Physical Education and Physically Active Lives: A Lifelong Approach to Curriculum Development

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ABSTRACT This paper focuses upon the relationship between physical education and interests in enabling more people to establish and maintain 'active and healthy lives' from a curriculum development perspective. Twin and inter-linked concepts of 'lifelong learning' and 'lifelong physical activity' are presented as a conceptual basis for curriculum development in physical education. A multidimensional conceptualisation of physical activity is introduced as a key reference point for rethinking the scope and focus of curricula claiming or aiming to facilitate people’s interest and ability to maintain active and healthy lives. It is argued that there is a need for a broadening of the skills, knowledge and understanding encompassed within curricula and for a lifelong curriculum to be acknowledged as the collective responsibility of organisations and individuals within and beyond existing formal education structures.

Introduction

In 2000, Penney and Chandler stressed that:

...there is not only one possible future for physical education. It is for all within the profession to address and debate what the futures should be and to ensure that policy and curriculum developments then reflect the visions established, and facilitate their realisation. (p. 85, our emphasis).

For some people the future for physical education is a future directed towards young people’s future health and well-being and, more specifically, their current and future participation in physical activity and sport. Indeed, Bob Laventure opened his 2002 fellows lecture to the Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom (PEAUK) with the confident statement that ‘physical education has always been inextricably linked to the health of young people and is recognised as providing the foundation of experiences that are the basis of participation in health enhancing physical activity throughout life’ (p. 40). Yet the political faith in physical education includes but also goes well beyond the ability of physical education and sport in schools to ‘deliver’ promised improvements relating to health. We remain in a situation whereby participation in physically active lives is merely one of an array of issues that are seen to be directly relevant to the subject or learning area.1 Reflecting upon the ‘state of play’ in health and physical education in Aotearoa New Zealand, Burrows and Ross (2003) recently commented that:

It seems that health and physical educators are increasingly being regarded (both by others and themselves) as capable of inoculating young people against an ever-expanding range of risks and problems such as stress, low self-esteem, drugs and alcohol, teenage sex and spiritual decline. (p. 15)
In times of ever increasing accountability, there is arguably a renewed need for us to be reflecting upon whether we are comfortable with the idea that physical education/health and physical education and sport in schools is being expected to simultaneously bring about improvements in physical activity levels in children and adults, in obesity rates in rankings in international sporting arenas and in drug and alcohol-related health and crime statistics. Are we confident that we have curricula, teaching and learning activities, assessment tasks and pedagogical relations in place that enable us to effectively engage with all or any of these agendas and furthermore, demonstrate the difference that we are making to various aspects of young people’s lives?

This paper seeks to extend professional debate about these matters by focusing attention specifically on ‘one possible future for physical education’ and its curriculum implications; a future concerned first and foremost with provision for ‘active lives’. The paper addresses these issues from a firmly educational standpoint, with the aim of thereby also offering something of a response to Evans’ (2003) recent reflection that:

In what has been an extraordinary displacement of professional interest over the last 20 years, Physical Education … has increasingly centred attention on and justified its existence discursively and pedagogically in terms of just about everything other than that which is distinctive and special about itself and its subject matter. Specifically, the discipline’s capacity and pedagogical responsibility, to work on, effect changes in, develop and ameliorate ‘the body’s’ intelligent capacities for movement and expression in physical culture, in all its varied forms, has been displaced. (p. 3)

The paper seeks to directly counter this displacement by presenting a clear conceptual basis for curriculum development and an accompanying multidimensional framework to be utilised in that development. Specifically, twin and inter-linked concepts of ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘lifelong physical activity’ are discussed as a critical precursor to presentation of a multidimensional physical activity framework. The framework is introduced as a reference point for rethinking the scope and focus of curricula claiming or aiming to facilitate people’s interest and ability to maintain active and healthy lives. Discussion then focuses upon the prospective curriculum implications of the framework. It is argued that there is a need for a broadening of the skills, knowledge and understanding encompassed within curricula and for a lifelong physical education curriculum to be acknowledged as the collective responsibility of organisations and individuals within and beyond existing formal education structures.

