding of the world in which they live. This, in turn, is expected to bring about the realisation of a *sine qua non* of liberal educational philosophy: the emergence of the autonomous adult (Green, 1989) who would *inter alia*, be subject to the dictat of reason.

In a similar vein, a further premise of a good deal of academic literature is that educational theory can be expected to have much the same impact upon teachers' thinking with regard to PE and, subsequently, their practice. It also seems to be assumed that teachers themselves are duty-bound to share such a perspective on educational philosophy. But what is the empirical evidence to suggest that PE teachers' views or 'philosophies' *are* affected by their education or teacher training or, for that matter, by *any* theorising at *any* level? Indeed, what is the evidence that teachers reflect upon PE in a manner that bears any resemblance to the kind of abstract reasoning usually associated with philosophical theory itself?

In attempting to make sense of the relationship between PE teachers' 'philosophies' and the ideologies underpinning these, this study has sought to identify and examine what teachers themselves, rather than academics or teacher trainers, think PE is about. Not, it should be noted, in the belief that these 'philosophies' might be taken to be self-evidently 'true' but, rather, in an

attempt to construct a more systematic understanding of PE teachers' views of their subject 'in the belief that greater understanding will enhance our capacity to exercise control' (Dunning, 1999: 240) over an important aspect of young people's educational experiences.

In order to achieve this, I have attempted to explore PE teachers' habituses alongside their working contexts; that is to say, the various predispositions that suffuse their personal and professional lives as well as the inevitable constraints provided by the particular circumstances they experience in the process of teaching. In figurational sociological terms, these predispositions and contextual constraints can be viewed as aspects of people's figurations. Put another way, the study has taken a figurational approach to making (sociological) sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies'. Such an approach to identifying the ideological themes permeating PE teachers' 'philosophies' has necessitated a shift of focus away from what has hitherto been an undue concentration on the justificatory ideas - the academic philosophies of PE - themselves, towards a closer examination of the networks of relationships in which PE teachers, as practitioners, are enmeshed and which form the essential context for understanding their everyday 'philosophies'. Before relating their thinking to other aspects of their figurations, I want briefly to summarise, and comment upon, my findings with regard to PE teachers' 'philosophies' *per se*.

## **PE teachers' 'philosophies' and the ideological themes therein**

### *Enjoyment*

Although not an ideology as such, concern with 'enjoyment' was a sufficiently prominent theme of PE teachers' 'philosophies' to merit particular consideration alongside the ideological themes therein. It was apparent that the vast majority of, if not all, the PE teachers in this study (similar to those in



Mason's (1995) research) brought to teaching a taste - passion would not be too strong a word - for physical activity in general and sport in particular. In part, this explains why they appear to place such emphasis upon 'enjoyment' as a central feature of their 'philosophies'. They want youngsters to enjoy what they themselves prize so highly, even though, it is worth noting, enjoyment would not normally be considered a necessary condition of education *per se*.

This is an interesting point, for PE teachers' have a distinctive view of their subject, one that is more particular and subjective than one might expect to find with teachers of more 'academic' subjects. Indeed, one would expect little sympathy for 'enjoyment' as an *aim* of education amongst any other group of educationalists, for whom education might even be seen as the very antithesis of 'fun'. The idea implicit in PE teachers' comments was that, notwithstanding their desire, and claims for, parity of academic and professional esteem, PE teachers see theirs as a less serious subject, one that is, indeed, not really educational in the 'standard' or orthodox sense outlined by Reid (1996a, 1996b). Many teachers viewed PE as revolving around enjoyment of sport; they appeared to see sport in a manner that suggested that they held common-sense, taken-for-granted (and by virtue of this, rather unsophisticated) versions of the valued cultural practice philosophy of Arnold and Best, or the sport education justificatory ideology of Siedentop. It may be, then, that far from proceeding from 'first principles', so to speak, PE teachers' 'philosophies' and, for that matter, academic philosophy, have a tendency to engage in teleological retrospection; that is to say, offering what might be better termed justificatory ideologies for what amount to views and customary practices, which were preferred on grounds other than those relating to systematic philosophical reflection.

Notwithstanding this claim, an emotional attachment to sport, together with an ideological commitment to its alleged worth, is only one aspect of PE teachers' emphasis upon enjoyment. To make sense of why enjoyment frequently ranks more highly on the scale of teachers' aims than traditionally highly-valued outcomes such as, for example, skill development, one needs to look further than enjoyment as a precondition for continued involvement in, and commitment to, sport as important as this is. One needs also to appreciate that the context in which PE teachers operate is one in which ensuring participation in, and adherence to PE, let alone sport, is an ever-present *practical* concern. It was apparent, then, that in many PE teachers' minds, enjoyment was often viewed as strongly associated with compliance on the part of pupils and, consequently, as something akin to a prerequisite for 'classroom' management and successful teaching. This was in addition, and prior, to being a feature of lifelong commitment to sport - either for its own sake, for personal development (PSE) reasons or even in the service of active lifestyles.

### *Sport*

Often implicit, but frequently explicit, was the perception among PE teachers that the desired enjoyment was of physical activity and, in particular, of sport and especially games. In this vein, the long-standing common-sense ideologies of PE teachers regarding the intrinsic and extrinsic worth of sport to individuals and institutions alike, as well as the emphasis upon sports performance as a central dimension of PE, suffused the comments of many teachers in the study, both male and female, young and old. Such ideological commitments to sport, whilst present among all groups of teachers, were most distinct and more thoroughly pervasive in the comments of relatively more established male PE teachers.



Thus, closely associated with concern for sports performance in teachers' 'philosophies' was concern with the value of participation in sport 'for its own sake' as well as the additional benefits participation was alleged to bring. In this regard, the sporting ideology frequently shaded into the related ideologies of education for leisure and 'sport for all'.

### *Education for leisure/ 'sport for all'*

In line with the claims of Roberts (1996a, 1996b; Scraton, 1992, 1995) it was apparent that the 'philosophies' of many teachers in this study incorporated a desire to encourage in young people a disposition towards physically active, supposedly healthy, lifestyles. Whilst promoting ostensibly beneficial uses of leisure time might be justified on various grounds (in the 1970s, for example, this would have been primarily for reasons of social control) among the teachers in this study it was typically justified on health grounds. Within many teachers' 'philosophies', an education for leisure ideology was closely associated with one of 'sport for all'; an ideology which similarly revolved around the alleged value of lifelong participation in sport for health reasons, as well as a breadth of personal and social benefits.

It was noteworthy that the ideologies of education for leisure and 'sport for all' were particularly common among two groups of teachers: those teaching in schools in disadvantaged areas and teachers (almost entirely female) of girls' PE. Associated with these ideologies was teachers' commitment to 'activity choice' or 'option' PE; a commitment many teachers continued to adhere to despite the constraints of NCPE and OFSTED. It was noteworthy, however, that 'options' frequently continued to revolve around sport and games; partly for ideological reasons and partly for reasons of pragmatism. Thus, 'options' had a tendency to supplement rather than replace 'traditional' PE. It was also noticeable that a key aspect of these related ideologies was



teachers' emphasis upon enjoyment as the main outcome of participation. In the light of this ostensible commitment to 'choice' and 'enjoyment', it is worth observing that the perceived need to accommodate older pupils' preferences evident in many teachers' 'philosophies' represented, once again, a sense of pragmatism, as much as 'principle', insofar as teachers sought to make their jobs more manageable.

### *Academic value*

Alongside their commitment to a sporting ideology, many teachers also appeared to perceive a need to put some kind of educational 'gloss' on what might otherwise be viewed, at least in educational terms, as tangential justifications for their subject. Thus, in the process of fighting for academic and professional status, they had begun to incorporate aspects of ideologies beyond that of sport, such as health, PSE and intellectual development.

It was noticeable, nonetheless, that views regarding the educational worth of PE were not expressed in a similar vein to other justifications. Indeed, the 'educational' justification frequently appeared as an after-thought; an additional vindication just in case 'enjoyment' of sport were seen as insufficient. It was almost as if PE teachers were saying 'sport is worthwhile for pleasure's sake' but that they implicitly recognised that many people would not regard this as sufficient justification for the subject and they, therefore, felt constrained to add that PE had a variety of additional 'goods'. Such 'goods' included the 'traditional' and pervasive claim for sport as a vehicle for moral and character development. Alongside, and often in association with such assertions, have been added, more recently, claims for a role for PE in pupils' intellectual development.

One particular educational 'good', prominent in many teachers' 'philosophies', was that of health.

### *Health*

PE teachers' responses regarding health and fitness were particularly interesting. The views of a good many PE teachers were heavily tinted with health-related ideological justifications for PE. Alongside, and frequently associated with, the common assumption that the primary aim of PE was enjoyment of those, largely sporting, activities that made up the traditional PE curriculum was the claim that these were beneficial for health reasons. Indeed, health (promotion) was typically described as the major contribution of PE to youngsters' education. It was interesting to note, however, that this was more often on the basis of 'lay' understandings of the relationship between health and exercise than health-related justifications espoused in the NCPE or, for that matter, in the theory underpinning HRE *per se*. It appeared that a common-sense 'paramedical' role for PE had infused many teachers' 'philosophies'.

Whilst the over-riding impression from many teachers' comments was that they believed - at 'gut' level - that PE had primarily to do with sport, at the same time, they also claimed to place great store by the ability of physical activity and particularly sport to promote individuals' health (both mental and physical; both now and in the future). Thus, an ideology of health was often linked in some way with the education for leisure and 'sport for all' ideologies.

### *PE teachers' 'philosophies': an amalgam of ideologies*

It was apparent, then, that many PE teachers' 'philosophies' incorporated several ideas or ideologies. Frequently these 'philosophies' emphasised one



dimension, such as sport, among an amalgam featuring several additional aspects, such as health, education for leisure or PSE. In addition, PE teachers tended not to have anything that could justifiably be called a 'philosophy' - in the sense of an integrated, coherent set of ideas - as such. Confusion, and/or contradiction frequently characterised their commentaries. What PE teachers articulated was typically a kind of check-list of preferences typically centring upon words and phrases like 'enjoyment', 'health', 'moral development' and 'skills'.

If one were to be kind one might describe these views in terms of what Reid (1997) refers to as 'value pluralism': a multiplicity of justifications for PE based on a plurality of values such as health, sports performance and character-development. However, in reality, PE teachers' views were a pastiche of differing 'philosophies' or, rather, ideologies (e.g. regarding participation in lessons, health, PSE, school teams, sports performance and sporting skills) that were not always, or at least not easily, reconcilable. Rather than representing a plurality of values, PE teachers seized upon things for justification; that is to say, they sought *ex post-facto* justifications for the things they *did* - the things they *preferred* and/or felt *constrained* to do. In this regard, it was particularly interesting to note that in response to a follow-up question regarding why the things they had mentioned (such as enjoyment, health and sport) were important, many teachers appeared somewhat surprised by the question, as if they had never really given the matter much thought or that the question was unnecessary because the answer was self-evident.

It seems inappropriate, therefore, to label PE teachers' thoughts, about the nature and purposes of PE, 'philosophies' as such, in anything other than the



aphoristic, everyday sense indicated by placing parentheses around the term; that is to say:

a matter of standing back *a little* from the ephemeral urgencies to take an aphoristic overview (which) usually embraces both value-commitments and beliefs about the general nature of things (Flew, 1984: vii; emphasis added).

