

## **Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education**

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Teachers, academics and politicians have historically had different views about what it means to be 'physically educated' or what inclusive physical education is and today there still remains a lack of consensus. The aim of this article is to shed some light on the matter and establish exactly what physical education teachers are expected to do, what they are not expected to do and what they can realistically achieve in the time at their disposal with all pupils irrespective of their ability. Physical education teachers are more than just games masters and mistresses, sports coaches, physical trainers, or fitness instructors and yet this is often the stereotype the media choose to portray on the television and in the cinema.

It is essential to recognise that inclusive physical education must rely on physical education teachers acknowledging that what a child learns derives not only from the content of the physical education curriculum but also from the manner in which it is organised and taught. Schools and their respective physical education teachers have always had the autonomy to make important decisions on behalf of their pupils and a great deal of leverage related to the specific activities can be incorporated in the physical education curriculum, the time devoted to these activities, the way in which they are organised and the manner in which they will be taught. Physical education teachers play a pivotal role with respect to curriculum design, grouping arrangements, staffing and ultimately delivery. Critical decisions depend on their judgement. These decisions can 'make or break' a child's enjoyment of the subject and future participation in physical activity. As Lamb (2014: 121) eloquently states 'what occurs in the physical education classroom in terms of

organisation, content and delivery has an important bearing on the identities, attitudes and opportunities for pupils'. And yet, pupils are rarely consulted and often have radically different views about physical education compared to the perspectives of their teachers (Green 2008:20). Establishing and developing fundamental movement skills in the primary years is the basis of all physical education and that physical activity in the early years of childhood are strong indicators of future behaviours including educational attainment, health and emotional well-being. There are however, very few specialist teachers of physical education in primary schools and there can be an over-emphasis on discrete sports too early in the teaching of primary aged children often taught by teachers who have had as little as six hours of formal training to teach physical education. Almond and Ezzeldin (2013: 55) concluded that fundamental movement skills are more concerned with sport and developing a commitment to a sporting pathway from the early years through to adulthood. The consequences of a sport-focused physical education curriculum in the primary school can be the neglect of pedagogy and the omission of dance, adventurous activities and swimming leading to children learning in rows and taking part in a 'one size fits all' approach to physical education.

During the mid-nineteen eighties we were both training to become physical education teachers at different institutions in England. For both of us this was an aspiration that we shared from a very early age and was influenced by our passion for and achievements in competitive team sport. During our secondary school years neither of us had paid much attention to the ways in which we were taught physical education and it was not until we were exposed to the pedagogical process during our undergraduate training that we began to realise and appreciate ways in which physical education could be an alienating experience for some pupils. Much of our understanding of and interest in this particular aspect of education was informed by Richard Peters (1973) and Ronald Morgan (1974) but inspired by the edited work of John

Evans (1986) and subsequently by other related publications (Evans 1988; Evans 1993). This influenced us to pursue our own post graduate studies during the nineties (Hayes 1994; Stidder 1998) and ultimately led to the publication of 'Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport' (Hayes and Stidder 2003 1<sup>st</sup> edition).

Twenty five years since the writing of these texts we believe that the physical education profession still has work to do with regards to inclusive practice and like our predecessors we contend that the teaching of physical education in some secondary schools still *'fosters rather than contests sexism, racism and elitism'* (Evans and Davies 1993: 21). Moreover, it remains the case that the values of those who define physical education programmes in schools needs to be confronted if a commitment to equity and inclusion *'is to be more than a façade behind which old habits hide'* (*ibid*: 21). Despite the seminal work of Evans (1986; 1988; 1993), the types of practices witnessed over a quarter of century ago still exist in some schools today whereby ability, performance-related outcomes and sex-differentiated provision in separate male and female physical education departments work against *'a same for all thrust'* (Evans and Davies 1993: 19). Penney and Evans (1999) initially prompted us to reconsider the rhetoric and reality of policy whilst Ken Green's excellent publication 'Understanding Physical Education' (2008) has led us to re-examine our own stance on matters related to inclusion in physical education and has provided the impetus for us to proceed with a second edition of our initial publication.

