The Idea of Physical Education and Its Discontents: An Inaugural Lecture

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> "After all, what would be the point of work or of political brinkmanship or, for that matter, of life, if there were no pursuits we humans find intrinsically satisfying that make life worth living in the first place, that is, worth all the struggle and hardship that are an inescapable part of life? And since play, games, and sports are best conceived, as the philosophical literature suggests, as just such intrinsically good things, they are among the most important and serious of human activities, and they are the very activities which things like work derive whatever seriousness they possess. All of which suggests, that when physical educationists endeavour to secure the academic legitimacy of their subject in (…) instrumental ways (…) they are barking up the wrong tree." (Morgan, 2006, p.102)

Prologue: A Debate in Scotland, 1954

It is November 1954, and delegates from the Scottish Physical Education Association (the men's association) and the Scottish League of Physical Education (representing the women) are meeting in Edinburgh to discuss 'Physical Education Today and in the Future' (The Leaflet, 56 (1), 1955). The conference is expressly concerned with which of three versions of gymnastics should be taught to boys in Scottish schools.

After prolonged and at times heated debate, the delegates could not reach an agreed position and a further four one day meetings were organized. Finally, an outcome is reached: the status quo prevails: the boys are to continue to be taught Swedish gymnastics, which have been the staple of physical education in state run schools since the 1880s.

This outcome is ironic, not just because the status quo prevailed following so much debate about the future of physical education. The irony is that in less than a decade Swedish gymnastics had disappeared almost without trace from the school curriculum. A second version, educational gymnastics, survived mainly in primary schools and in physical education programs for girls until the 1980s. The distant third placer in 1954, Olympic gymnastics, emerged during the 1960s to take its place in physical education programs all over Britain, though from the mid 1960s in an increasingly minor role within a sport-dominated curriculum.

How could these physical educators have got it so badly wrong?

Introduction

In his book 'The Modern University and Its Discontents', distinguished historian Sheldon Rothblatt (1997) recalls John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman's famous definition of the University in his book 'The Idea of a University', written in the

1850s. The university, stated Newman, is a place for teaching universal knowledge. 'Such is a University in its essence.' Rothblatt shows that Newman's definition had strong resonance with the Oxford of Newman's undergraduate days and as such the teaching was focused on the cultivation of character rather than mere expertise. But by the time of writing 'The Idea', this notion, that the university was primarily concerned with teaching, was already under threat at Oxford. Moreover, by the 1850s, there were other, rival notions of the university emanating from Germany, the United States, Ireland and from neighbouring Scotland. Indeed, as Rothblatt notes

> 'All the new universities and university colleges of Ireland and the civic universities of England as well as the new University of Wales were like London, inspired by Scottish rather than English examples …(the) new institutions were cost-conscious establishments. They were, to begin with, market-driven, fee-sensitive, vulnerable to changes in demand and willing to take students with weaker preparation than mid-Victorian Oxford and Cambridge. They had no choice. The civics possessed neither the independence nor the teaching resources of Oxford and Cambridge and could not, while they were young, adopt an elitist or meritocratic mission.' (Rothblatt, 1997, p.21)

Rothblatt's study demonstrates that Newman's legacy is not his actual idea of the university, since there existed then and exist now many examples that do not match this idea. The examples he provides, indeed, suggest an antithesis to Newman's idea. Rather, Newman's importance as a thinker and educator is <u>the idea of</u> the idea of the university. His legacy, in other words, can be captured in the notion that institutions have an essence, an essential character that marks them out as different from other institutions. Rothblatt notes that although there is no single idea of the university, Newman's significance lies in the tantalising thought that it may be possible to conjure this single idea into existence. It is the idea of the idea that is his lasting legacy. It is, in Rothblatt's terms, 'talismanic'. Even in the USA, where higher education institutions were able to grow unencumbered by the idea of the idea of the university, Rothblatt argues that 'the long shadow of the idea of the idea of a university is still discernible, however faint'. (Rothblatt, 1997, p.28)

Why should this be so? Because, says Rothblatt, in order to survive, institutions must from time to time reinvent themselves. In the USA, 'Remaining atop the prestige hierarchy required energy and resourcefulness, on-going appeals to donors and a watchful eye for potential growth opportunities.' (p.36) Thus Harvard, claims Rothblatt, a symbol of immutability if ever there was one, 'constantly redefined itself in an effort to stay current'. (p.36) Allan Bloom's best-seller 'The Closing of the American Mind', provides an example of recourse to the idea of the idea of the university when certain sacred values are challenged, in Bloom's case the idea that a university education should be exclusive, nourish imagination and develop a love of knowledge for its own sake. For Bloom, the argument for a 'true university' rests squarely on Cardinal Newman's legacy. When sacred values are challenged, the identification of these values as the essence of a university is tempting indeed.