Thus, the 'philosophies' articulated by PE teachers in this study gave the impression of 'standing back', or being detached, only marginally from either their preconceptions regarding the nature and intrinsic worth of PE and sport and the everyday 'ephemeral urgencies'. At the same time, they frequently lacked any indication of an 'overview' as such. Indeed, the views of teachers on particular dimensions of their 'philosophies' (e.g. participation, 'sport for all') often stood in marked contrast to other dimensions (e.g. standards of dress, school teams and performance sport).

It is interesting to note that the comments of many teachers in this study were of a piece with those of the teachers cited in Mason's (1995) study, who also appeared to hold what might best be termed a 'mish-mash' of views on PE. If this study, and that of Mason, are anything to go by, teachers' somewhat vague and unclear statements regarding the nature of PE suggest that they have little or no idea of philosophical conceptions of their subject. Teachers' conceptions of PE bore only a passing resemblance to the variety of philosophical conceptions of the subject typical of academic analyses. Consequently, PE teachers' 'philosophies' did not - nor could 'philosophies' of the aphoristic kind be reasonably expected to - bear other than superficial resemblance to the putative abstract, systematic, outlines of a set of coherent principles regarding the alleged nature and purposes of PE, of the type one might expect from an academic philosophical perspective.

The 'philosophies' of PE teachers are not, then, philosophical as such. Rather, they are, more usually, an amalgam of beliefs, values and attitudes (i.e. habituses) that emerge from a figuration of the teachers' personal and sporting biographies and the constraints of their working context, together with the ideologies associated with both of these. PE teachers' 'philosophies' appeared confused, partially formed, impressionistic and far more involved than detached. What Reid (1999: 103) refers to as 'metatheoretical uncertainty' to describe the 'plurality' of competing 'philosophies' among PE teachers would - from a figural sociology perspective - be better described as a fusion of prior values, beliefs and commitments more or less permeated and amended with experience and more or less adapted to fit the practical constraints of the day-to-day job of teaching. In this regard, it is interesting to note that teachers took the invitation to outline their 'philosophies' of PE as an opportunity to reveal their *values* and *beliefs* regarding, for the most part, their *day-to-day practice*. They typically valued sport and physical activity and their typical concerns were with participation in PE in the first instance and, thereafter, with medium to long-term participation in sport and physical activity. Thus, what the PE teachers in this study exhibited were *commitments to particular ideologies*, such as sports performance, health and, frequently, a medley of ideologies to suit particular practical situations.

PE teachers' 'philosophies' appeared, then, to feature a characteristic of social development in general, and the history of PE in the UK in particular, namely, the existence of continuity alongside change. Whilst real change may well have occurred in the ideologies and practices of PE teachers in the last 15 to 20 years (Evans, 1992; Kirk, 1992a), such change may not be as great nor as transformative as one might want, or be inclined, to believe. Evidently, HRE has assumed a more prominent place in the 'philosophies' and practices of PE



teachers. By the same token, education for leisure, together with 'sport for all' and the promotion of active lifestyles, has become more central to PE teachers' views of what PE should be, and is, about. Nonetheless, it is apparent that widespread continuities persist alongside the occurrence of such real changes. Sport, and especially team-games, remain at the heart of many teachers' 'philosophies' (frequently alongside other justificatory ideologies) and practice and continue to form the centre-piece of curricula and extra-curricular PE in secondary schools.

Based upon their research in the U.S.A., Chen and Ennis (1996: 339) claimed that what they term the 'discipline mastery' orientation (a 'focus on developing performance proficiency in sport skills and understanding of performance-related knowledge'), and what here is labelled the sporting ideology, 'was no longer the dominant philosophy in teaching physical education'. 'Teachers' beliefs', they argued, 'varied across the spectrum of the value orientations'. My own study would not support such a claim. PE teachers continuing and strong commitment to sport is a feature of their emergent and processual 'philosophies'. Whilst this may be tempered or even camouflaged by other concerns, such as health and PSE, most of them continue to view sport rather than physical activity as the most suitable and likely vehicle for achieving other 'educational' goals.

In addition, as Chen and Ennis (1996) acknowledge, even where PE teachers have value orientations other than sports performance - for example, what they refer to as 'social responsibility' - they may well be constrained by subject-centred content in the curriculum. This contextual constraint is precisely the situation that confronts PE teachers in England and Wales, faced with an activity based NCPE that continues to prioritise sport and traditional PE activities, especially team-games. Penney and Evans (1997) have noted the



constraints on the flexibility of teachers in England and Wales to achieve any kind of 'slippage', should they desire it, between the requirements of the sport and games privileged within NCPE and their own practice. Notwithstanding the putative proposals for ending the requirement for older pupils to do games in the NCPE for 2000 (Carvel, 1999), it is evident that the Government has competitive sport in schools, and particularly in PE, high on their agenda (Davies, 1999; Leisure Opportunities, 1999) and that this will continue to act as a significant constraint upon teachers in practice. This would appear to cast doubt upon the extent to which, as Mawer (1996) suggests, teachers of PE do in practice have 'philosophical' room for manoeuvre, whether or not they would be inclined to use it.

The impact of philosophy as such on teachers' 'philosophies', was, perhaps unsurprisingly from a figurational perspective, demonstrably very limited. What did impact upon PE teachers was their deeply-rooted attachments and associated convictions (e.g. towards the value of sport) and their practice or, more precisely, the constraints circumscribing their practice. The way teachers thought about PE had been shaped by their past experiences and had become bound up with the job itself. As such, their 'philosophies' tended to be *practical* 'philosophies'. Accordingly, an abiding theme of this study has been the claim that in order to make sense of PE teachers' 'philosophies' one must recognise that people can only be understood - or, to couch the point in Eliasian terms, '*emerge*' as people - when their views are seen in the context of their time and related to the framework of their period (Elias, 1993). In this vein, teachers' thoughts on PE need to be viewed as aspects of their networks of social relationships, past and present. We need to uncover how PE teachers' work is circumscribed by wider social processes such as the sportization of pastimes, the medicalization of life and the professionalization of work. As Elias notes:

individual decisions remain ultimately opaque if we overlook the relevant aspects of the unplanned social processes within which they are taken, the dynamics of which largely determine their consequences (Elias, 1993: 46).

Whether they realise it or not, whether they like it or not, PE teachers are caught up in unplanned social processes, such as the medicalization of life. More directly, they are deeply immersed in wider professional processes, such as the academicization of (nominally) practical subjects such as PE. The upshot of these processes is that PE teachers frequently feel themselves compelled to do things, such as develop examinations in PE, and have to find ways (frequently retrospectively) to justify their actions.

It is evident, then, that PE teachers compromise. They feel that they have to or, at least, feel under great strain to; not (or, at least, not entirely) because they are ideologues, 'progressive', reactionary or even 'wicked' people but, in part, because of the constraints with which they are faced. They may not have to believe in nor perform certain practices (in a deterministic sense), but they *feel* as if they do; or, rather, they feel as if they have little choice or room for manoeuvre. What might be construed as an ideological conservatism on the part of teachers would be ill-conceived as such. It is, rather, a conservatism at a much more practical level - people tend not to want disruption or hostility to the routine working life that they have spent so much time and energy becoming accustomed to and, consequently, socialized into. This is not to say, however, that PE teachers' thoughts and practices are simply a reflection of their circumstances. There was ample evidence of teachers working behind the scenes to put into practice their preferred views of PE. But these, themselves, were frequently views or 'philosophies' constrained by experience (e.g. a negative impression of PE whilst a child or the difficulties of



maintaining interest among their protégés as a teacher). This is a point worth dwelling upon: teachers perceived greater or lesser degrees of freedom and constraint in their circumstances whilst at the same time holding stronger or weaker views on PE *per se*.

Why, then, do PE teachers think the ways they do? How might one satisfactorily explain or account for their kind of views? In the latter chapters of this study, I have attempted to explain how the ‘philosophies’ held by PE teachers and their underlying ideologies can best be explained in terms of the networks of social relationships, or figurations, of which they are a part. Before embarking upon a concluding analysis, however, I want to offer a final comment on the methodology of the study, in the form of a caveat.

#### Teachers do not speak for themselves ...

PE teachers do not appear to engage in periods of reflection as such, let alone reflection of a ‘pure’ philosophical kind. The ‘proper’ professional responses that they frequently offered (e.g. regarding the educational benefits of PE) tended to have an air of serendipity about them. In this regard, PE teachers’ views often appeared somewhat muddled. They frequently did not possess the kinds of structure or pattern that the researcher, in the process of researching, is inclined to impose upon them. This points to one important note of caution for a qualitative study; that is to say, a study that seeks to elicit, interpret and analyse the views of people.

It is necessary to keep in mind the realisation that there is typically, perhaps inevitably, a limit to people’s understanding of their situations. ‘Insiders’ are not always best placed to understand the networks and processes of which they are a part. People’s involvement lends an opacity to their appreciation of the worlds they inhabit and this, in the case of PE teachers, is usually reflected



in their 'philosophies'. Thus, in attempting to identify key ideological themes in PE, and to establish the extent to which these continue to infuse the thoughts and practices of PE teachers, I have tried to bring to the surface what teachers think without making these thoughts and opinions appear more articulate and reflexive than they actually were in practice. PE teachers' views are relatively inarticulate and relatively inconsistent. That is, in part, because they see themselves as 'doers' not 'thinkers' and, correspondingly, PE as doing rather than thinking or writing about doing. This, then, may be the real task of the sociologist. Not, to put it analogously, to attempt to switch the light on for the teacher by adding a structure or coherence to their thoughts (as expressed in their comments) but rather to show what life is like in the darkness: to reflect the complications, contradictions and so forth that are typically features of their views. This may, indeed, be the real achievement of qualitative work: to make greater sense of people's reality by making it more accessible to sociological analysis whilst, at the same time, attempting to limit any tendency towards distortion of that reality.

It is, therefore, important to recognise the provisional nature of qualitative work and, consequently, attempts such as this study to make sense of what PE teachers think and why they think it. It is provisional inasmuch as it is contingent upon its utility in making sense of the data thrown up by the interviews. Having offered this caveat, I now turn to the analysis of PE teachers' 'philosophies'.

### **PE teachers in their figurations**

It is with PE teachers that the various ideologies within the subject-community find expression. In attempting to understand PE teachers' 'philosophies', and the ideologies that underpin these, it is necessary to make sense of the figurations which teachers form with others. This, in turn,

requires an awareness of the social characteristics of PE teachers themselves, in addition to an appreciation of the nature of teachers' interdependent relationships with others, at what I am calling the local and national levels of their figurations.

*PE teachers' figurations at the personal level*

This study has drawn upon the concept of habitus as a useful means of explaining how, what Bourdieu (1984) has referred to as socially learned 'dispositions', suffuse people's actions (van Krieken, 1998). Thus, it is argued, habitus tends to be manifest as a blindly functioning regulation of a person by themselves. Consequently, the ideas which a person expresses - which come to the surface, so to speak - are by no means necessarily the ones which have most influence on their conduct. These expressions, it is argued, often constitute the 'superficial' aspects of people's consciousness whilst 'the real forces which govern (them)' (Camic, 1986; cited in van Krieken, 1998: 47) are habits or habitus. It behoves the sociologist, then, to identify 'the web of social relations in which the individual lives during his (sic) more impressionable phase, during childhood and youth' in the expectation that it will be these which have become particularly strongly imprinted 'upon the unfolding personality' (Elias, 1987; cited in van Krieken, 1998: 156).