At this point we are keen to establish what inclusive physical education is and, more importantly, what it is not. Our use of the term 'physical education' rather than the abbreviation 'PE' relates specifically to the seventy six hours (or five per cent) of formal curriculum time devoted to the teaching and learning of physical education to all pupils in an academic year<sup>i</sup>. Whilst we

accept that there might be a tenuous link between the structured learning that takes place in the physical education curriculum and the extended school sport programme we would like to make it clear that physical education has broader educational objectives and learning outcomes. In this context, the teaching and learning of physical education has little or no relationship to the provision of competitive school sport as these experiences are usually for elite performers often in sex-segregated teams which have performance-related outcomes. As we have stated in one of our previous publications

**The term 'school sport' has been increasingly used in government policy documents alongside 'physical education' in the title of the subject thus giving the impression that school sport is synonymous with physical education. We believe that to refer to 'school sport' alongside 'physical education' is potentially misleading and may cause some confusion amongst our readers. Our use of the term 'physical education', therefore, refers specifically to the UK government's intended offer of at least two hours of high quality physical education in the curriculum to all seven to fourteen year old pupils.**

(Stidder and Hayes 2011: xix)

We are also keen to emphasise the fact that sport and carefully managed competition can be a valuable educational experience for all pupils but by the same token should not be at the expense of overall holistic development. In this respect, we believe that all pupils irrespective of social categorisation are entitled to engage with all aspects of a broad, balanced and relevant physical education curriculum. This article is, therefore, our attempt to emphasise a child-centred approach to the teaching and learning of physical education in schools and to dispel the myth and any misconceptions that physical education teachers just coach sport!

The writing of the first edition of *Equity and Inclusion* began at a time when the physical education profession in the United Kingdom (UK) was entering a period of transition and significant change. Ironically, the writing of the

second edition of 'Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport' also began as physical education teachers in the UK prepared for yet another major policy change under the Labour government with the introduction of a fourth version of a national curriculum for physical education implemented in September 2008 alongside a 'Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People' (PESSYP 2008). This text has, therefore, been both hindered and helped by the speed of change in the educational world and (metaphorically speaking) the '*moving of goalposts*' with regards to physical education, UK government policy and yet another anticipated National Curriculum for Physical Education due for implementation in 2014.

The election of a UK coalition government in May 2010 resulted in further change of education policy and the re-emergence of competitive school sport as a major area of policy development. During the course of our work voices from within educational circles in the UK began to drive the place of competitive school sport and physical education onto the political agenda particularly since London achieved the rights to hosts the 2012 Olympic Games. In June 2010 the UK coalition government announced plans for the introduction of a 'schools Olympics' and endorsing this particular initiative education secretary of state Michael Gove said: '*We need to revive competitive sport in our schools. Fewer than a third of school pupils take part in regular competitive sport within schools and fewer than one in five take part in regular competition between schools*'<sup>ii</sup>, echoing his previous sentiments at the Conservative Party conference in October 2007 when he pledged to make it easier once more for children to do 'proper' competitive team sports in schools. In our opinion, this comment only served to misinform the general public about the perceived demise of competitive activities in schools and was nothing more than an ill-informed doctrine about the place of competition in physical education.

Michael Gove's 'one size fits all' policy received a luke warm reception and his subsequent public letter to Baroness Campbell at the Youth Sport Trust dated October 20<sup>th</sup> 2010 was, in our view, a nail in the coffin for physical education in schools under the present administration. In his correspondence Michael Gove confirmed that *'The Coalition Government will encourage more competitive sport, which should be a vibrant part of the life and ethos of all schools through the creation of an annual Olympic-style school sport competition'*. In our opinion, this was a sad indictment of the way in which physical education was viewed by policy-makers reflected by Michael Gove's use of the term 'sport' thirty two times compared to physical education once and the abbreviated term 'PE' on five occasions. In her response dated October 29<sup>th</sup> 2010, Baroness Campbell referred to the change of government policy as 'deeply disappointing' and would potentially exclude pupils with special needs, disaffected teenage girls, pupils on the verge of exclusion and those where sport is not culturally embedded. Whilst offering support for competitive sport, Baroness Campbell also stressed her commitment to ensuring that young people who do not enjoy team sports are provided with opportunities to engage in an activity that they can pursue throughout their lifetime. Eileen Marchant, chair of the Association for Physical Education also corresponded with the Secretary of State for Education on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 expressing concern about the impact of the intended policy on the teaching and learning of physical education in schools.