At the same time, Bloom's recourse to the idea of the idea of the university should not be misunderstood as a mere discursive device. In the presence of discontents, of critics, nay-sayers, sceptics and reformers, the recourse to essentialist arguments is a constant temptation. For what use is the alternative? If we cannot define the essence

of the university and there is empirical evidence of great diversity, then perhaps anything goes? Faced with this prospect, even those discontents who are sceptical of essences might want to argue, as does Rothblatt, that the idea of the idea of the university is important. Without it, he suggests, 'a university is utterly shapeless and possesses no means of distinguishing itself from any other kind of educational institution.' (p.43)

If the idea of the university is controversial and hard to fix, as Rothblatt's analysis suggests, how stable are fields of knowledge that populate universities? Are fields any more obdurate and certain than the institutions in which they are practised. In their book 'Academic tribes and territories', Becher and Trowler suggest not. They (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p.23) argue that the 'ways in which particular groups of academics organize their professional lives are related in important ways to the intellectual tasks in which they are engaged'. The academic tribes or communities and their territories or fields of knowledge form a culture, which include taken for granted beliefs and assumptions, codes of conduct, and recurrent practices over time. As Becher and Trowler demonstrate, a range of forces including post-industrial society, globalisation, massification, the regulatory state, and the marketizing of knowledge, have acted on and demanded responses from these tribes and their territories. The practices of groups of academics and the shape of their territories are interdependent. As practices change, so too must the idea of a field of knowledge. A case in point is physical education.

The idea of the idea of physical education

It may not be unreasonable to claim that the field of physical education both in universities and in schools is in a state of conceptual confusion and has been, increasingly, since the 1950s. One easy way to demonstrate this confusion is to raise the question of the place of sport contemporaneously in physical education. To members of the general public, the answer is simple. Physical education and sport are more or less the same thing (Williams, 1985; Kirk, 1992). At least, to suggest to a layperson that sport has no place in physical education would be plain silly. Indeed, Tony Blair the British Prime Minister, in his foreword to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2001, p.2) publication *A Sporting Future for All*, makes an explicit connection between elite sporting success and school physical education.

This 'commonsense consensus' (Kirk, 2004) on physical education and sport contrasts sharply with views expressed by some physical educators. For example, Margaret Talbot, incoming CEO of the new Association for Physical Education, recently asked 'should our (the physical education profession's) primary purpose include school sport, for whose delivery there are many organizations involved'? (Talbot, 2005, p.41) Will Kay (2006), writing even more recently in the British Journal of Teaching Physical Education, rehearses a now commonplace argument that physical education cannot be reduced to sport. While this seems a reasonable enough proposition, his elaboration moves us on to less certain ground. He says

> 'Sport is only one part of physical experience. Further, research (citing Vealy, 1993) indicates that sport participation increases rivalrous, antisocial behaviour and does not build socially valued personal attributes. Sport is an important part of physical education for some pupils, but a 'good sportsperson' is not necessarily a physically educated one.' (Kay, 2006, p.27)

The issue here is not so much the veracity of Kay's claims as it is the confusion they demonstrate and convey. Since, as Siedentop (2002) and Almond (2001) argue cogently from their respective sides of the Atlantic, sport is a major cultural institution. This status would seem to suggest sport clearly <u>is</u> appropriate subject matter for physical education. So why would a physical educator go to some lengths to evidence the (otherwise) reasonable point that physical education should not be reduced to sport by highlighting the negative dimensions of sport as if these are inevitable and confirmed, furthermore, by 'research'?

In light of these statements circulating within the public discourse of the physical education profession, it is perhaps not surprising to discover that the word sport is never mentioned in the entire National Curriculum Physical Education documentation, even though there are some implicit references through words like 'competitive' and 'teams':

> 'Physical education provides opportunities for pupils to be creative, competitive and face up to different challenges as individuals and in groups and teams. It promotes positive attitudes towards active and healthy lifestyles. Pupils learn how to think in different ways to suit a wide variety of creative, competitive and challenging activities. They learn how to plan, perform and evaluate actions, ideas and performances to improve their quality and effectiveness. Through this process pupils discover their aptitudes, abilities and preferences, and make choices about how to get involved in lifelong physical activity.' (Qualifications Curriculum Authority, 1999, p.15)