It is evident that PE teachers' commitment to sport and physical activity in one domain of their lives, their leisure, suffuses another domain, their working lives. Their biographies, and especially their early and profound attachments to sport, appeared to have developed a typical orientation towards PE among many teachers in this study; that is to say, both in terms of what they thought PE should be about as well as what they claimed to do in practice. The responses of these teachers, regarding their biographies, lent weight to a conceptualisation of childhood and youth as 'the main



“transmission belt” for the development of habitus’ (van Krieken, 1998: 156); habituses which have come to characterize groups of, as well as individual, PE teachers.

For Elias, because ‘habitus and culture are very slow to change’ (van Krieken, 1998: 49) it becomes ‘impossible to understand social life except over longer spans of time’ (p. 154). Such longer spans of time would, of course, involve more than the life-spans of individual teachers or, for that matter, the relatively young history of PE in schools. Nonetheless, the notion of emergent and developing habituses helps one appreciate the fact that PE teachers do not arrive for teacher training as *tabula rasa*. Rather, they arrive with particular dispositions towards PE which, among other things, incorporate a ‘second nature’ tendency to view PE as primarily to do with sport. As these teachers move into the world of PE teaching, and their figurations expand and become more complex, their habituses inevitably become connected to their emerging social relations. Thus, it is at the local and national levels of these figurations - when dispositions become blended with the contexts of particular social circumstances, such as the working environment - that PE teachers’ intuitive orientations towards PE can be more or less challenged or reinforced. In practice, they seemed, more often than not, to be reinforced. In this regard, it was interesting to note that, even though some teachers in the study suggested they had begun their PE teaching careers with particular ‘philosophies’, they claimed to have developed other interests (e.g. health and active lifestyles) over time that had come to influence their practice, and subsequently their ‘philosophies’ (for these, too, required *ex post facto* justification).

From an Eliasian perspective, it is crucial to appreciate that the figurations of which individuals are a part have immense significance for their nascent



identities. And, because 'personal and collective identities' are particularly important in the world of sport (Dunning, 1996: 188), then PE teachers' networks can be said to be of particular significance for a sociological attempt to construct an adequate explanation of their 'philosophies'. PE teachers' thoughts, as well as their proffered practices, are characterized by degrees of involvement and detachment, not least in terms of the ties that bind them to particular we-groups - ranging from school PE departments (at the professional level) to particular sporting communities. As a result, teachers are more or less susceptible to what Elias (1993) terms the compulsion of the figuration. In this context, it is something of a truism for figurational sociologists, that, people 'model their ideas about all their experiences chiefly on their experiences within their own groups' (Elias, 1978: 55).

#### *PE teachers' figurations at the local level*

PE teachers arrive at school with generalized dispositions towards PE. They have more or less clear ideas regarding what they expect to be doing. To the extent that would-be teachers feel bound to incorporate particular views and practices in order to qualify as teachers, those 'philosophies' are, in part, infused with the norms of their training. Typically, however, they owe a good deal more to their prior socialization; that is to say, the habits or habituses acquired throughout their young lives.

As teachers, they find themselves enmeshed within a variety of practices, constraints and expectations and the socialization process continues. These constraints are many and varied. In brief, they include the constraints posed by significant others (such as headteachers, HoDs as well as more established PE colleagues, the pupils themselves and their parents); local constraints such as the inheritance of traditions (in a variety of forms, ranging from the more direct influence of sporting traditions through to the more indirect traditions

such as religious affiliation); and what might be termed relatively self-imposed constraints (in the form of other roles they or their colleagues may have within the school, but also beyond it); as well as constraints that reflect issues at the national level of teachers' figurations, such as the development of examinations in PE as a response to teachers' collective status concerns.

Thus, it is argued, 'philosophies' tend to be more influenced by practices rather than preceding them and PE teachers' views become more comprehensible when viewed, at least in part, as responses to their day-to-day situations. Making sense of the way PE teachers think about their work requires one to think less about philosophies *per se* and more about the deep-seated values, beliefs and attitudes that they bring to their work. It also requires one to think more about the manner in which the context of this work constrains their practice and, ultimately, their thoughts. In order to do this, one needs to locate the way in which PE teachers think about their work within the broader and day-to-day constraints of their work and their lives.

#### *PE teachers' figurations at the national level*

In this study, I have attempted to show how the personal and local dimensions of PE teachers' figurations relate to developments at the national level. I have argued that developments, such as NCPE, which have their origins at the national level, serve to constrain teachers at the local level of the school and inevitably come up against the habituses of PE teachers; habituses which frequently coincide, giving the impression of a group habitus in the sense of a shared fund of common-sense understandings among particular groups of PE teachers.

The emerging public and political concerns with, for example, youth culture, the health of the nation and national sporting performance, that have



characterised public policy from the 1960s onwards, render more complex and more opaque the figurations of which PE teachers were, and are, a part. In this vein, the significance of developments at the national level - for PE teachers' 'philosophies', their underlying ideologies and their practice - waxes and wanes to the extent that the views of Government, various lobbies, the general public and the PE subject-community, as well as other interested parties, more or less coincide.

Developments in the socio-political milieu of PE inevitably enable or constrain some teachers more than others. Many teachers come to PE teaching, as a career, with a built-in commitment to sport and an intuitive conviction regarding its inherent worth. Inevitably, in terms of what they actually do as teachers, they are constrained by their circumstances; not simply the practical circumstances of managing the pupils but also the ideological circumstances manifest, for example, in what teachers inherit as a curriculum, the expectations of their managers, Government legislation (e.g. NCPE) and policy (e.g. *Sport: Raising the Game*), as well as wider social and professional processes (such as the medicalization of life and academicization and professionalization of PE), to name but a few of the more salient features.

#### *Figurations and power-ratios at the local and national levels*

Developments in the PE subject-community inevitably bear the hallmark of shifting balances of power within, but also across, a variety of PE and non-PE communities and groups. Thus, in exploring the significance of networks of interdependency for PE teachers' 'philosophies', power needs to be seen as a central dimension of figurations. Whilst interdependencies are 'reciprocal' they are also, and at whatever level they are to be found, typically unequal: 'usually one party in a social relationship tends, at least in certain respects, to be more dependent than the other party' with the result that an uneven



balance of power (or power-ratio) exists that 'directly affects the way both parties act and feel towards each other' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 22).

Whatever the particular nuances of each teacher's situation, PE teachers - as workers - live their working lives in social relationships and feel the effects of these; particularly the *power* effects. Moreover, these are not limited to the effects of face-to-face relationships with their immediate colleagues. Although the immediate working relationships (e.g. within departments) have considerable effect upon their lives, PE teachers are also bound in to wider relational networks involving power-ratios that they might not readily recognise. For example, whether they like it or not, PE teachers are bound in to relations with the Government through government agencies, such as OFSTED, and through legislation, such as NCPE. In addition, they are interdependent with what might be termed the 'sports lobby' (e.g. governing bodies and sports clubs), teaching colleagues and professional bodies, not to mention the children they teach and their parents. These groups can, and do, affect the lives of PE teachers: their autonomy, their 'philosophies', their job satisfaction and even their careers. Relations of power between individuals and groups develop as 'shifts and transformations in patterns of social bonding take place' (Murphy *et al.*, forthcoming) and these involve shifts and transformations in the influence of some over others. And it is not just groups in the present that affect teachers. Ideologies from the recent past (e.g. sport and 'traditional' games) continue to affect the expectations teachers have of themselves and that others - be they parents, children or government ministers - have of them.

The theory of established-outsider relations (Scotson and Elias, 1994), and the power- and status- differentials (van Krieken, 1998) between various groups in the PE policy-community (Houlihan, 1991), helps one understand PE

teachers' apparent pre-occupation with status concerns and the relationship between these and the emergence of professional ideologies 'which operate with greater or lesser success to enhance the status of particular (groups)' (van Krieken, 1998: 139). Hence the evident concern amongst physical educationalists with, for example, health promotion through PE, as a means of achieving greater power in relation to other professional groupings both within and without education.

Exploring the interrelationships between the local and national dimensions of PE teachers' figurations encourages an appreciation of 'the position of knowledge production within *power* relations' (van Krieken, 1998: 169; emphasis in the original). These relations have fluctuated in the last 10 to 20 years, first appearing to move towards the pre-eminence of a health ideology before shifting back in the direction of the more enduring ideology of sport.

#### *The gender dimension to PE teachers' figurations'*

One particularly important aspect of PE teachers' figurations at both the personal and local levels, but which manifests itself most clearly on the latter plane, is that of gender. It was apparent that the 'philosophies' and ostensible practices of many PE teachers in this study continued to reflect degrees of gender-stereotyping. In this regard, the constraints of practice frequently served to reinforce rather than to challenge the attitudes and predispositions characteristic of teachers' habituses. Indeed, the views of teachers in the present study tended to support Waddington *et al.*'s (1998) observation that NCPE has reinforced rather than challenged or undermined traditional gender segregation and stereotypes.

Teachers were not equally receptive to all six areas of NCPE. Both male and female teachers' attitudes and professed practices demonstrated strong



support for the other four areas (i.e. games, swimming activities, athletic activities and gymnastic activities), and games in particular. However, as Waddington *et al.* (1998) noted, attitudes towards dance and O&AA in particular continue to reflect gender-stereotypical views of male- and female-appropriate behaviour. They pointed out that dance and O&AA remain the only activity areas 'whose inclusion within the PE curriculum is contested' (p.36).

Whilst the views and practices of some men and women ran counter to the dominant pattern, it was evident that men remained more likely than women to hold stereotypical views regarding the norms of boys' and girls' PE. As with Waddington *et al.*'s (1998: 42) findings, 'male teachers expressed their objections to the inclusion of dance in the curriculum in terms which barely concealed their own gender stereotyping'. It is important to note, nonetheless, that various women teachers also held quite stereotypical views regarding the norms of gender, as illustrated by their marked reluctance towards O&AA. In this regard, it was evident that female teachers were themselves implicated in some forms of constraint in PE and sport along gender lines (Colwell, 1999). It was noticeable that where teachers' intuitive views had been reinforced or challenged, this frequently appeared to have been so, at least in part, on the basis of the constraining influence of experiencing particular circumstances, such as having to teach opposite-sex groups or having relatively positive experiences of teaching particular forms of dance, such as rock and roll.

Gender dimensions were also evident in terms of positions of relative power and influence. Whilst numbers of male and female HoDs in the study were similar (eight and seven, respectively), male HoDs appeared somewhat more inclined to offer their 'philosophies' as departmental 'philosophies'. That



notwithstanding, it was evident that the centrepiece of most teachers' (both male and female) 'philosophies' remained sport and, within sport, games.

It is also important to observe, however, that there was no single set of norms regarding girls and boys PE. Rather, there were by degrees differing norms within differing PE departments and frequently, and unsurprisingly, among the teachers in those departments. Nonetheless, among the disparities there were relatively clear patterns; patterns that suggested that whilst not all male teachers shared similar views, gender-stereotypical views were more evident among male than female teachers of PE. In short, the 'philosophies' and professed practices of PE teachers in this study reinforced the impression that 'the teaching of PE continues in many respects to reproduce rather than to challenge, gender stereotypes' (Waddington *et al.*, 1998: 44). Indeed, the tendency of PE teachers, especially established male teachers, to recourse to pseudo-educational rationales in support of their 'philosophies' and practices appeared 'indicative of the amount and strength of resistance to change' (Waddington *et al.*, 1998: 44).