**I know that the National Curriculum is shortly to be reviewed and afPE is very much committed to keeping physical education as a statutory subject. We are aware that competition will feature strongly in the revised curriculum but without an effective grounding in a high quality physical education curriculum competition will suffer at all levels.**

Despite a recognition by academics that boys and girls could not be categorised as one homogeneous group (Penney and Evans 2002), Michael

Gove proceeded without due regard for the dynamics and inter-relationship between gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, age, religion, culture and disability. His only public acknowledgement of the effect of social diversity upon British school children was when he publically acclaimed to the Commons Education Select Committee on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2010 that *“Rich thick kids will always do better than clever poor ones”<sup>iii</sup>*, a reference to the 'yawning gap' which had formed between the attainment of poor children and their richer counterparts.

On November 24<sup>th</sup> 2010 the UK government's white paper 'The Importance of Teaching' was announced in the House of Commons signalling the beginning of a radical overhaul of the education system in England. In terms of physical education it was clear that the vision for physical education was firmly embedded in competitive team sport as a means of providing moral fibre and personal toughness to pupils in schools despite a lack of any evidence base for such assumptions.

**4.28 Children need access to high-quality physical education, so we will ensure the requirement to provide PE in all maintained schools is retained and we will provide new support to encourage a much wider take up of competitive team sports. With only one child in five regularly taking part in competitive activities against another school, we need a new approach to help entrench the character building qualities of team sport**

(DFE 2010: 45)

On the same day as announcing the government reforms to teaching, Prime Minister David Cameron attempted to justify the government's decision to axe the school sport partnership programme along with £162 million of previously ring-fenced funding on the basis that it was a poor use of public money. Whilst accurately claiming that the numbers of schools offering the traditional team sports of netball, rugby, and hockey had fallen under the previous government the Prime Minister failed to acknowledge the

unprecedented numbers of young people who had actually rejected these types of competitive team sports in favour of other individual, alternative or lifestyle activities and the increasing numbers of schools who were making these types of provision available through the school sport partnership.

David Walsh, the Sunday Times chief sports writer implied that the government's decision to cut school sport funding was contradictory and full of double standards citing the fact that it was young people that had actually helped London (and Sebastian Coe) to achieve the rights to host the 2012 Olympic games during the bidding and lobbying process in Singapore in 2005. In return, funding for school sports partnerships would be slashed.

**Five years on and one feels nothing but disgust at the way young people were used and are now being abused.....Sport and young people are being exploited for political purposes, used by any amount of careerists for their own ends and it asks a serious question about Coe's sincerity when he said that the London games would be about inspiring young people.**

(Walsh 2010: 20)

Physical education and school sport were literally being kicked about like a political football. It was clear that the UK coalition Government intended to restructure the interface of physical education in schools and emphasise competitive sport as the vehicle to engage more young people in physical activity whilst overlooking the significance of lifestyle activities. In this respect, physical education was regarded as no more than a *'conveyor belt for elite level sport, showcasing able and talented youth with potential to succeed'* (Green 2010: xiv) whilst ignoring the individual needs of those pupils who had rejected competitive team sport in favour of alternative team games and non-competitive lifestyle activities. It was in effect an invitation to a small proportion of 'gifted and talented' pupils into what Brown (1997) described as the 'inner sanctum of the physically able and keen young male athletes of the school'.



As the 2012 London Olympic Games approached the vision held by politicians was for physical education to '*serve as a vehicle for the flow of talented athletes into top-level representative sport*' (Green 2010: 4) even though the percentage of pupils in schools aged between nine and sixteen who were defined as gifted and talented was only seven percent of the total population of pupils in schools (Quick et al 2008 cited in Green 2010: 4). Even the Queen's 2010 Christmas broadcast contained references to the belief that competitive sports could contribute to the formation of a nation's character and may have been reminiscent of David Cameron's experiences as a former Etonian schoolboy. After all, it is reputed that the Duke of Wellington once said that "*the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton*". Subsequently, the revised policy for physical education in schools had the potential to stigmatize the vast majority of pupils who did not have advanced physical skills, as inferior. Such was the level of public and professional outrage to the planned reforms, the UK coalition government announced a minor U-turn on their intentions to remove all funding from the existing school sport partnerships and instead cut the funding by eighty seven percent enabling this to continue over three years.