Daryl Siedentop's work on physical education teacher education suggests the disappearance of sport from the official discourse of physical education is only part of a larger problem. In a paper published recently but originally delivered to a conference in 1989, Siedentop (2002a, p. 368) argued that physical education teacher educators "have largely given up on the historic content knowledge of our field". He suggests that the pedagogical content knowledge that forms the basis of a teacher's or coach's day-to-day work, the knowledge of how to design experiences for learners, is seriously impeded by this neglect of content knowledge since pedagogical content knowledge cannot exist without content. The consequences of this neglect are that

> 'We have arrived at a point in our history where we can now prepare teachers who are pedagogically more skillful than ever, but who, in many cases, are so unprepared in the content area that they would be described as "ignorant" if the content area were a purely cognitive knowledge field.' (Siedentop, 2002a, p.369)

And yet, as Ken Green's (1998) study of physical education teachers' practical philosophies of teaching show, most teachers, like the lay public and the Prime Minister, view sport and physical education as closely related if not synonymous. For example, one teacher told Green

> '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?'

> ‘The only opportunity some kids get for sport is within school … As a PE teacher its got to be sport for all.’ (in Green, 1998)

Discussing extra-curricular sport, another teacher commented: ‘My fundamental job is to raise levels of fitness and skill expertise in whatever area I’m working … we’re talking about why we need sport’. (in Green, 1998)

The place of sport in physical education is, within some sections of the physical education community at least, a highly emotive topic. The issue is revealing of conflicting views on the form and content of the field more broadly. In a situation such as this, in which discontents abound and there appears to be little shared understanding of a field of study, there is a strong temptation to search for the true meaning of physical education. Indeed, since the lack of stability around the shape and substance of the field has been chronic, dating from at least the 1950s, the idea of the idea of physical education, as with the idea of the idea of the university, has strong appeal. How have physical educators and others responded to this chronic lack of stability in the field of physical education?

Approaches to the problem of the idea of physical education

There have been three broad responses the idea of the idea of physical education. A first, most common and straightforward of these responses has been to state a definition of physical education. While definitions vary in specificity, explicitness and scope, most make links between learning in the physical domain and a range of related outcomes concerned with physical and social skills, moral values, health, spirituality and intellectual ability. The definition we saw earlier from The National Curriculum: Physical Education is one of the more sophisticated versions. Many definitions of physical education now exist, but there is little consensus over which particular definition should be preferred. It might be argued, indeed, that since definitions attempt to tie concepts down, they inevitably are fixed on particular ideas of physical education rather than the idea of the idea.

A second response made a better attempt to get to the essence of physical education, though in my view failed in a similar fashion to the definitional approach. In the 1960s and 1970s, philosophers of education such as Richard Peters (1966) and Paul Hirst (1974) sought to clarify the meaning of a range of concepts, such as Education, drawing broadly on Wittgenstein’s approach to language analysis. Behind their apparently disinterested analysis of concepts, the philosophers of education were seeking to identify which areas of knowledge should be included in the school curriculum and, implicitly, which should be omitted. This line of investigation had important and serious consequences for physical education. Peters’ and his colleagues’ analyses of Education concluded that physical education could not be regarded as an educationally worthwhile activity. It therefore could not be considered part of a compulsory or core curriculum that all children should experience (Lawton, 1983).

Several philosophers of physical education rose to this challenge, and they discovered many ingenious arguments with which to counter Peters’ and his colleagues’ conclusions. Some argued that physical education was essentially an aesthetic activity since it included dance and movement education (Carlisle, 1969; Best, 1978). Since aesthetic activities were included in Hirst’s list of forms of knowledge, it was argued

that physical education therefore should be part of the school core curriculum. Others suggested that competitive activities such as sports presented children with moral challenges (Meakin, 1986). Since physical education includes sports, and since according to Peters, educationally worthwhile activities are marked by a moral seriousness, they suggested physical education therefore should also be regarded as educationally worthwhile. Taking a more radical stance, another group of philosophers proposed that physical education was a form of practical knowledge in its own right, and so deserved to be included in the curriculum on that basis (Aspin, 1976).

This second, philosophical, response certainly introduced a measure of intellectual rigour and theoretical sophistication to the challenge presented by the idea of the idea of physical education. While some of the ideas generated by conceptual analysis have influenced more recent theorising about physical education's place in the school curriculum, such as Margaret Whitehead's (2006) notion of 'physical literacy', and some have confirmed policy-makers' prior conviction that physical education is a 'non-cognitive' (Scottish Education Department, 1977) and therefore marginal subject educationally, by and large this volume of philosophical literature did little to aid our understanding of the nature of the idea of the idea of physical education.