### *PE teachers in their figurations*

It is not surprising to find that the figuration of circumstances and relationships, in which PE teachers find themselves enmeshed, is not typically conducive to the development of a relatively detached perspective on PE of the kind that might be associated (justifiably or otherwise) with the abstract theorising of educational philosophers.

In short, the context within which teachers operate tends to be far more influential than any 'philosophical' stance towards which they might be more or less inclined. Indeed, not only will context be more influential upon teachers' practice than theoretical considerations, but context is also likely to

lead teachers to amend, adapt or even alter their 'philosophies' in line with the constraints of their practice. In this regard, Connell (cited in Sparkes, 1990: 39) observes that '(T)eachers are workers, teaching is work, and the school is a workplace. These simple facts are often forgotten'. PE teachers respond to the immediate pressures of their working situation as involved participants in the 'hurly-burly' of teaching and view the attendant constraints as more *urgent* if not more important. In this sense, PE teachers' practice frequently seems more *reactive* than *proactive* and we might conclude, along with Evans, that where 'tension' exists 'between the operational ideology and the fundamental ideology' this tends, on the part of teachers, to lead to 'some modification in the latter' (Evans, 1992: 243).

### **Philosophical versus sociological conceptions of PE**

A PE philosopher wrote recently that:

when occasional and unsystematic reflection ... begins to acquire a more systematic character, when we try to organize our thinking in a logically coherent and structured way, consciously seeking greater rigour and depth in our deliberations, then we are engaged in what can fairly be called the theory of our professional practice (Reid, 1999: 102).

Notwithstanding the accuracy of this claim, it has been an enduring theme of this study that, to the extent that PE teachers do engage in 'theorizing', this tends to be a long way short of the kind of philosophising that academics engage in. On the whole, it was evident that PE teachers' 'knowledge', as manifest in their 'philosophies' of PE, tended to take the form of beliefs, wishes and what might be termed 'articles of faith' rather than the kind of abstract theorising of the kind associated with the academic or even professional PE literature.



Thus, PE teachers in this study proffered little that could be said to closely resemble the academic philosophies of PE - in conventional phraseology or otherwise - in circulation at the level of PE theorising. On the other hand, however, it is worthy of note that many offered views that might be seen as *approximating* to the valued cultural practices justification articulated by Hirst (1994a, 1994b) and Arnold (1992) and the conceptually similar philosophy of sport education of Siedentop (1994). However, such comments *were* only approximations, for responses tended to take the form of clichés and were characterised by an absence of reflection. Indeed, one might speculate that the greater similarity of the more 'PE friendly' valued cultural practice philosophy - that Best (1994a, 1994b), for example, has come to prefer over the standard 'PE *unfriendly*' academic conception of education (and thus PE) - might tell us more about perceived needs, and related pressures, to find teleological justifications for PE in pressing circumstances than any enlightened coming together of the philosophical analysis of PE with PE practice.

Reid, like Carr (1997) before him, claims that,

occasional detachment for the purposes of reflection ... can hardly be regarded as an idle distraction from more urgent business; it has to be seen, rather, as an indispensable obligation for any properly conscientious professional (Reid, 1999: 101-102).

Once again, however, we are confronted here with the limitations of a philosophical approach to making sense of knowledge, in general, and the 'philosophies' of PE teachers, in particular. Philosophising about PE - at least in the academic sense - involves the development of systems of ideas with such a high degree of internal coherence, consistency and abstraction such that they might be said to 'stand alone', as it were. However, as this study has illustrated, as far as PE teachers are concerned this is precisely what abstract



academic philosophical conceptions of PE, in fact, do: they stand alone, almost entirely ignored by PE teachers. Putting to one side the question of whether 'any properly conscientious professional' is, indeed, '*obliged*' (emphasis added) to philosophise, it is clear that PE teachers tend not to do so or, at the very least, do so in a very tenuous form and very infrequently, if at all.

Reid (1999: 104) continues:

For if there are conflicts or problems with the theoretical framework of ideas and presuppositions which governs our professional practice, then we must not be surprised if those conflicts or problems find a way of manifesting themselves at the level of our concrete practical activity.

From a sociological perspective, however, such a claim is highly debatable inasmuch as theoretical problems do not appear to manifest themselves in teachers' practice; or, at least, not to the extent that Reid implies. Nor, for that matter, do ideas 'govern' professional practice; arguably, indeed, the reverse is more typically the case.

PE teachers are constrained in a way that philosophers of PE are not. Philosophers, in part because it is 'part and parcel' of their occupation, are *relatively* free (indeed, are obliged) to contemplate abstract ideas regarding the nature and purposes of PE, such as they are. As Elias (1993) might argue, academic philosophers of PE have tended to philosophise with the presumption of people not dependent upon the need to adapt their thoughts - to the lived reality of teachers, for example - for their professional survival. It is worth remembering, however, that philosophers and academics are themselves constrained by the demands of being professional philosophers and academics. They are constrained in different ways to, and in different directions from, PE teachers; that is to say, the *structure* of their work is

different from that of PE teachers. Nonetheless, their job provides sufficient leeway to enable them to indulge in preferred views. Quite readily philosophers can themselves become vehicles, some might say the primary vehicles, for ideologies - be they of sport (Siedentop, 1994), moral education (e.g. Laker, 1994a, 1994b) or 'Olympism' (Parry, 1998). Arguably, then, the philosophies of philosophers share something in common with the everyday 'philosophies' of PE teachers, inasmuch as they may be more adequately conceptualised as constituting *justificatory* ideologies; a point I will return to later.

In this respect, philosophers' philosophising upon PE frequently appear quite involved, not to say evaluative. As such, their thoughts may tell us more about the ideological commitments of these philosophers than about any prescribed purposes for PE. Whilst giving the impression of not being so, the arguments of philosophers are frequently more or less ideological and are made relatively opaque by their ostensible claims to be discussing the nature and purposes of PE in an abstract, detached manner. In the process, they effectively obscure rather than clarify our understanding. As Mennell and Goudsblom (1998: 33) observe, 'thanks to the power of philosophers as an established group within universities' in the UK, and the associated centrality of educational philosophy to PE since the late-1960s, the writings of authors in the philosophy of PE tradition have had a significant impact on *theoretical* justifications for the subject in both the academic and teaching worlds (if not teachers' everyday 'philosophies'). Despite being himself a PE philosopher, McNamee (1998: 75) takes a more sociologically informed perspective when he observes that the 'cognitive imperialism' of the 'traditional liberal paradigm' of education (as initiation of young people into the forms of knowledge that constitute 'rational mind' - seen as central to the development of autonomous adults) has served to constrain the manner in which



educationalists *at all levels* have felt able to articulate views on the nature and purposes of their subject. Here, then, in the 'cognitive imperialism' of analytical philosophy, is one clear and immediate illustration of the penetration of social processes into the process of 'philosophising'; at the level of PE teachers as well as academic philosophers.

Even the abstract philosophical contemplation of concepts such as education that have characterised the orthodox analytical philosophy of education can, when viewed sociologically, be seen to bear the hallmark of a greater degree of involvement than might be recognised or acknowledged by philosophers themselves. '(T)o set out the traditional liberal distinctions' to be found in conceptions of education, McNamee (1998: 87) points out, renders them 'open to the simple charge of ideology; no matter how internally coherent the thesis ... (they) are always open to counter-ideological critique'. It is necessary, McNamee adds, to recognise that a plurality of conceptions of PE (as well as education) are likely to exist depending upon the 'shared understanding' (1998: 87) of particular groups. Thus, academic philosophers of all varieties, under the 'pretext' of saying what PE is about are 'really saying' what they think it 'ideally should be' (Elias, 1978: 52). For Elias, philosophers, and people in general for that matter, have a tendency to 'confuse fact with ideal, that which is with that which *ought* to be' (Elias, 1978: 118; emphases added).

The 'distinctive role' of the philosophy of PE, according to Reid (1999: 103), might be said to be exploration of the question 'how we conceptualize or think about issues in physical education'. For a figurational sociologist, however, such an undertaking is a quintessentially *sociological* task. From a figurational perspective, what teachers think and why they think it, as well as what they actually do in practice, only becomes fully intelligible with reference to their habituses and contexts. This is the central point of this



study: only an approach that incorporates sociology can adequately explain *why* teachers think *what* they think.

### A figurational sociological epistemology

PE teachers' 'philosophies' (or even, for that matter, the views of professional academic philosophers) cannot readily be understood only, or even mainly, in terms of any apparently abstract reasoning on their part. In the same way that what PE teachers do cannot be understood in isolation from what they think (and, of course, vice-versa), what they think cannot be understood in isolation from them as 'five-dimensional' people. As Elias (1978) put it, people's thoughts and actions are 'bonded' to them as people in their real-life situations. Thus, PE teachers' 'philosophies' cannot be reduced to a process of abstract reasoning in isolation from the figurations of which they are inevitably and always a part.

It is here that the benefits of a sociological (more specifically, figurational) perspective on epistemological issues are apparent. As with agency theorists, the attachment of philosophers of the analytic school 'to individualist liberal ideals of autonomy and freedom', as van Krieken (1998: 45) puts it, gets in the way of their attempts comprehensively and adequately to conceptualise knowledge. One cannot make any sense of knowledge or the process of thinking if one attempts to do so on the basis of a presumption of rationality alone, or even, primarily. Reasoning, as a process, is an acquired ability; that is to say, one that is learned. Acquiring the propensity to reason, however crucial, is only one dimension of the process of thinking. The thinker also needs to be inclined towards applying reason in a sufficiently detached manner if reasoning is to serve the end of attaining object-adequate knowledge. Otherwise, the process of reasoning will inevitably be more or less affected by the magnetic 'pull' of the emotions; that is to say, of the

thinker's involvement. The 'attraction' of involvement is likely to undermine the adequacy of the thought process by pulling reasoning in the direction of the thinker's intuitive, preferred perspective on any given topic.

From a sociological standpoint, appreciation of the more or less ideological nature of conceptions of PE points towards Mannheim's (1960: 71) conclusion: that 'the vain hope of discovering truth in a form which is independent of an historically and socially determined set of meanings will have to be given up'. Indeed, it may be that what pass for philosophies of education and, in the case of this study, of PE, are more accurately viewed as 'justificatory ideologies' rather than, in any sense, 'pure' abstract conceptualisations.

#### **'Philosophies' of PE as justificatory ideologies of PE**

It is claimed, then, that investigating PE teachers' 'philosophies' in the context of the figurations of which they are a part proves far more informative in making sense of their 'philosophies', ideologies and practice than what might be termed the 'grand philosophies' circulating in the subject-community. Having noted such contextual constraints, however, it is important to bear in mind that it remains an open question whether or not these constraints serve to hinder many (and especially male) teachers from pursuing their 'ideal' PE provision. For, it may be that such constraints provide a convenient fund of 'handy' justifications for what, in reality, amount to many teachers' preferred practices: sport and games. PE teachers are more or less predisposed towards particular ideologies. These ideologies, in configuration with the practical constraints they confront, manifest themselves in particular 'philosophies' as well as practices. Such 'philosophies' are better viewed, it is argued, as *justificatory ideologies*.



It is true to say that aspects of PE teachers' 'philosophies' may be more or less related to factual knowledge of a broadly scientific, even philosophical, kind. More often, however, they tend to be an amalgam of values, beliefs and pragmatism and, thus, frequently share one thing in common: a tendency to rely on theoretical knowledge as a 'prop' for a preferred way of seeing the world. Consequently, it is argued that much of the 'knowledge' that constitutes PE teachers' 'philosophies' is, in fact, ideological and, as such, is more or less mythical.