In our opinion, the UK coalition government's vision for physical education in schools represented a retrograde step and signified the advent of more performance-related outcomes and a greater emphasis on sex-segregated team sport which would have little or no relevance to a large proportion of young people in schools and is actually counter-productive in meeting other aims associated with physical education such as lifelong participation in physical activity and the cultivation of healthy and active lifestyles. For us, it was a blatant attempt to re-affirm the gendered and elitist nature of the 'PE ritual' (Hargreaves 2000). Indeed, it was tantamount to legitimizing the

dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity that had historically prevailed throughout the development of physical education, robustly defended as natural and desirable by politicians in the past (Brown and Evans 2004: 49). Needless to say, the UK coalition government's generic education reforms received considerable criticism from opposition politicians but also had equal relevance to the world of physical education. In spite of all this, the intended reforms to school physical education did receive some support. Eleanor Mills wrote in the Sunday Times (July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011: 4) that a sporting education should be every child's birthright

**Competitive sport, for too long a dirty word in state schools, needs to be put back centre stage. All kids need tough, competitive sport – and lots of it. Michael Gove, the education secretary, is shaking up our schools and making lots of the right noises; let's all ensure that sport is at the heart of his reforms.**

**Eleanor Mills Sunday Times (July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011: 4)**

It was becoming increasingly clear that physical education was being used as a euphemism for competitive school sport and that sport was considered to be the main focal point of government policy whereby the ability and achievements of physical education teachers and their respective departments was not to be judged on their achievements inside the formal physical education curriculum but more on the accolades and trophies won on the sports field. It appeared to us that physical education teachers were being encouraged to promote the achievements of *their* school teams, to proudly display silver trophies in glass cabinets as the centre piece of the school's main reception area and to compete for overall bragging rights over other schools in their local communities. This has hardly been surprising given that Green (2008) has highlighted the contradictions that physical education teachers face when implementing physical education policy into practice.

**The goals of (UK) government policy towards PE, rhetorically at least, continue to be varied, and tend to include health promotion, academic attainment, and social inclusion alongside the development of sport and sports performance; goals which are by no means compatible.**

For us working in physical education teacher training institutions we were questioning whether the UK coalition government's intentions meant that we should be training sports coaches rather than specialist teachers of physical education who are able and willing to cater for all pupils needs? Were we being asked to condone the type of practice where physical education lessons were just an arena for the selection of school teams, or representation at the annual school sports day, swimming gala or inter school sport competitions? Was physical education simply being used as a guise for promoting elitist competitive school sport? Would an over-emphasis on sex-stereotyped team games leave the vast majority of pupils in secondary schools disillusioned and disaffected? As such this posed other vexed questions with regards the content of the physical education curriculum.

Why were the UK coalition government privileging the place of 'proper' competitive team sport at the expense of other types of activities? Did this contradict Ofsted (2011; 2009) evidence suggesting that pupils were participating in an ever-increasing range of physical activities, rejecting traditional team games and turning instead to yoga, skateboarding, martial arts and cheerleading? If competitive sport was putting children off exercise how would this address the UK national obesity problem amongst children with experts estimating that one in ten children would be obese by 2015 and almost fifty percent of adults and one quarter of children by 2050? Would this address the UK Department for Health's physical activity guidelines for 5 - 18 year olds (Department for Health 2011) and the recommendation that all children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least sixty minutes every day? Was this undermining the government's own policy to tackle and curb the UK's increasing record of

teenage obesity? Why were fifty percent of all primary school pupils being denied the opportunity to take part in two hours of school physical education per week as highlighted by Eileen Marchant during the BBC 'You and Yours' radio four broadcast on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2011?