A third response began to emerge in the 1970s just as the language analysis approach of the educational philosophers was losing its momentum. Research in the sociology of school knowledge, particularly as it began to take shape in the work of writers such as M.F.D. Young, Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu and Geoff Esland (see Young, 1971), put forward the radical proposition that the school curriculum is an example of the social organisation of knowledge. This proposition suggested that rather than having intrinsic worth that transcends societies and historical epochs, as the educational philosophers required, the school curriculum is the product of a range of social forces, involving the exercise of power and embodying particular values and preferences.

The full significance of this insight was brought out in the work of school curriculum historians such as Herbert Kliebard (1986) and Ivor Goodson (1985), and university curriculum researchers such as Rothblatt and Becher & Trowler. For example, Goodson suggested that school subjects and university disciplines do not evolve. Instead, they follow trajectories of popularity and perceived importance over time through struggles between vying groups and individuals. These groups and individuals actively contest each others' values and seek to establish their own preferences for particular versions of school knowledge, either at the overall level of the school curriculum or in relation to specific subject areas.

The message of this social epistemological line of research is that, if we wish to form an idea of a field such as physical education, (or geography or mathematics), we must as Becher & Trowler (2001) propose, study what people do in the name of that field. In other words, a field or territory is defined by the practices of groups of people who occupy the field. This message, commonplace though it may seem, can be misleading if it is assumed to propose that empirical inquiry of actions in the present is enough to provide a definition of a field or territory. Such practices need to be contextualised locally and contemporaneously, but also as Becher& Trowler and the curriculum historians show, institutionally, in wider society, and historically. This point has

particular relevance if we are to understand the importance of the idea of the idea of physical education or of the university since the accumulation of practices over time and the residual effects of superceded practices influence the social construction of contemporary practices.

I want to suggest that neither the straightforward definitional approach nor conceptual analysis can assist us to understand how we might manage the tension identified by Rothblatt between a consensus on the idea of the idea of physical education on the one hand, and a relativist 'anything goes' position on the other. The statement of a definition might include some elements of a subject and exclude others, but it cannot conjure a form of physical education or of the university into existence by itself. The analysis of a concept such as Physical Education may clarify thinking to an extent, but it cannot account for the different circumstances and contexts in which a concept might be received.

The social constructionist approach and more specifically curriculum history, in contrast, provides the means to understand the emergence of ideas of physical education and sources of discontent. In the next section, I want to provide a brief, mostly chronological, account of events in the history of physical education leading up to and following the 1950s Scottish debate about the future of physical education in order to better understand how the idea of the idea of physical education might have changed and why.

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The social construction of physical education

I mentioned earlier that the place of sport in physical education is a useful way into understanding some of the discontent around the idea of the idea of physical education. In returning to this example, there are two important points to bear in mind. Firstly, sport has not always been the subject matter of physical education, and only became a regular aspect of the subject in mass schooling from the late 1950s up to the present. As I mentioned in the prologue, prior to the 1950s, the primary subject matter of physical education was gymnastics. While games were a commonplace feature of the schools serving male and female social elites from the late nineteenth century, they were not until the 1960s thought of as physical education, nor were they part of the regular school curriculum. Secondly, throughout the modern history of physical education, from the late 19th century to the present, the subject matter of physical education has been explicitly gendered. In Britain, gender continues also to influence the institutional organisation of physical education (eg. Separate classes for boys and girls).

Sport played little or no part in the physical education of children attending government funded schools until the late 1950s and, even then, only in the secondary schools. Until the 1950s, the mainstay of physical education had been Swedish gymnastics, a form of free-standing exercises that involved intricate flexions and extensions of the major joints of the body. The Swedish system had been developed by Per Henrik Ling in the early 1800s as therapeutic exercise, and was the system favoured by the British Navy from around the mid19th century. The proto-physical education profession in Britain emerged from almost exclusively private colleges of physical training for women from the 1890s. The women dominated physical education between the 1890s to the 1950s and Ling gymnastics was their creed. The

professional Gymnasts worked mainly in private schools for girls. However, the adoption of the Swedish system by the Board of Education in their 1909 Syllabus of Physical Exercises established Ling gymnastics as the official system throughout government schools in Britain.