The distortions characteristic of ideological thinking among PE teachers in the present study appeared reminiscent of what Mannheim (1960: 49) would refer to as unwitting 'self-deception'. For the most part, these distortions are a consequence of the social situation teachers found themselves in contemporarily (in the form of their context) as well as over their course of their lives (in the form of their habituses). Such ideological thinking is, frequently, neither the result of deliberate attempts to deceive, at one pole, nor 'error ... (as) the result of a distorted and faulty conceptual apparatus, at the other' (Mannheim, 1960: 54). Teachers' ideologies are more adequately conceptualised as the product of the figurations of which they are a part; that is to say, the particular networks of relationships that serve to constrain and shape their 'philosophies' and practices as they develop and, in the process, make commitment to some ideologies more likely than others.

In this study I have attempted to show how 'philosophies' of PE teachers are embedded in a particular culture at a particular time. PE teachers' thoughts are constrained by their figurations and consequently culled from a common *fund* of everyday ideas. Thus, it is important to note that ideologies, as Dunning (1992: 187) says of theories in general, 'become fashionable for a greater or lesser period of time for extra-scientific reasons' and frequently this



leads to an 'uncritical submission to the authority and prestige of the dominant standards' (Elias in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 231). Mannheim (1960) draws our attention to the empirical tendency for ideologies to develop in conflict situations as a defence of, or attack on, something, and hence their propensity to distort. In this regard, Elias (in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 227) points out that people:

work and live in a world in which almost everywhere groups, small and great, including their own groups, are engaged in a struggle for position and often enough for survival, some trying to rise and better themselves in the teeth of strong opposition, some who have risen before trying to hold on to what they have, and some going down.

Teachers' 'philosophies' were frequently justified 'by drawing upon convenient and readily available rationale' (Waddington *et al.*, 1998: 42). Rationale based upon academic considerations, in particular, tended to lend degrees of respectability (Waddington *et al.*, 1998) to preferred views of PE. Indeed, the point made by Waddington *et al.* regarding gender stereotypes among PE teachers can be generalised to their 'philosophies' as a whole; that is to say:

the recourse of many teachers to pseudo-educational rationales to support ... stereotypical views is perhaps indicative of the amount, and the strength, of resistance to change (Waddington *et al.*, 1998: 44).

Given that diverse and multi-faceted societies contain a plurality of ideologies, it is unsurprising to find that education and PE contain a range of ideologies and vested interests within which some are more prominent than others; and, indeed, they do. PE teachers' 'philosophies' tend to be characterised by a mixture of ideologies, with some (such as health but more especially sport) more prominent than others. However, the dynamic nature of the figurations of which PE teachers are a part means that relatively pre-

eminent ideologies never completely subjugate others; not least because of the differentially powerful influences within the differing figurations (e.g. of women PE teachers, those teaching in deprived areas and so forth).

Given, also, the apparent significance of teachers' habituses and contexts for their views of PE, coupled with constraints on academics to engage, to a greater or lesser extent, in theoretical debate perhaps one should not be surprised to find that teachers have often been criticised in the academic and professional press for being uncritical and unreflective; that is to say, for taking a somewhat 'rosy' and conservative view of what PE 'is about' and what it actually achieves. It has long appeared a widely held belief among physical educationalists that simply participating in sport would lead to the development of desirable personal and social benefits and a number of authors have observed that the PE profession characteristically and routinely fails to reflect upon its rationale and practice. Evans and Davies (1986) have suggested that one reason why PE has largely been neglected as an area of the school curriculum is precisely because teachers of PE themselves have by and large failed to take a 'reflexive attitude' towards their practices and the 'rationales which sustain them'. Indeed, they add that 'Conservatism ... sometimes appears as inherent in the Physical Education profession' (1986: 16). In this regard, Kirk (1992b: 225) points to what he perceives as an apparent ambivalence towards many issues on the part of physical educationalists and believes that 'it suggests an absence of critical awareness of social and cultural phenomena which are of direct relevance to the work (physical educationalists) do'. And yet, it is worth observing that, from a sociological perspective, this should not be at all surprising if one recognises, to put it starkly, that PE is *not* full of philosophers! In addition, claims of conservatism should not surprise us either, for the PE profession is not unique here - this is a normal characteristic of occupational groups who have a built-



in tendency to resist change which threatens to make life highly uncomfortable by disrupting established routines.

Alderson and Crutchley (1990) offer a more detailed attempt to make sense of this perceived state of affairs and suggest that it may be explainable in terms of the following factors: the lack of a constructively critical perspective within teacher training (and hence within teaching itself); the lack of an evaluative perspective and the discouragement of those who have doubts about or wish to question accepted practice; a preoccupation with sport competition and the development of talent; a suspicion that training institutions have recruited to the profession many people who are keenly interested in high-level sport but who are less interested in teaching or the less able pupil; the fact that teachers have neither the time nor the skills to plan and evaluate their own work effectively enough; and, finally, fragmentation within the profession and a lack of unity amongst the various representative organisations.

Despite the intuitive plausibility of such an explanation, from a sociological perspective, Alderson and Crutchley appear to have confused what might, at the risk of over-simplification, be referred to as 'cause and effect'. PE teachers tend to have certain predispositions - certain habituses - and are surrounded by a variety of more or less common constraints. It is perfectly understandable, then, that there exists a lack of critical reflective thinking on the part of PE teachers about what they do. The point is that it is somewhat misguided to place undue emphasis upon the role of PE philosophy or, for that matter, PE teachers' 'philosophies' in the aphoristic sense, as a major determinant of PE teachers' behaviour.

The changing formations that characterise habitus are not yet as pronounced in the world of the PE teacher as some might suppose. The 'continual



adjustment of human conduct and action to particular social conditions' (van Krieken, 1998: 174) appears manifest in several developments that PE teachers have been relatively keen to support, such as HRE and examinable PE. Hence, the emergence of various medium or long-term shifts in ideological pre-eminence which tell us something about 'the balance between continuity and change' (Dunning, 1996: 186) in ideological trends in PE. However, it remains an open question, as van Krieken (1998) might put it, whether the habituses of PE teachers have changed (for example, in the direction of concern for health promotion as the primary rationale of PE) to the extent that some (e.g. Murdoch, 1992) might want to think it has. As van Krieken (1998: 70) notes, 'it is largely part of the modern self-perception to want to see ourselves as radically different from our historical predecessors' and, in the case of PE teachers, re-orientation from 'playing' sport towards promoting health might lend academic and professional credence to the subject-community.

In sociological terms, it is important to recognise that the case of PE may be one more example of a tendency to treat as purposive what is, in fact, by and large unplanned: a consequence of the 'to-ing and fro-ing' of the power-ratios within and without PE. Whilst not planned, nor indeed intended, many developments in PE (such as the continuing pre-eminence of team games and sport in curricular and extra-curricular PE) have not been unstructured nor have they been random. Although not deliberately developed in a particular direction, trends in ideological influence have developed a recognisable pattern: one that reflects both the ideological inclinations of a large number of (especially male) PE teachers and a variety of influential groups in the PE policy-community. Teachers' 'philosophies' of extra-curricular PE in particular, as well as their professed practice, tell us one very important thing: namely, that when they can, when given a relatively free hand, many PE

teachers (female as well as male) are inclined to choose sport. When the constraints of NCPE, classroom management and such like are diminished, many PE teachers tend to fall back on their own commitments and values; they fall back on sport. Such tendencies act as a kind of self-constraint of teachers upon themselves. They are, in turn, exacerbated by wider social processes, such as the emergence of a market in education and official and semi-official publications that have served to renew emphasis upon sport and, in particular, team games. At the same time, nonetheless, to the extent that concerns internal to the profession (e.g. status) figure with wider social developments and processes (health concerns) traditionally pre-eminent ideologies (such as sport) have not gone unchallenged or, for that matter, unmodified.

The 'fundamental changes in educational philosophies and organization' (Waddington *et al.*, 1998: 34) have been mirrored, at least in part, by the emergence of health and, to a lesser extent, education for leisure/ 'sport for all' justificatory ideologies in PE teachers' 'philosophies'. Nonetheless, there was substantial evidence in this study to suggest that both male and female PE teachers' 'philosophies' remain strongly wedded to the sporting ideology first and foremost. NCPE, alongside other constraints at the national level, has tended to reinforce the existing balance in favour of a sporting justificatory ideology. With this later point in mind, I now want to reflect briefly upon the policy implications of this study, particularly with regard to recent developments at the national level of PE teachers' figurations.

### Policy implications and recent developments

In the course of developing research into the philosophies and ideologies of PE, I have come to understand the significance of the truism that PE teachers are not philosophers! More particularly, I have come to appreciate that - *pace*



my own interest in abstract philosophical questions - it is important to understand that what one might loosely call the 'philosophies' of PE teachers are shaped largely by their lived experiences as PE teachers. In this context it is important to understand that PE teachers are no more likely than are any other group of educated middle-class workers to engage in what Waddington (1975: 48) has called 'the consideration of abstract philosophical principles'. Rather, insofar as teachers consider the nature and purposes of PE, their thoughts and behaviours are likely to arise from a figuration of their habituses and contexts. In particular, their 'philosophies' are likely to reflect *practical* concerns, relating to the day-to-day constraints and problems of their work (e.g. the requirements of NCPE, timetabling and staffing difficulties, classroom control and 'coping with the kids'). PE teachers are, as it were, at the 'sharp end' of PE; it is the teachers who perform the practice of PE. If we wish to understand teachers' 'philosophies' of PE, then we must study them not as abstract philosophical systems of ideas, but rather as practical, everyday 'philosophies' which provide practical guides to action as well as a justification for those actions. It is particularly interesting to consider the policy implications of such a realisation in relation to recent developments. In this final section, therefore, I want to briefly consider the policy implications of this study for several groups of people who, in one way or another attempt to influence PE teachers' views of their subject as well as their practice: teacher trainers and academics as well as Government ministers and officials.

Whilst sociologists cannot say what PE teachers *ought* to be doing they can analyse and seek to understand why they *do* what they do and why they *think* what they think. At the same time, sociologists are in a position to throw light upon the prominent ideologies within the subject-community and beyond and the relationship between these and the 'philosophies' (in the aphoristic sense) held by PE teachers. As indicated at the outset of this study, this is



important for several reasons. Firstly, the absence of such an understanding will inevitably mean that PE teachers, teacher trainers and academics, will be likely not only to misunderstand and 'talk past one another'. Secondly, the share of resources devoted to particular conceptions of PE and particular aims for PE will reflect the degree of power maintained by particular groups favouring particular conceptions. All philosophising and policy-making, it is argued, needs to be sociologically informed if it is to be concerned with *realistic* aims in PE.

An informative illustration of the problems associated with a failure to grasp the lessons to be learned from a sociological study of PE has come recently (at the level of policy-making) in several pronouncements from the new Chair of Sport England (and ex-professional footballer), Trevor Brooking, and the Minister for Sport, Kate Hoey. Brooking has recently been quoted (Leisure Opportunities, 1999) as suggesting that curricular and extra-curricular PE are in need of an overhaul. He claimed that the '(sporting) skills (of pupils) have slid dramatically, compared to when he was at school, as a result of not enough competitive sport and not enough practice out of school hours' (p. 2). Brooking went on to say: 'What we've got to do is try and *put a fun and enjoyment factor into sport and teach technical skills* without the pressure of success at all costs' (emphasis added). It is evident that the Chair of Sport England and PE teachers are, indeed, 'talking past one another', not least inasmuch as the former is clearly unaware that *enjoyment of sport* is one aspect of PE teachers' 'philosophies' and practice that he need not be concerned about.