Following the UK coalition government's White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching', a systematic and comprehensive review of the primary and secondary National Curriculum in England for five to sixteen year olds was announced. The remit stated that the first phase of the review will 'set out a clearer expectation that all pupils should play competitive sport by 2013 and retain an expectation that all children learn to swim as well as consider the merits of providing schools with guidance about the allocation of time to outdoor physical activities' (DFE 2011: 15: 3). To us, the government's shifting focus away from physical education to school sport only served to increase the existing misgivings amongst the physical education profession about the place of competitive team games. Our concern was that this would simply provide the green light for 'dinosaur' games teachers bearing one ball and a bag of bibs to continue with the types of practices undertaken for most of their teaching careers. In essence, we believed that it was deliberate attempt to stabilise the types of physical education that had existed for the past three decades despite research that had shown that a broad, more diverse physical education curriculum might be more usefully employed thus challenging the legitimization of a certain type of 'maleness' in terms of what it is to be a successful heterosexual male in western culture (Brown and Evans 2004; 49).

In effect, we believed that the politicians had dug their own grave by rejecting quality physical education in favour of a defunct model trialled in the fifties. The intended policy was in direct contrast with the definition of quality physical education given by the World Summit on Physical education (1999)<sup>iv</sup>

and evidence from schools visited by Ofsted in consecutive years (2002 - 2011). Ofsted consistently found that a disproportionate amount of the curriculum time available to physical education is devoted to competitive team games. In 2006 Ofsted reported that six out of twelve schools were judged to have good curriculum provision overall in physical education and in the best schools there was 'a broad and balanced curriculum, sufficiently flexible to incorporate more aesthetic and individual opportunities to meet the wider needs of all learners' (Ofsted 2006: 12). Moreover, good provision in physical education was often tailored to attract pupils previously uninterested or disenchanted by introducing an increasing number of leisure-based clubs and contemporary sporting activities which had encouraged more pupils to become involved in physical education (*ibid*: 12). The 2009 report suggested that, increasingly, pupils were being offered a much wider experience of physical education and sport. Golf, skateboarding, mountain biking and cycling, yoga, archery, cheerleading, martial arts and problem-solving challenges were being taught alongside more traditional activities, often at pupils' request. This not only enriched the provision but provided creative solutions when facilities were limited or the programme of traditional team activities was proving unpopular. This had reduced disaffection and improved engagement, particularly among vulnerable groups (Ofsted 2009: 38). Moreover, Ofsted (2011: 7) highlighted the fact that where secondary schools had provided a wider range of games, performing arts and alternative sports this had increased participation in after-school clubs by pupils of all ages, interests and abilities including those that had special educational needs and/or disabilities and had a significant impact on improving pupils confidence, self-esteem and attitudes towards learning in other subjects.

We believed that the UK coalition government's vision contained many mixed messages and were full of contradictions. In essence, they had shot themselves in the foot and scored a political own goal. This was at odds with

what we believed to be the most effective and inclusive means of engaging all pupils in physical activities and contradicted our own understanding of the nature and purpose of physical education in schools. If the proportion of pupils playing competitive school sport regularly had remained disappointingly low with only around two in every five pupils playing competitive sport regularly within their own school, and only one in five playing regularly against other schools were they suggesting that the failure of the English national football team at the FIFA World Cup finals in South Africa was the fault of the physical education profession? If this was the case then do we blame our Science or Mathematics teachers if we fail to win Nobel prizes? Do we blame our English teachers if we fail to win Booker prizes? Do we blame our Drama teachers if we fail to win Oscars or our Art teachers if we fail to win Turner Prizes? Do we blame our food technology teachers for the alarming rate at which teenage obesity levels have continued to rise? Do we blame our Music teachers when we fail to win International Music awards?

For the purpose of this article we suggest that the use of the term 'equity' relates to fairness and respect for all pupils where forms of oppression and discrimination are removed from the classroom setting. Penney (2000) has summarised the term equity and its association with physical education:

**In short, equity is concerned with giving value to, and celebrating social and cultural differences of individuals and in society.**