In order to achieve its physical and educational effects, the Swedish system relied on precise and correct performance of the exercises, and this in turn required exceptional teaching. Unfortunately, there was little evidence of exceptional teaching among generalist elementary school teachers and copious evidence of teaching to the book, with tedium and disaffection the result. The 1909 Syllabus had little to say about the social benefits of physical education beyond the educational effect of instilling discipline and order among groups of children, and individual qualities of obedience and perseverance. At the same time, social outcomes were nevertheless extremely influential in persuading policy makers and politicians that there should be physical education in schools. We need to recall that by 1909, compulsory attendance at school had barely been in force for thirty years. The need for social order was paramount if schools were to function. The potential for systems of physical exercises such as Swedish gymnastics to have a regulative effect was not missed by policy makers, who understood very clearly that working on children's bodies in very precise ways could reinforce discipline and obedience. The fact that such exercises were also in use in the armed forces, and that physical education at this time had a strong militaristic flavour, confirms the claim that social regulation was an explicit, if unstated, anticipated benefit.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the specialist Ling Gymnasts themselves had begun to experiment by introducing musical accompaniment to lessons and emphasising the rhythmic qualities of movement. It was on the basis of criticism of gymnastics by gymnasts themselves that brought a shift to a less precise, more 'natural' form of movement experience in the form of educational gymnastics and dance. The work of Rudolf Laban was developed from the 1930s by female gymnasts, though at first in the face of stern opposition from gymnasts of the old school. The publication of *Moving and Growing* by the Ministry of Education in the early 1950s signalled a victory for the new school of educational gymnasts, and a dramatic transformation of physical education in primary schools and for girls in secondary schools in particular. Emotional growth and expression were among the main benefits claimed for educational gymnastics, and the aesthetic experience was central to movement education as it was now being called (Randall, 1961).

World War 2 intervened dramatically in this process, however, in ways that the women gymnasts had not and could not have anticipated. The first specialist colleges of physical education for men appeared in Glasgow in 1932 and Leeds in 1933. The curriculum was modelled on Swedish gymnastics as it was for the women, and only small numbers of male teachers were produced between the early 1930s and the beginning of the war (Connel, 1983). The raising of the school leaving age to 15 in the years immediately following the war and the mass expansion of the secondary school system required the employment of large numbers of male physical educators for the first time. The men arrived in physical education with quite different perspectives to the women gymnasts and the war itself played a part. In the early years of the war, the need to produce soldiers from conscripted civilians imparted urgency to the already emerging work of scientists such as T.L. De Lorme in the USA

on the uses of progressive overload to assist in the rehabilitation of patients with muscular disabilities. Circuit training, developed by Morgan and Adamson in Leeds during the 1950s, was effectively an application of these new ideas about the relationships between exercise and physical performance. Originally intended to benefit the health of university and college students, circuit training was soon taken up by male competitive sports team, since the emphasis on muscular strength and cardio-vascular endurance central to this concept of physical fitness was suited well to the demands of competitive sport. Sport itself was viewed by the men as a more appropriate means of educating secondary school age pupils than either Swedish or educational gymnastics.

Pure and Applied Gymnastics is an important text written by David Munrow and published in 1955 that captures the radical shift that was underway in physical education. Munrow was at the time of publication Director of Physical Education at the University of Birmingham. His book was written in a style that offered a direct challenge both to traditional Swedish gymnastics and also to the mainly female-sponsored educational gymnastics. According to Munrow

> "The men have made overt acknowledgement that other skills are as important and have 'diluted' the gymnastic skill content of gymnasium work so that now boys may be seen practising basket-ball shots and manoeuvres, carrying out heading practices or practising sprint starting … The women, in the main, have...'diluted' the traditional gymnastic skills by a quite different device. They have ceased both to name and to teach them. Instead, a description is given, in general terms, of a task involving apparatus and individual solutions are encouraged. A much wider range of solutions is thus possible; some may include traditional skills but many will not." (Munrow, 1955, p.276)

We can see in Munrow's first sentence the crux of the new scientific approach to physical education, applying principles from the study of physiology, biomechanics and skill acquisition. Traditional gymnastics skills could be supplemented by sports skills, broken down and practiced in their component parts, before being re-assembled during sports performance. Indeed, this whole/part/whole methodology for teaching sport was to become hugely influential in decades to follow.

An illustration that the movement towards the teaching of sports skills was underway in men's physical education can be found in this 1949 report in the Journal of Physical Education. Physical education students from Loughborough and Carnegie Colleges performed at the 1949 Lingiad held in Stockholm, the stronghold of Swedish gymnastics. The Journal reported that their performances "splendidly contrasted in type and presentation" with the activities of the host nation, and left the Scandinavians "not knowing what next to expect from the British". The report went on to say that

> "The Carnegie programme opened with quickening and strengthening activities all conducted competitively. It then gave four series of games skill practices and competitions. The games taken were cricket, basket-ball, soccer and rugger. Each series showed the separate skills of the game being practiced and then applied the skills in a competitive phase. Twenty-five activities were packed into fifteen minutes and the work was a good test of stamina as well as a fine demonstration of speed and skill. Cricket greatly intrigued the audience

> and Rugby Touch brought them to their feet." (Reported in the *Journal of Physical Education*, 1949, p.123)