Around the time of Brooking's statement, the Minister for Sport commented that the proposals for the 2000 revision of NCPE aimed '"to increase flexibility and promote participation by providing a wider choice of exercise options for

pupils to select from” (cited in Davies, 1999: 40). The proposals under consideration in the current revision would make the activity area of games at Key Stage 4 an option rather than a requirement. Such an aim would be ‘in tune’ with many teachers’ ostensible desire for greater ‘activity choice’, among older pupils especially. Nevertheless, this is an aim that appears somewhat ‘out of tune’ with the policies of OFSTED, as well as subsequent comments from the Minister herself, who acknowledged that ““bridging” will need to take place between the two Government departments’ (Davies, 1999: 40) (i.e. those of DfEE and DCM&S) insofar as she “wants to make sure that no school will use it (that is, the proposed loosening of the requirement for games at Key Stage 4) as an excuse for not having team sport for anybody” (p. 40). The data in this study suggests that, as far as PE teachers are concerned, ‘activity choice’ and sport are not mutually exclusive. PE teachers have a deep attachment to both. Nevertheless, it is apparent that whilst PE teachers, academics and teacher trainers appear keen to establish their academic credentials and thus their professional status, this does not seem to be the role that Government and the Sports Council have in mind for PE.

The Minister for Sport’s apparent commitment to “changing the ethos of school sport, and *involving parents more*” (Davies, 1999: 40; emphasis added) suggests that the constraints operating at the national and local level of PE teachers’ figurations will constrain them even more in the near future towards a sporting ideology. Insofar as such an ideology is more or less prominent in the ‘philosophies’ of many teachers, recent developments appear unlikely to alter the balance of power and influence within PE tilted, as it is at present, towards sport rather than education for leisure/ ‘sport for all’ or even, for that matter, the ideology of health. It remains to be seen whether national constraints will impact significantly upon the process of academicization in



PE. However, in the light of a sociological appreciation of PE teachers' figurations, it seems unlikely.

If the realities of PE teachers' figurations at the personal, local and national levels are, as is claimed, of far greater significance (in terms of their views of what they are trying to achieve) than the proselytising of PE academics or even the pronouncements of Government officials, it seems evident that to the extent to which academics and politicians fail to engage with a sociological perspective on knowledge in PE they fail to engage with the realities of PE, rather than the mythology of PE. The aim of this study has been to construct a more systematic understanding of PE teachers' 'philosophies' in order to enhance our understanding of the complexities of the process of PE in schools. The message for those 'wise' people - academics and teacher trainers, as well as Government officials - who endeavour to establish influence over the development of the PE curriculum and, for that matter, PE teachers, is that unless they take account of the realities of the people who implement curricula they will be unlikely to achieve their goals. Indeed, they may help to bring about outcomes that they neither want nor intend.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> In Eliasian terms, the lot of PE teachers at both the local and national levels bears comparison with Scotson and Elias (1994) notion of 'outsider' groups in relation to those who might be considered more 'established'. Eminently accusable in relation to a range of concerns stretching from sporting performance of national teams through moral awareness/character development to the 'health of the nation', the 'philosophies' of teachers in the present study suggests that many of the claims made of teachers in relation to their 'radical', 'progressive' (Evans, 1990b) or other such views on the nature and purposes of their subject



could only be found 'among a very small minority: a "minority of the worst"  
(Elias, 1965; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 250).

## References

- Abbot, A. (1991) 'The future of professions: occupation and expertise in the age of organization', *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 8, 17-42.
- Alderson, J. and Crutchley, D. (1990) 'Physical education in the national curriculum', in Neil Armstrong (Ed.), *New Directions in Physical Education Volume One*. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics, pp. 37-62.
- Alexander, K., Taggart, A. and Thorpe, S. (1996) 'A spring in their steps? Possibilities for professional renewal through sports education in Australian schools', *Sport, Education and Society*, 1 (1), 23-46.
- Almond, L. (1983) 'A rationale for health-related fitness', *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 19 (2), 5-10.
- Almond, L. (1989) *The Place of Physical Education in Schools*. London, Kogan Page.
- Almond, L. (1996) 'A new vision for physical education', in N. Armstrong (Ed.) *New Directions in Physical Education: Change and Innovation*. London, Cassell Education, pp. 189-198.
- Almond, L., Harrison, P. and Laws, C. (1996) 'Sport: Raising the Game - a physical education perspective', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 27 (3), 6-11.
- American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, The (AAHPERD) (1980) *Health Related Physical Fitness Test Manual*. Reston, VA. AAHPERD.
- Armour, K. (1997) 'Developing a personal philosophy on the nature and purpose of physical education: life history reflections of physical education teachers at Citylimits high school', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (1), 68-82.
- Armour, K. and Jones, R. (1998) *Physical Education Teachers' Lives and Careers: PE, Sport and Educational Status*. Basingstoke, The Falmer Press.

Armstrong, N. (1987) 'Why implement a health-related fitness programme?', *British Journal of Physical Education*, 15 (6), 173-175.

Armstrong, N. (1990) 'Children's physical activity patterns: the implications for physical education', in N. Armstrong (Ed.), *New Directions in Physical Education 1*. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics, pp. 1-16.

Armstrong, N. (1991) 'Health-related physical activity', in N. Armstrong and A. Sparkes (Eds.), *Issues in Physical Education*. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics, pp. 139-154.

Armstrong, N. and Welsman, J. (1997) *Young People and Physical Activity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Armstrong, N., McManus, A., Welsman, J. and Kirby, B. (1996) 'Physical activity patterns and aerobic fitness among prepubescents', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (1), 19-29.

Armstrong, N., Welsman, J. and Kirby, B. (1998) 'Aerobic fitness and physical activity patterns of young people', in K. Green and K. Hardman (Eds.) *Physical Education: A Reader*. Aachen, Meyer & Meyer Verlag, pp. 105-115.

Arnold, P. J. (1991) 'Health promotion in society, education and the movement curriculum', *Physical Education Review*, 14 (2), 104-118.

Arnold, P. J. (1992) 'Sport as a valued human practice: a basis for the consideration of some moral issues in sport', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 26 (2), 237-255.

Arnold, P. J. (1997) *Sport, Ethics and Education*. London, Cassell.

Baker, J. A. W., Hardman, K. and Pan, D. W. (1996) 'A perceptual mapping approach to determine an appropriate descriptor for our field', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (1), 75-81.

Biddle, S. (1987) *Foundations of Health Related Fitness*. London, Ling Publishing.



- Biddle, S. (1989) “Innovation without change” and the ideology of individualism: a reply to Sparkes’, *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 20 (2), 65-66.
- Blake, B. (1996) ‘Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in physical education’, *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 32 (1), 6-16.
- Boronski, T. (1987) *Sociology in Focus: Knowledge*. New York, Longman.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bowling, A. (1997) *Research Methods in Health: Investigating Health and Health Services*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Bray, S. (1991) ‘Health-related physical activity in the primary school’, in N. Armstrong and A. Sparkes (Eds.), *Issues in Physical Education*, Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics, pp. 170-189.
- Brooker, R., Kirk, D., Braiuka, S. and Bransgrove, A. (forthcoming) ‘Implementing a game-sense approach to teaching junior high school basketball in a naturalistic setting’, *European Physical Education Review*.
- Burgess, E. (1996) ‘Our sporting future: “Sport - Raising the Game” one year on’, *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 27 (3), 12-14.
- Caldecott, S. (1992) ‘Teachers’ practices, perceptions and future intentions regarding health related fitness’, *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 28 (1), 33-39.
- Caldwell, S. (1987) ‘How can physical education improve its status in public schools ?’, *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 58 (6), 7.
- Cale, L. (forthcoming) ‘A whole school approach to physical activity promotion’, *European Physical Education Review*.
- Cale, L. and Harris, J. (1993) ‘Exercise recommendations for children and young people’, *Physical Education Review*, 16 (2), 89-98.

Capel, S. (1996a) 'Physical education and sport - how can they work together to "raise the game" in schools?', *Pedagogy in Practice*, 2 (1), 31-44.

Capel, S. (1996b) 'Recent government influences on education, physical education and initial teacher training in England and Wales', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 21 (1), 29-31.

Carr, D. (1979) 'Aims of physical education', *Physical Education Review*, 2 (2), 91-100.

Carr, D. (1997) 'Physical education and value diversity: a response to Andrew Reid', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (2), 95-105.

Carroll, B. (1994) *Assessment in Physical Education: A Teacher's Guide to the Issues*. London, The Falmer Press.

Carroll, B. (1998) 'The emergence and growth of examinations in physical education', in K. Green and K. Hardman (Eds.) *Physical Education: A Reader*. Aachen, Meyer & Meyer Verlag, pp. 335-352.

Carvel, J. (1999) '£60m sport fund to fire pupils' will to win', *The Guardian*, June 21st, p. 9.

Casbon, C. (1999) 'National Curriculum review update - key points in the review of the Order', *British Journal of Physical Education*, 30 (1), 6-7.

Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) (1960) *Sport and the Community*. London, C.C.P.R.

Centre for Research into Sport and Society (CRSS) (1992) *Research Methods*, Module 5 Unit 2. Leicester, University of Leicester.

Centre for Research into Sport and Society (CRSS) (1993) *Research Methods*, Module 5 Unit 2. Leicester, University of Leicester.

Centre for Research into Sport and Society (CRSS) (1998)  
[www.leicester.ac.uk/crss](http://www.leicester.ac.uk/crss)



- Chambers English Dictionary (1990) *Chambers English Dictionary*. Edinburgh, W. and R. Chambers.
- Chen, A. and Ennis, C. D. (1996) 'Teaching value-laden curricula in physical education', *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 15, 338-354.
- Collins, M. (1995) 'Sights on sport', *Leisure Management*, September, 1995, 26-28.
- Colquhoun, D. (1991) 'Health based physical education: the ideology of healthism and victim blaming', *Physical Education Review*, 14 (1), 5-13.
- Colquhoun, D. (1992) 'Technocratic rationality and the medicalization of the physical education curriculum', *Physical Education Review*, 15 (1), 5-12.
- Colquhoun, D. and Kirk, D. (1987) 'Investigating the problematic relationship between health and physical education: an Australian study', *Physical Education Review*, 10 (2), 100-109.
- Colwell, S. (1999) 'Feminisms and figural sociology: contributions to understandings of sports, physical education and sex/gender', *European Physical Education Review*, 5 (3) 241-262.
- Cooke, G. (1996) 'Sport, coaching and physical education', *National Coaching Foundation Newsletter*, 6-9.
- Corbin, D. E., Metal-Corbin, J. and Biddle, S. (1989) 'Educating children about ageing and lifetime health-related fitness', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 20 (4), 191-192.
- Cox, B.D., Blaxter, M., Buckle, A.L.J. et al. (1987) *The Health and Lifestyle Survey*. Cambridge, The Health Promotion Research Trust.
- Cox, B.D., Blaxter, M., Buckle, A.L.J. et al. (1993) *The Health and Lifestyle Survey: Seven Years On. A Review..* Cambridge, The Health Promotion Research Trust.
- Crutchley, D. H. and Robinson, L. (1996) 'Teachers' perceptions of "planning", "performing" and "evaluating" within National Curriculum Physical Education', *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 32 (1), 46-54.



