

If you don't know where you are going, it
doesn't matter what bus you get on:
A personal perspective on aspects of the
current state of physical education and
some areas for consideration to support
future development

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Outline

- Purpose of the presentation
- Perceptions of the current state of physical education and some perceived reasons
- Some areas perceived to be important to improving the current state of physical education
- Summary

Purpose of the presentation

- This presentation is designed to stimulate thinking
- Do you question what you are doing?
- Do you focus on the immediate or engage in deep thinking / critical reflection or do you follow routine?
- Do you focus on the immediate or do you look at the bigger picture of how lessons fit into the whole ?
- It is based on my perception from the UK and elsewhere; there may be differences in the local context

Perceptions of the current state of physical education

- All is not well with the state of physical education
- It works for those who are good at or like the subject, but not for others – it does not help develop competence, confidence, motivation, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the life course for all pupils
- It does not work consistently towards achieving the purposes of physical education

Some perceived reasons for the current state of physical education

- Not confident in the value of the subject within schools
- Trying to be all things to all people rather than working towards a clear (set of) purposes
- Do not clearly articulate what we are trying to achieve
- Limited focus on philosophy, aims and purposes of physical education and the physical education curriculum
- Vicious cycle of learning in some activities, e.g. gymnastics and dance
- Lack of focus on deep thinking/critical thinking/reflection

Some perceived reasons (continued)

In teacher training:

- Tendency to focus on content; for material to be uncoordinated; for there to be lack of integration of knowledge; lack of application of sports science material; the importance of curriculum and pedagogy does not tend to be recognised
- Focus of student teachers on the technical aspects of teaching in order to pass their teaching practice. Therefore need to follow up in early professional development to build on this as gain confidence

Some perceived reasons (continued)

Beyond teacher training

- Professional socialisation
- External pressures
- Wash out effect from training – teach the way they were taught; teach what want to teach not necessarily what is needed
- Routine approach (get more conservative the longer in the profession)
- CPD not generally effective
- Do not base work on evidence/research

So, I believe

- we need to take action to improve the quality of physical education consistently across the system for all pupils and to achieve psychomotor; cognitive and affective outcomes;
- that by doing this we can also increase the status of physical education in the curriculum

So, what do I perceive we need to do?

Some areas perceived to be important to improving the current state of physical education

Be clear about

- What physical education is and how it is defined
- what we are trying to achieve – the aims and purpose of the curriculum and what this means for practice (and recognise effect of own values / beliefs in achieving the goals)

Definitions of physical education

- 'an integral part of the total education process, ...a field of endeavour that has as its aim the improvement of human performance through the medium of physical activities that have been selected with a view to realising this outcome' Bucher (1983: 13).

This focuses on the subject as contributing to education of the whole child

Definitions of physical education (continued)

The National Curriculum for Physical Education in England (*Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2007*) defines physical education for 11-16 year old learners as a subject:

- *which develops pupils' competence and confidence to take part in a range of physical activities that become a central part of their lives, both in and out of school. A high-quality physical education curriculum enables all pupils to enjoy and succeed in many kinds of physical activity. They develop a wide range of skills and the ability to use tactics, strategies and compositional ideas to perform successfully. When they are performing, they think about what they are doing, analyse the situation and make decisions. They also reflect on their own and others' performances and find ways to improve them.*

Definitions of physical education (continued)

These definitions take slightly different approaches. The first stresses the value of physical education as part of education (physical education is not sport or recreation and sport or recreation is not physical education) and the second focuses on the centrality of the movement experience in physical education

I believe that both of these are important for physical education.

Purpose and goals of physical education

The purpose of physical education is to enable students to demonstrate individually and with others the physical skills, practices, and values to enjoy a lifetime of active, healthy living (Singapore PE Teaching and Learning Syllabus, 2014)

Purpose in England

Purpose of study

- A high-quality physical education curriculum inspires all pupils to succeed and excel in competitive sport and other physically demanding activities. It should provide opportunities for pupils to become physically confident in a way which supports their health and fitness. Opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect.

Aims - to ensure that all pupils:

- develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities
- are physically active for sustained periods of time
- engage in competitive sports and activities
- lead healthy, active lives

Physical literacy

A brief definition of physical literacy reads:

‘As appropriate to each individual’s endowment, physical literacy can be described as a disposition, evidenced through the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the life course’ (Whitehead, 2010)

What does this mean for teaching?

Improving the current state of physical education (continued)

- Recognise that physical education is an essential part of the whole school curriculum
- Developmental curriculum that builds over the years and progressive from year to year/stage to stage
- Focus on working towards the purposes of physical education - developing motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the life course

Teacher training

- Recognise the background of students in teacher training as well as their focus of attention (on the immediate)
- Balance between content knowledge (sports science and practical), application of knowledge/research and pedagogical knowledge
- Integrated multi-disciplinary approach
- In depth focus on aims and purposes of physical education and the physical education curriculum
- Deep thinking/critical reflection

Beyond teacher training

CPD to focus on:

- Challenging teachers to engage in deep thinking/critical reflection
- Teachers using evidence/research in schools
- Moving teachers beyond the immediate; Focusing on the 'big picture' - what we are trying to achieve beyond the teaching of an individual lesson/unit of work (although teaching each lesson is important) towards achieving the purposes of physical education through the curriculum, its purposes and how these can best be achieved
- Recognising and taking account of why we teach the way we do and the effect of own values / beliefs in achieving the goals
- Selecting content and pedagogy to achieve specific outcomes (less focus on content itself)

Improving the teaching of physical education(continued)

- Look at the system as an integrated whole to build on what is already there. All parts of the system need to work together; not individual parts. Identify what is needed at each point/part
- Look at physical education as part of physical activity throughout the life course
- Work with others in the subject to build on current good practice that is working towards the stated purposes of physical education
- Also, talk to/work with teachers of other subjects to see how they address a range of issues

In conclusion

- This presentation has been designed to get you thinking clearly about where you are going and how you can achieve the purposes of physical education
- They are my perceptions, based on certain assumptions and my experiences outside Singapore; you know the situation in Singapore much better than I do, so can decide which of these perceptions are relevant and which are not
- To move forward I believe we all need to work together to focus on the best for the students and the subject. You know the players in physical education in Singapore. You have the structures in place in Singapore to do this. Need to look at whether they are working most effectively. You may be in a unique position

In conclusion (continued)

- Be confident in what you are doing in Singapore; in what you are doing yourselves and what you are contributing. How can you share with others what you are doing?
- Cannot transplant directly from other countries
- What is/could Singapore be known for?
Consistently excellent teaching of physical education that helps achieve the stated purpose of the subject also achieving broader goals and twenty first Century competences

And finally

If you know where you are going, you know which means of transport will get you there – it is important to be clear about where you are going

Need deep thinking/critical reflection to be clear about goals and what this means for practice