In the second part of Munrow's statement, we can see also the basis of the men's critique of educational gymnastics, which suggested this approach lead to a deterioration of standards and a narrowing of the curriculum. Although the women's approach survived in primary schools and schools for girls for several decades, it did not ultimately survive this critique. Of course, women and girls had been playing sport at least half a century beforehand, though often against much general social disapproval. Even so, we can see in two stereotypically gendered sports – netball and rugby - contrasting gendered styles of participation. In netball, physical contact is forbidden and skill is measured in part by the ability to control movement precisely in space and time. Rugby, in contrast, rewards the ability to occupy and crash through space forcefully. Both games were developed in the mid to late 19th century, and both encode gendered forms of movement.

It was on the basis of these associations of sport in general with masculinity, and football, cricket and rugby in particular, that the arrival of sport as a major force in the physical education curriculum was so troublesome to the women physical educators of the 1950s and 1960s. But the momentum was with the men. Consider the somewhat triumphal tone in this 1959 statement by Mr Hugh Brown, then Principal of my Alma Mater the Scottish School of Physical Education at Jordanhill, Glasgow.

> "The curriculum in the Colleges of PE is ever-widening. This is something that I rejoice to be able to report, and my only comment is 'high time, too!'. We are British people - for which I can find no cause for apology - and we are a games-playing nation. It has always puzzled me, for instance, that gymnastics should be regarded as being synonymous with Physical Education. Gymnastics is a part - a very valuable part - of a vast subject, and in some countries it may have been looked on as being the main fraction of the whole. No longer is that so here. However good a system may be, the folly of adopting it in its entirety and foisting it upon people, unadapted to peculiar needs, is at last recognised. What may delight the Germans or the Danes, and what suits their national characteristics, does not necessarily make a similar appeal here. Now we are recognising this!" (Reported in Physical Education, 1959, 50, p.92)

Mr Brown's statement is from a paper on 'The Training of the Man Teacher of Physical Education'. There was a complimentary paper presented by Marion Wardle on 'The Training of the Woman Teacher of Physical Education', where there is equal criticism of Swedish gymnastics, but little mention of games.

During the 1960s, the effects of the postwar baby boom (Marwick, 1982) and the ongoing expansion of secondary education gave further momentum to the cause of sport in physical education. The specialist women's colleges that had been the bedrock of the female tradition were also disappearing, absorbed into new, larger organizations (Fletcher, 1984). The stage was set for the process of change in physical education that had begun to gather pace in the late 1940s to come to fruition by the late 1970s.

In order to understand what was happening to the idea of the idea of physical education through all of this, we can turn to another event in Scotland, some twenty years after the 1954 conference. By the mid 1970s, curriculum and assessment in Scottish secondary schools was under review. Policy makers and curriculum writers had been influenced by the work of a number of philosophers of education (eg. Peters, 1966; White, 1973; Hirst, 1974) who, we can recall from earlier in this lecture, had argued that some knowledge was of greater educational worth than other knowledge based on a search for the essence of the concept of Education. These arguments lead policy makers to the view that some school subjects should be regarded as 'core' or essential in the curriculum and others as optional (Lawton, 1983; Skilbeck, 1984). In 1975, the Scottish Education Department and its Consultative Committee on the Curriculum set up a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. James Munn to examine the curriculum of Scottish secondary schools in years 3 and 4, the years leading up to the national examinations.

The Munn Committee received submissions from interested parties during 1975 and 1976 prior to making its report the following year (SED, 1977). Given the prevailing interest in the notion of core and elective subjects based on the 'educational' criteria of the philosophers, members of the physical education profession were nervous about the possibility that their subject may be excluded from the core curriculum. So what they chose to say on behalf of physical education was clearly a matter of some importance to the future of the subject.

In 1975, the Scottish Central Committee on Physical Education (SCCPE) made a submission to the Munn Committee on behalf of all of the physical education profession in Scotland (SCCPE, 1975). The SCCPE actually began their submission by taking issue with what they called the 'Peters/ Hirst initiation model' of education by arguing that this model was biased against a practical subject such as 'physical education/ movement' (as they called it). They proposed the Munn committee adopt the scheme devised by another philosopher of education, Philip Phenix (1964), whose 'realms of meaning' thesis, they claimed, offered greater scope to a movement based subject.

In laying out their view of physical education/ movement, the SCCPE claimed that

> "The early stages of the curriculum should attempt to help the child to become more aware of his/her own movement responses through kinesthetic feedback … (and should) help guide the child to an understanding of his individual movement characteristics. Cognitive understanding of underlying concepts of the activities and of individual movement responses should be established by this stage." (SCCPE, 1975, p.6)

The SCCPE submission also claimed that "the pupil should have a reasonably sophisticated body concept … a concept of aesthetic demands (and) a concept of the competitive nature of certain activities" (SCCPE, 1975, p.7).