Curtner-Smith, M. D. (1995) 'The impact of the National Curriculum on secondary school physical education: a qualitative case study in one English town', *Unpublished Manuscript*.

Davies, G. A. (1999) 'Hoey has strategy to return team games to the agenda', *The Daily Telegraph*, September 17th, p. 40.

Denscombe, M. (1998) *The Good Research Guide*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

Department for Education and Employment (1996) *Sports Colleges: A Guide for Schools*, London, HMSO.

Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office (DES/WO) (1991) *Physical Education for Ages 5-16. Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Wales*. London, DES/WO.

Department of National Heritage (DNH) (1995) *Sport: Raising the Game*, London, DNH.

Department of National Heritage (DNH) (1996) *Sport: Raising the Game. One Year On*. London, DNH.

Dévis-Dévis, J. and Sparkes, A. (1999) 'Burning the book: a biographical study of a pedagogically-inspired identity crisis in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 135-152.

Dowling-Naess, F. (1996) 'Life-events and curriculum change: the life-history of a Norwegian physical educator', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (1), 41-53.

Dunning E. (1992) 'Figurational sociology and the sociology of sport', in Centre for Research into Sport and Society, *Theories of Sport*, Module 2 Unit 3. Leicester, CRSS, pp. 147-221.

- Dunning, E. (1993) 'Figurational sociology and the sociology of sport', in Centre for Research into Sport and Society, *Theories of Sport*, Module 2 Unit 3. Leicester, CRSS, University of Leicester, pp. 147-221.
- Dunning, E. (1995) 'Figurational sociology and the sociology of sport', *Theories and Methods in the Study of Sport*, Module 5 Unit 8, Leicester, CRSS, University of Leicester, pp. 147-221.
- Dunning, E. (1996) 'On problems of the emotions in sport and leisure: critical and counter-critical comments on the conventional and figurational sociologies of sport and leisure', *Leisure Studies*, 15 (3), 185-207.
- Dunning, E. (1999) *Sport Matters*. London, Routledge.
- Elias, N. (1956) 'Problems of involvement and detachment', *British Journal of Sociology*, 7, 226-252.
- Elias, N. (1978) *What is Sociology?* London, Hutchinson.
- Elias, N. (1993) *Mozart. Portrait of a Genius*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Ellis, M. D. (1988) *The Business of Physical Education*. Champaign, Ill. Human Kinetics.
- Elvin, I. (1990) *Sport and Physical Recreation*, Harlow, Longman/ILAM.
- English Sports Council (ESC) (1997) *England, the Sporting Nation: A Strategy (consultation document)*. London, English Sports Council.
- Evans, J. (1990a) 'Ability, position and privilege in school physical education', in David Kirk and Richard Tinning (Eds.), *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture: Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. London, The Falmer Press, pp. 139-168.
- Evans, J. (1990b) 'Defining a subject: the rise and rise of the new PE?', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11 (2), 155-169.



Evans, J. (1992) 'A short paper about people, power and educational reform. Authority and representation in ethnographic research. Subjectivity, ideology and educational reform: the case of physical education', in Andrew C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in Physical Education and Sport: Exploring Alternative Visions*. London, The Falmer Press, pp. 231-247.

Evans, J. (1995) 'Reconstructing teacher education', *European Physical Education Review*, 1 (2), 111-121.

Evans, J. and Davies, B. (1986) 'Sociology, schooling and physical education', in John Evans (Ed.) *Physical Education, Sport and Schooling-Studies in the Sociology of Physical Education*. Lewes, The Falmer Press, pp. 11-17.

Evans, J. and Penney, D. (1995) 'The politics of pedagogy: making a National Curriculum Physical Education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 10 (1), 27-44.

Evans, J. and Williams, T. (1989) 'Moving up and getting out: the classed and gendered opportunities of physical education teachers', in T. Templin and P. Schempp (Eds.) *Socialization into Physical Education: Learning to Teach*. Indianapolis, Benchmark Press, pp. 235-251.

Evans, J., Davies, B. and Penney, D. (1996) 'Teachers, teaching and the social construction of gender', *Sport, Education and Society*, 1 (2), 165-184.

Evans, J., Penney, D. and Bryant, A. (1993) 'Theorising implementation: a preliminary comment on power and process in policy research', *Physical Education Review*, 16 (1), 5-11.

Fejgin, N. (1995) 'The academicization of physical education teacher training: a discourse analysis case study', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 30 (2), 179-190.

Fisher, R. (1996) 'Gifted children and young people in physical education and sport', in Neil Armstrong (Ed.) *New Directions in Physical Education: Change and Innovation*. London, Cassell Education, pp. 131-143.

Fitzclarence, L. and Tinning, R. (1990) 'Challenging hegemonic physical education: contextualizing physical education as an examinable subject', in Kirk, D. and Tinning, R. (Eds.) *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture*:



*Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. London, The Falmer Press, pp. 169-192.

Flew, A. (1984) 'Preface', in A. Flew (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (2nd edition). London, Pan Books Ltd., pp. vii-xi.

Fox, K.R. (1983a) 'Physical lifeskills: further thoughts on health-related fitness', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 14 (3), 68.

Fox, K.R. (1983b) 'Teaching physical lifeskills: practical ideas on health-related fitness', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 14 (5), 126-128.

Fox, K. (1992) 'Education for exercise and the National Curriculum proposals: a step forwards or backwards', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 23 (1), 8-11.

Fox, K. (1993) 'Exercise and the promotion of public health: more messages for the mission', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 24 (3), 36-39.

Fox, K. (1996) 'Physical activity promotion and the active school', in Neil Armstrong (Ed.) *New Directions in Physical Education: Change and Innovation*. London, Cassell Education, pp. 94-109.

Freidson, E. (1994) *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Frisby, D. and Sayer, D. (1986) *Society*. London, Ellis Horwood Ltd. and Tavistock Publications.

George, L. and Kirk, D. (1988) 'The limits of change in physical education: ideologies, teachers and the experiences of physical activity', in J. Evans (Ed.) *Teachers, Teaching and Control in Physical Education*. Lewes, The Falmer Press, pp. 145-155.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

- Gilliver, K. (1999) 'Physical education 2000: review of the National Curriculum', *British Journal of Physical Education*, 30 (1), 4-5.
- Godfrey, J. and Holtham, G. (1999) *Sporting Lives: A Vision for Sport in the UK*. London, Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Goudsblom, J. and Mennell, S. (Eds.) (1998) *The Norbert Elias Reader. A Biographical Selection*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Green, K. (1989) *Autonomy as a Concept in the Literature of the Philosophy of Education*. M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Birmingham.
- Green, K. (1994a) *Health-Related Exercise and Lifelong Participation: A Sociological Analysis of a 'Marriage of Convenience' in Physical Education*. M.Sc. Dissertation, University of Leicester.
- Green, K. (1994b) 'Meeting the challenge: health-related exercise and the encouragement of lifelong participation', *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 30 (3), 27-34.
- Green, K. and Scraton, S. (1998) 'Gender, coeducation and secondary physical education: a brief review', in K. Green and K. Hardman (Eds.), *Physical Education: A Reader*. Aachen, Meyer and Meyer Verlag, pp. 272-290.
- Guardian, The (1998) *Guardian Education*, December 1st, pp. 5-26.
- Hardman, K. (1998) 'To be or not to be? The present and future of school physical education in international context', in K. Green and K. Hardman (Eds.), *Physical Education: A Reader*. Aachen, Meyer and Meyer Verlag, pp. 353-382.
- Hargreaves, J. (1994) *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*, London, Routledge.
- Harris, J. (1994a) 'Health related exercise in the National Curriculum: results of a pilot study in secondary schools', *The British Journal of Physical Education Research Supplement* 14, 6-11.



Harris, J. (1994b) 'Young people's perceptions of health, fitness and exercise: implications for the teaching of health related exercise', *Physical Education Review*, 17 (2), 143-151.

Harris, J. and Cale, L. (1997) 'Activity promotion in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (1), 58-67.

Hendry, L. B. (1976) 'Survival in a marginal role: the professional identity of the physical education teacher', in N. J. Whitehead and L. B. Hendry (Eds.) *Teaching Physical Education in England - Description and Analysis*. London, Lepus, pp. 89-102.

Hendry, L. B. (1986) 'Changing schools in a changing society: the role of physical education', in John Evans (Ed.), *Physical Education, Sport and Schooling: Studies in the Sociology of Physical Education*. Basingstoke, The Falmer Press, pp. 41-70.

Hendry, L. B., Shucksmith, J., Love, J. G. and Glendenning, A. (1993) *Young People's Leisure and Lifestyles*. London, Routledge.

Henry, I. (1993) *The Politics of Leisure Policy*. Basingstoke, MacMillan.

Hirst, P. (1994a) 'From forms of knowledge to forms of practice', *Working Together for Physical Education*, The National Conference for Physical Education, Sport and Dance, Loughborough University, 9th July, 1994.

Hirst, P. (1994b) Personal communication. *National Conference for Physical Education, Sport and Dance*, Loughborough University, 9th July, 1994.

Holt, R. (1989) *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Houlihan, B. (1991) *The Government and Politics of Sport*, London, Routledge.

Houlihan, B. (1999a) 'Politics and policy in sport', *Guest Lecture*, University College Chester, 24th February, 1999.

Houlihan, B. (1999b) 'Sporting excellence, schools and sports development: the politics of crowded policy spaces', paper presented to the CRSS/EPER



Conference on *Physical Education and Sporting Excellence*, University of Leicester, 11th September, 1999.

Johns, D. J., Gilbert, K. and Shuttleworth, J. (1994) 'Justifying terminology and changing discourses: from physical education to human movement studies', *Unpublished Manuscript*.

Jones, C. and Bate, D. (1990) 'Health-related fitness and physical education: compatibility explored', *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 26 (2), 5-11.

Katch, F. (1989) 'The naming debate: movement science', *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 60 (8), 71-72.

Kilminster, R. and Wouters, C. (1995) 'From philosophy to sociology: Elias and the neo-Kantians (a response to Benjo Maso)', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 12 (3), 81-120.

Kirk, D. (1990) 'Defining the subject: gymnastics and gender in British physical education', in David Kirk and Richard Tinning (Eds.), *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture: Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. London. The Falmer Press, pp. 43-66.

Kirk, D. (1992a) *Defining Physical Education*. London, The Falmer Press.

Kirk, D. (1992b) 'Curriculum history in physical education: a source of struggle and a force for change', in Andrew C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in Physical Education and Sport: Exploring Alternative Visions*. London, The Falmer Press, pp. 210-230.

Kirk, D. (1999) 'Ways of thinking about the relationship between school physical education and sports performance', paper presented to the CRSS/EPER Conference on *Physical Education and Sporting Excellence*, University of Leicester, 11th September, 1999.

Kirk, D. and Tinning, R. (Eds.) (1990) *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture: Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. London, The Falmer Press.

Kretchmar, S. (1989) 'The naming debate: exercise and sport science', *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 60 (8), 68-69.