**Penney (2000: 60)**

Inclusive physical education can be defined as a journey with a purpose (Mittler 2005) as well as involving the politics of recognition and being

concerned with the serious issue of who is included and who is excluded within education and society in general (Hodkinson and Vickerman 2010). Our own use of the term 'inclusion' specifically refers to ways in which schools and teachers value the achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person equally whilst providing a curriculum that is relevant to each individual regardless of ability. It is based on the notion that every child can achieve success irrespective of their personal circumstances and that the term '*gifted and talented*' is a mis-used and inappropriate way to describe a child's educational and physical potential. In this respect, it is often assumed that the terms 'gifted and talented' are synonymous whereas, in fact, the term '*gifted*' refers to up to ten percent of a school's population measured by actual or potential achievement in the main curriculum subjects whilst '*talented*' refers to subjects such as Art, Music and Physical Education (Cambridgeshire County Council (2009). Tomlinson (2008: 59) has observed that, 'despite twentieth-century moves towards egalitarianism in education, the selection and segregation of those regarded as being gifted, talented, or of higher ability in better resourced schools and programmes is now increasingly acceptable'.

Our use of the term 'inclusion', therefore, follows former UK table tennis commonwealth games medallist Matthew Syed and his optimistic, albeit old-fashioned, message in his book 'Bounce' that success can be achieved by all young people, but it comes at a price and depends upon hard work, practice and self-belief rather than innate ability or individual social category. For us physical education involves processes that are not exclusively reserved for individual schools and draws attention to a range of complexities that exist at a time when lifestyle choices, activity preferences and exercise habits amongst young people continue to change. The rhetoric of public policy and the reality of practice in physical education in schools are considered highlighting the ways and means through which physical education is provided to pupils and

how teachers are central players in both perpetuating or challenging discrimination and inequality within physical education classes. Moreover, the physical education experiences of young people offer a voice to both those who excel in a physical environment and those who have become disaffected, disinterested and disillusioned with school physical education.

There can be no excuses, however, for the types of practices that simply humiliate young people prompting them to post their feelings through on-line blogs<sup>v</sup>

**In PE, we had a football lesson where we had to get the ball, hold it, THEN kick it; it was pouring down with rain that day so it was hard to hear the teacher, so I just got the ball and kicked it back to the person. Then, he started YELLING at me and said I had to HOLD the ball. He treats me like I'm stupid and then in cricket he said ' am I teaching special needs cricket?' he then yelled at me saying 'IS THAT BAT TOO HEAVY FOR YOU?' and called me an idiot. I don't think my Headteacher knows about this. I'm in the UK by the way.**

There have been several characterisations of the stereotypical male Physical Education teacher such as Mr Sugden (played by the actor Brian Glover) from the movie 'Kes' and 'Dynamo Doug Digby' (played by the actor Brian Conley) from the television series 'The Grimleys'. Most recently 'Jasper Woodcock' played by the actor Billie Joe Thornton in the movie 'Mr Woodcock' has arguably exacerbated many of the images that adults and young people may associate with Physical Education. Other stereotypical representations of female physical education teachers and sports coaches have been portrayed by the actress Jane Lynch who plays the fictional character Sue Sylvester, the coach of the William McKinley High School cheerleading squad - a ruthless fascist bully to pupils and staff in the American comedy-drama 'Glee



Miller and Armstrong's comedy sketch illustrating the stereotypical male Physical Education teacher has also reaffirmed the view that some may have of traditional teaching approaches as the following dialogue exemplifies:

**I was on the books of Rangers for a couple of years, but they decided that they did not want to use me professionally anymore, so I did personal training for bit, but apparently I was too aggressive and I had very poor people skills and that's when I thought, why not be a PE teacher..... Filled with pent up rage and want to lash out? Then be a PE teacher. ([www.take it out on the kids.gov.uk](http://www.takeitoutonthekids.gov.uk))**

**([www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwDknTtkVdc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwDknTtkVdc) - Be a PE teacher)**

Many of these perceptions continue to be exacerbated by other portrayals of the stereotypical male physical education teacher such as the character Trevor Gunn, played by actor Philip Glennister, in the BBC (2013) situation comedy 'Big School'. He describes the character he plays as 'a dysfunctional, unfit, lothario physical education teacher who is quite grotesque'. In one episode, Trevor Gunn exclaims that physical education is one of the hardest degrees to do having covered modules on learning how to pump up a football and how to blow a whistle. Glennister's own recollections of his school physical education teachers provided him with material in order to develop his character for television<sup>vi</sup>.