The emphasis placed in the submission on cognition and conceptual development, and the prominence of notions such as the aesthetic, was characteristic of the female tradition. We can see here clearly the influence of educational gymnastics and modern dance. Significantly, while Dunfermline College of Physical Education (the women's

college) endorsed the SCCPE submission, the Scottish School of Physical Education (SSPE – the male college) did not. Indeed, they not only refused to endorse the submission, but went a step further and made a rival submission the following year.

The submission by the SSPE was of a different kind altogether from that of the SCCPE. The SSPE made no comment on the philosophy behind the approach likely to be taken by the Munn Committee. Instead they made the case for physical education's inclusion in the core curriculum on the basis of its contribution to health, to the development of perceptual-motor skills through games and sports and as a preparation for life-time leisure activity. The men produced evidence from scientific studies where it was available to support their arguments in each of these three areas.

When the Munn Committee reported in 1977, physical education was granted a place in the core curriculum of years three and four of Scottish secondary schools, though with two periods per week against the five allocated to mathematics and English, and four to science and social studies. In Paragraph 4.17 of the Report, the Committee suggested that physical education could contribute to the development of skilful movement, to preparation for leisure, and to the health of all pupils. In justifying their decision to recommend only two periods a week for physical education, the Committee also suggested that as a "non-cognitive" activity physical education should supplement its teaching and learning time through extra-curricular activities (Section 7.7).

The similarities between the SSPE submission and the recommendations of the Munn Report are too obvious to support any other conclusion. By the mid 1970s the male view of physical education, in Scotland in this case but arguably across Britain, based on a 'scientific functionalist' (Kirk, 1992) view of the relationship between exercise and health, and on the development of sports skills, had become the dominant perspective. The female view, it seems, had not simply been ignored. Much worse, the Committee used language to support a counter-position to the SCCPE submission by bluntly stating that physical education was a "non-cognitive activity".

Conclusion: A battle of ideas?

The modern history of physical education in Britain, as my brief account has attempted to show, has been a veritable battleground of ideas of physical education. This history is a good example of Goodson's thesis that school subjects and university disciplines rise and fall through a process of contestation between vying individuals and groups over discursive and material resources. Consistent with Goodson's thesis, we might conclude that school subjects and university fields are indeed socially constructed. Their form and substance, their status and survival, all are outcomes of processes of struggle and contestation over time. This is, I think, an important message in itself, and one that Leeds Met's Vice Chancellor Simon Lee (2003) in his own inaugural lecture 'Beyond boundaries', explores in great detail. As Lee's lecture shows, it is an idea that is worth reflecting on in relation to the idea of the idea of the university more generally, and to the shape and substance of particular universities.

Perhaps we can also ask what we can learn from this history about the idea of the idea of physical education? We can, I think, draw a number of conclusions. As I suggested in the Prologue, it would appear that the Scottish physical educators who met in 1954 to determine the future of physical education got it so badly wrong because they

believed the idea of the idea of physical education was expressed as and limited to gymnastics. Their mistake was not so much their choice of the soon to be obsolete Swedish gymnastics over educational or Olympic gymnastics. It was instead their belief that the idea of the idea of physical education was, in essence, gymnastics.

In retrospect, perhaps we can say their error was a failure to recognise that the idea of the idea of physical education could and was about to change. In so doing, in continuing to believe that gymnastics was the essence of the field, they inadvertently contributed to the decline and fall of that idea. Just as the idea of the idea of the university permits a range of diverse universities to exist as universities, so the idea of the idea of physical education would permit some diversity in what practices can count as physical education. The notion that physical education is gymnastics led these physical educators to exclude or ignore or just simply fail to begin to imagine other possibilities, and so to miss the real threat to the form of physical education they valued.

Indeed, we might argue that their error was even more profound. Not only could they not imagine that physical education could be something other than gymnastics. They mistook and then invested enormous energy campaigning for specific ideas of physical education (Swedish or educational or Olympic) as if these were 'true physical education'. In other words, they mistook a specific idea of physical education for the idea of the idea of physical education. Because of this, they did not foresee that the most serious challenger to Swedish gymnastics wasn't educational or Olympic gymnastics. It was, of course, sport.