- Laker, A. (1996a) 'The aims of physical education within the revised National Curriculum: lip service to the affective?', *Pedagogy in Practice*, 2 (1), 24-30.
- Laker, A. (1996b) 'Learning to teach through the physical as well as of the physical', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 27 (3), 18-22.
- Leisure Opportunities (1999) 'Brooking talks on sport', *Leisure Opportunities*, 242, September 1st-13th, p. 2.
- McCormack, A. (1997) 'Classroom management problems, strategies and influences in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (2), 102-115.
- McGeorge, S. (1992) 'Results of the Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey - implications for P.E. teachers', *Health and Physical Education Project Newsletter*, 31, 1-3.
- McNamee, M. (1998) 'Philosophy and physical education: analysis, epistemology and axiology', *European Physical Education Review*, 4 (1), 75-91.
- McIntosh, P. and Charlton, V. (1985) *The Impact of Sport for All: 1966-1994*. London, Sports Council.
- Macdonald, K. M. (1995) *The Sociology of the Professions*. London, Sage Publications.
- Macdonald, D. and Kirk, D. (1996) 'Private lives, public lives: surveillance, identity and self in the work of beginning physical education teachers', *Sport, Education and Society*, 1 (1), 59-75.
- Macdonald, D., Abernathy, P. and Bramich, K. (1997) 'A profile of first year human movement studies Students', *Unpublished Manuscript*.
- Macdonald, D., Kirk, D. and Braiuka, S. (1999) 'The social construction of the physical activity field at the school/university interface', *European Physical Education Review*, 5 (1), 31-51.



- Maguire, J. (1988) 'Research note: doing figural sociology: some preliminary observations on methodological issues and sensitising concepts', *Leisure Studies*, 7 (2), 187-193.
- Mann, M. (1983) (Ed.) *Macmillan Student Encyclopaedia of Sociology*. London, The Macmillan Press.
- Mannheim, K. (1960) *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Mason, V. (1995) *Young People and Sport in England, 1994. The Views of Teachers and Children*. London, The Sport Council.
- Mawer, M. (1996) *The Effective Teaching of Physical Education*. New York, Longman.
- Mennell, S. and Goudsblom, J. (Eds.) (1998) *Norbert Elias on Civilization, Power and Knowledge*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Mercer, T. (1989) 'Being habitually active in leisure time: today's best buy for public health', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 20 (3), 137-144.
- Munrow, D. (1972) *Physical Education: A Discussion of Principles*. London. Bell & Hyman.
- Murdoch, E. (1987) *Sport in Schools*. London, The Sports Council.
- Murdoch, E. (1992) 'Physical education today', *Bulletin of Physical Education*, 28 (2), 15-24.
- Murphy, P., Sheard, K. and Waddington, I. (forthcoming) 'Figural sociology and its application to sport'.
- Oakeshott, M. (1972) 'Education: the engagement and its frustration', in Robert Dearden, Paul Hirst and Richard Peters (Eds.), *A Critique of Current Educational Aims, Part I of Education and the Development of Reason*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 17-47.



Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (1998) *Secondary Education 1993-97 The Curriculum*. <http://www.open.gov.gov.uk>.

O'Hear, A. (1981) *Education, Society and Human Nature. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Outhwaite, W. (1983) 'knowledge, sociology of', in Michael Mann (Ed.) *The Macmillan Student Encyclopaedia of Sociology*. London, Macmillan Press, pp. 185-186.

Park, R. J. (1994) 'A decade of the body: researching and writing about the history of health, fitness, exercise and sport, 1983-1993', *Journal of Sport History*, 21 (1), 59-82.

Parry, J. (1988) 'Physical education, justification and the National Curriculum', *Physical Education Review*, 11 (2), 106-118.

Parry, J. (1998) 'Reid on knowledge and justification in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 4 (1), 70-74.

Penney, D. (1998) 'Positioning and defining physical education, sport and health in the Curriculum', *European Physical Education Review*, 4 (2), 117-126.

Penney, D. and Evans, J. (1997) 'Naming the game. Discourse and domination in physical education and sport in England and Wales', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (1), 21-32.

Penney, D. and Evans, J. (1998) 'Dictating the play: Government direction in physical education and sports policy development in England and Wales', in K. Green and K. Hardman (Eds.), *Physical Education: A Reader*. Aachen, Meyer and Meyer Verlag, pp. 84-101.

Penney, D. and Harris, D. (1997) 'Extra-curricular physical education: more of the same for the more able', *Sport, Education and Society*, 2 (1), 41-54.

Physical Education Association - United Kingdom (PEA-UK) (1994) 'Physical education in the National Curriculum - draft revised order (SCAA) April 1994', *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 25 (2), 5-6.

Placek, J. H., Dodds, P., Doolittle, S. A., Portman, P. A., Ratliffe, T. A. and Pinkham, K. M. (1995) 'Teaching recruits' physical education backgrounds and beliefs about purposes for their subject matter', *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 14, 246-261.

Prain, V. and Hickey, C. (1995) 'Using discourse analysis to change physical education', *QUEST*, 47, 76-90.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Department for Education and Employment (QCA & DfEE) (1999) *The Review of the National Curriculum in England. The Secretary of State's Proposals*. London, QCA.

Reid, A. (1996a) 'The concept of physical education in current curriculum and assessment policy in Scotland', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (1), 7-18.

Reid, A. (1996b) 'Knowledge, practice and theory in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (2), 94-104.

Reid, A. (1997) 'Value pluralism and physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (1), 6-20.

Reid, A. (1999) 'Folk psychology, neuroscience and explanation in physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 5 (2), 101-120.

Revell, P. (1999) 'Less teamwork, more fun?', *Guardian Education*, May 18th, p. 4.

Roberts, K. (1995) 'School Children and Sport', in Lesley Lawrence, Elizabeth Murdoch and Stan Parker (Eds.), *Professional and Development Issues in Leisure, Sport and Education*, Brighton, Leisure Studies Association, Publication No. 56, pp. 337-348.

Roberts, K. (1996a) 'Young people, schools, sport and government policy', *Sport, Education and Society*, 1 (1), 47-57.

Roberts, K. (1996b) 'Youth cultures and sport: the success of school and community sport provisions in Britain', *European Physical Education Review*, 2 (2), 105-115.



- Roberts, K. (1997) 'Same activities, different meanings: British youth cultures in the 1990s', *Leisure Studies*, 16 (1), 1-16.
- Roberts, K. and Brodie, D. (1992) *Inner -City Sport: Who Plays and What are the Benefits?* Culemborg, Giordano Bruno.
- Rose, C. (1996) 'An example of physical education curriculum policy', *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 32 (3), 32-41.
- Schempp, P. G. (1989) 'Apprenticeship-of-observation and the development of physical education teachers', in T. J. Templin and P. G. Schempp (Eds.) *Socialisation into Physical Education: Learning to Teach*. Indiana, Benchmark Press, 13-37.
- School Sport Forum (1988) *Sport and Young People: Partnerships and Action*. London, The Sports Council.
- Scotson, J. and Elias, N. (1994) *The Established and the Outsiders: A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. London, Sage Publications.
- Scruton (1992) *Shaping Up to Womanhood. Gender and Girls' Physical Education*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Scruton, S. (1995) '"Boys muscle in where angels fear to tread" - girls' sub-cultures and physical activity', in C. Critcher, P. Bramham and A. Tomlinson (Eds.) *Sociology of Leisure: A Reader*. London, E. & F.N. Spon, pp. 117-129.
- Siedentop, D. (1994) *Sport Education*. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics.
- Slattery, M. (1985) *The ABC of Sociology*. Basingstoke, Macmillan Education.
- Sleap, M. (1991) 'Promoting health in primary school PE', in N. Armstrong (Ed.), *New Directions in Physical Education 1*. Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics.
- Sparkes, A. C. (1990) 'Winners, losers and the myth of rational change in physical education: towards an understanding of interests and power in innovation', in D. Kirk and R. Tinning (Eds.), *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture: Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. Lewes, The Falmer Press, pp. 193-224



- Sparkes, A. C. (1992) 'The paradigms debate: an extended review and a celebration of difference', in Andrew C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in Physical Education and Sport: Exploring Alternative Visions*. Lewes, The Falmer Press, pp. 9-60.
- Sports Council (1988) *Sport in the Community: Into the 90s: A Strategy for Sport 1988-1993*. London, Sports Council.
- Sports Council (1992a) *Young People and Sport: A Consultation Document*. London, Sports Council.
- Sports Council (1992b) *Sport in the Nineties - New Horizons*. London, Sports Council.
- Sports Council for Wales (SCW) (1995) *The Pattern of Play: Physical Education in Welsh Secondary Schools: 1990 to 1994*, Cardiff, Sports Council for Wales.
- Sproat, I. (1996) 'Minister for Sport's foreword', *Sport: Raising the Game. The First Year Report*. London, DNH.
- Talbot, M. (1995a) 'The politics of sport and physical education', in Scott Fleming, Margaret Talbot and Alan Tomlinson (Eds.) *Policy and Politics in Sport, Physical Education and Leisure: Themes and Issues*. Brighton, LSA Pub. No. 55, pp. 3-26.
- Talbot, M. (1995b) 'Physical education and the National Curriculum: some political issues', *Leisure Studies Association Newsletter*. No. 41: July 1995, 20-30.
- Talbot, M. (1998) 'Physical education: contested positions, competing discourses - the need for renaissance?', *European Physical Education Review*, 4 (2), 104-116.
- Theodoulides, A. and Armour, K. M. (1998) 'Planning, performing and evaluating in the National Curriculum Physical Education', *European Journal of Physical Education*, 3, 129-144.

- Thorpe, R. (1996) 'Physical education: beyond the curriculum', in Neil Armstrong (Ed.) *New Directions in Physical Education: Change and Innovation*. London, Cassell Education, pp. 145-156.
- Tinning, R. (1991) 'Problem-setting and ideology in health based physical education: an Australian perspective', *Physical Education Review*, 14 (1), 40-49.
- Underwood, G., Bird, S. and Farmiloe, H. (1993) 'Pupils' knowledge and understanding of health related fitness in secondary schools', *The Bulletin of Physical Education*, 29 (3), 47-63.
- van Krieken, R. (1998) *Key Sociologists: Norbert Elias*. London, Routledge.
- Waddington, I. (1975) 'The development of medical ethics - a sociological analysis', *Medical History*, 19, 36-51.
- Waddington, I. (1995) 'Professions', in A. and J. Kuper (Eds.), *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 650-651.
- Waddington, I. and Murphy P. (1992) 'Drugs, sport and ideologies', in E. Dunning and C. Rojek (Eds.), *Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. Routledge, London, pp. 36-64.
- Waddington, I., Malcom, D. and Green, K. (1997) 'Sport, health and physical education: a reconsideration', *European Physical Education Review*, 3 (2), 165-182.
- Waddington, I., Malcom, D. and Cobb, J. (1998) 'Gender stereotyping and physical education', *European Physical Education Review*, 4 (1), 34-46.
- Waring, M. and Almond, L. (1995) 'Games-centred games - a revolutionary or evolutionary alternative for games teaching', *European Physical Education Review*, 1 (1), 55-66.
- Weber, M. (1949) '"Objectivity" in social science and social policy', in E. Shils and H. Finch (Eds.), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New York, Free Press, pp. 68-103.

Williams, A. (1988) 'The historiography of health and fitness in physical education', *British Journal of Physical Education Research Supplement*, 3, 1-4.

Wilterdink, N. A. (1977) 'Norbert Elias's sociology of knowledge and its significance for the study of the sciences', in Peter R. Gleichmann, Johan Goudsblom and Hermann Korte (Eds.), *Human Figurations: Essays for Norbert Elias*. Amsterdam, Stichting Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift, pp. 110-126.

Wirth, L. (1960) 'Preface', in Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. xiii-xxxi.

Youth Sport Trust (1996) *Bringing Sport to Life ... for Young People*. London, YST.