**Question: Any memories of your time at school that has helped flesh out the character?**

**Answer: You know PE teachers were always fairly sadistic creatures, although they weren't at my school from what I remember. They were always quite good blokes. We used to get caught round the back of the mobiles having a sneaky fag and rather than confiscating our cigarettes off us our PE teacher used to give us money for them, then confiscate them. So it was quite a good deal.**

Likewise, the song and accompanying video titled 'Love Lost' by The Temper Trap may be scarily reminiscent of school physical education lessons and the

dreaded cross-country run of some individuals who have now reached their twenties and beyond

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLTPKKt-pMs>

What saddens us more is the way in which journalists recall their own secondary school physical education lessons with deep disdain and the way in which their physical education teachers simply provided them with an escape route to either go through the motions or opt out completely from their physical education lessons. In the wake of the controversy about girls' low participation rates in sport caused by the Sports and Equalities minister Helen Grant, Rachel Cooke (2014) wrote in the Sunday Observer

Physical education lessons meanwhile became a convoluted exercise in avoidance. The slothfulness soon spread amongst the girls like a contagion. Cross country runs began with a truculent jog until we were out of sight of the teachers, at which point we would repair at the nearest newsagents for sweets and fags. Rounders involved making sure your team was out as soon as possible, the better that you might field and get to sunbathe and gossip in the long grass. Athletics meant hiding in the loos until it was "too late to change, Miss"

It is also concerning to know that physical education teachers can make pupils withdraw from physical education lessons as described by journalist Phoebe Doyle (2012)

When I was at school I hated PE. Dreaded it. Not only that, I thought I was rubbish at it, in fact I was rubbish at it. I was the one running away from the hockey ball (they're hard those balls, y'know). Once I'd tired from the years of humiliation from being last to be picked, I took to bringing letters (a combination of fake and real) getting me out of it. I had all manner of ailments and injuries which rendered me too poorly for PE yet remarkably sparky in English and history. I'd sit on the field with the other twice-weekly rebels; we'd talk about boys and doodle on our class books about who we loved 4eva that week - it wasn't physical, or educational. It was at best passing the time, and at worst learning that exercise just wasn't for us. I remember cross-country too. A regime seemingly invented purely to put us off ever wanting to run. We'd do it January, we'd don our PE pants and airtex tops and off we'd go - no stretching, no training - just straight out for a three mile run/jog/walk/smoke around our local town as an act of sheer humiliation. On return the fast boys who'd win effortlessly would be lined up at the finish line waiting to laugh at us as we ran in.

Such characterisations of 'typical' physical education teachers probably serve well the audience that they are aimed at. We would however like to challenge such characterisations of physical education teachers through our work with our education students who wish to have a career in physical education reminding them of the central concept that physical education is for all and meets the needs of everyone who engages with it.

*This article has been adapted from extracts from the following publications*

*Stidder, G. and Hayes, S. (2010) Learning and teaching in Physical Education - a guide to teachers and trainees. In: Stidder, G and Hayes S (Eds). The Really Useful Physical Education Book. Learning and Teaching Across the 7 - 14 Age Range'Routledge, London, pp. 12 - 20.*

*Stidder G and Hayes S (2012) 'Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education: Themes and Perspective for Practitioners' Chapter One In Stidder G and Hayes S (Eds) (2012) 'Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport' (Second Edition), London, Routledge, pp 1 - 16*

*Stidder, G. (2015) 'Becoming a Physical Education Teacher', London, Routledge*

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## Introduction

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<sup>i</sup> The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 require all children aged 5 - 16 to attend school for 190 days (38 weeks) a year. Schools must open for 380 half-day sessions (190 days) in each school year, beginning with the first term to start after July. This is consistent with the up to 195 days a year required by a teacher's statutory conditions of service: the additional five days are non-teaching work days. The UK government's expectation is that all children receive a minimum of two hour high quality physical education a week.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10423816>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11331574>

<sup>iv</sup> The World Summit on Physical Education (1999) defined quality physical education as the most effective and inclusive means of providing all children with the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in physical education and sport (World Summit on Physical Education The Berlin Agenda for Action for Government Ministers. Berlin: ICSSPE

<sup>v</sup> <http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20120825143810AAQ8BUM>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01d3njz/profiles/philipglenister>