With respect to universities, we might speculate that the act of compiling league tables to measure the worth of universities commits the same error. League tables do this by enshrining in these measures the idea of a specific university or kind of university and then claiming that these measures capture the idea of the idea of the university, or what the university is in essence. So, what Rothblatt's notion of the idea of the idea does is allows degrees of freedom around the notion of the university so that there can be diversity between actual universities. At the same time, the idea of the idea of the university sets some broad parameters that indicate when the notion is stretched too far so that it is no longer useful in distinguishing actual universities from other kinds of educational establishment. An important lesson to learn both about the idea of the idea of the university and of physical education is that these parameters can and are being negotiated, amended, and re-negotiated over time.

According to my account of the modern history of physical education, from around the 1880s to the present, the reconstruction of the idea of the idea of physical education has happened only once, centring on the shift from gymnastics to sport. Even though there have been a number of versions of gymnastics, representing specific ideas of physical education, and variations on the theme of how sport-based physical education is practiced, I would argue there has to date been only this one shift.

This said, it could be suggested that the version of physical education proposed by the female inspired coalition in mid-1970s Scotland, emphasising the conceptual, aesthetic and educational dimensions of physical education/ movement was an attempt to posit a new idea of the idea of physical education. This notion could,

potentially, have resulted in quite different physical education programs from the sport-based version inspired by the victorious (mostly male) scientific functionalists. Perhaps the position of those such as Kay who argue for a version of physical education that has little or no association with sport carries some traces of this idea of the idea of physical education. But since it was difficult for advocates to persuade the Scottish curriculum developers that the conceptual, aesthetic and movement notion was appropriate in the 1970s, it may be even more difficult now, in the few years leading up to a London Olympic Games, to contemplate the idea of the idea of physical education that does not have sport at its core.

A problem for the future of physical education may be, nevertheless, that while sport forms a substantial part of the idea of the idea of physical education, there is increasing criticism both from within and outside the subject that physical education does not do sport well (eg. Siedentop, 2002). There is also a growing expectation among public health professionals, politicians and the media, that physical education ought to do more to halt childhood obesity (Kirk, 2006). Physical educators in the past, I suggest, have not been terribly good at gauging wider public perceptions of their subject and at analysing broad physical cultural trends in society. The Scottish gymnasts' decision of the 1950s is a case in point, though there are many more recent examples that confirm this truth (Hoolihan, 2002; Penney & Evans, 1999; Roberts, 1996). Perhaps if we were to pay a little more attention to the bigger picture for physical education and its positioning in various educational, sport and health discourses, we might have some better sense of when the next shift in the idea of the idea of physical education will happen, and the form it will take.

And it seems to me that universities must do the same. If Newman's legacy is the idea of the idea of the university, we must understand that the future prospects, prosperity and indeed survival of particular universities, here at Leeds Met and elsewhere, depend on our willingness and ability to construct the 'modern' university and engage productively with its discontents.

Epilogue: Dreaming the Impossible Dream (with apologies to Shirl J Hoffman)

The Times, 27 June 2013

New Scheme for Sport and Exercise in Schools

The Prime Minister's Office announced today that Lord Coe had agreed the new schemes for sport and exercise in schools. This follows the decision late last year to abolish the National Curriculum. In place of physical education, all pupils aged 5-14 will from September participate in a minimum of 3 hours of exercise per week. They will be required to meet stringent fitness targets set by the new Office for Health Standards. The franchise for this service has been won by Lifestyle and Weight Management Group Ltd, the multi-national research and development company. A spokesperson for LWMG commented that 'Obviously we are delighted with this decision. LWMG's pioneering work in the field of childhood obesity over the past 15 years makes the Group the obvious candidate to manage this franchise'. The collapse of the National Health Service in March coupled with ongoing reports of high Body/Mass Index scores and critical levels of obesity among the British population were identified by LWMG as decisive factors in shaping the new coalition Government's decision.

Prime Minister Coe is also said to be keen to ensure England's third world cup win next year following the victories of 1966 and 2010, and to build on Britain's historic record medal haul from the London Olympics. Sports Minister Sir David Beckham has been in close consultation with the two lead bodies in youth sport, the Youth Sport Trust and Sports Coach UK, who have recommended that the multi-skills Talent Development Program first introduced in 2003 be further extended. An additional 800 school/ club sports coaches will be recruited to work with the existing 9000 coaches. It is hoped that it may be possible to recruit some of these additional coaches by retraining former, now redundant, physical education teachers.

All children aged 5-7 will undergo intensive multi-skills training prior to selection for the Talent Development Program for 8-16 year olds. This initiative, Minister Beckham said, will further consolidate the Government's recently announced investment in the development of a network of residential sports colleges for 12-16 year olds. The first college opened last year in Loughborough, and further colleges will open in Bath, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Glasgow later this year.

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