A Selective and Strategic Vision

Amidst strong central and/or local government statements of a commitment to physical activity agendas and furthermore, the promise of investment on a grand scale to accompany activity promotion initiatives, there is an understandable temptation to propose a key linkage between a physical education curriculum and the pursuit of ‘active’ and ‘healthy’ lives. Furthermore, as Laventure’s comments indicated, claims of such a linkage are not new in physical education. Yet, there is arguably a long overdue need to be articulating exactly what the nature of the physical education–physical activity–active and/or healthy lives linkages are, or indeed, might be. Gard (2003) has provided a timely warning that ‘unless a credible alternative vision for physical education can be articulated, we may end up having to explain our failure in a job for which we did not apply’ (p. 77). Meanwhile, a recent Labor Party Policy Paper in Australia featured the following
interesting slippage in terminology: ‘schools are often stretched for resources and do not have the capacity to employ a specialist physical activity teacher’ (Lundy & Gillard, 2003, p. 12, our emphasis).

In the light of this latter comment it is important to stress that we are not seeking the expressed ‘redefinition’ of professional identity and role. Rather, the starting point for our proposals is a belief that education, physical education and junior sport have key roles to play in encouraging and enabling more people to continue to participate in a wide array of physically active pursuits throughout their lives for whatever reasons they choose—personal health, general lifestyle, social interests and in some cases, desires to personally improve or excel in an activity. Embedded and reflected in the ideas that we will outline for policy and curriculum developments in physical education and beyond are particular visions for people’s future lives, and furthermore, the communities and societies that they will be a part of. The visions are certainly about more than lives featuring a specified quantity of a particular sort of activity undertaken at a recommended intensity. Rather, they are about enjoying being active, being able to stay active and lead whatever one views as a ‘healthy’ and ‘full’ life, and helping others to do likewise. Significantly, these visions relate to a life of learning, not just activity.

**Planning for Realisation of the Vision**

Curriculum planning cannot sensibly start with the curriculum. Given that the curriculum is a vehicle, or collection of vehicles, intended to reach a certain set of destinations, we have to begin with the destinations themselves. Once we have these, we have at some point to work out what kind of vehicles are best to help us attain them in particular circumstances. (White, 2003, p. 6)

In the light of White’s comments our first priority is to gain some clarity about the destinations that we have in mind when we talk about desires for ‘more people to be more active’ and/or maintain so called ‘active’ or ‘healthy’ lifestyles. We suggest that gaining greater clarity demands that we revisit the ways in which we are thinking about first, *education*, and second, *activity*.

**Education: A Lifelong Process**

‘Lifelong learning’, ‘learning societies’ and ‘learning communities’ are all terms that have recently found substantial currency with academics and politicians alike. There is increasing talk of education extending beyond schools, learning being recognised as occurring at other sites and times—an ongoing dispersed process to be actively encouraged and supported—and no longer only by teachers in schools. Indeed, in Scotland, lifelong learning has been embraced not merely in a government Minister’s portfolio, but in their title of Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.2 Amidst the myriad of initiatives in education in England is the development of ‘Networked Learning Communities’.3 Draft proposals for the key stage 3 (for students aged 11–14) in Northern Ireland are also notable in including ‘learning for life and work’ as a new learning area, distinct from, but also an important reference point for, the far more recognisable ‘general learning areas’ (CCEA, 2003).

Physical education is arguably very well positioned to move forward in line with these policy directions. Invariably, physical educationalists seek out avenues via which skills and interests developed within school can be pursued further, certainly in the case of
those children who are keen and/or show notable talent in sport. We can readily
recognise that learning and involvement in physical activity and sport happens in many
places and various times—in schools but also in communities, in families, amongst
friends, in workplaces and in our connections with digital and ‘virtual’ worlds. Arguably
there is a need for greater recognition that learning relating to health and physical
education needs to be ongoing for all young people, responsive to their ever changing life
circumstances, needs and interests, and is by no means the sole concern or domain of
those currently identified as physical education teachers. As Richard Tinning (2003)
recently observed:

> While it is usual to think of schools as a key site of learning (knowledge
> production) and the teacher as a ‘flesh and blood’ human, pedagogical work is
> also done by many other ‘cultural players’ in addition to schools and teachers.
> Pedagogical work is done by such diverse media as an instructional video, a
> lifestyle magazine, a film, a mobile text message, a billboard poster, a NIKE
> ad, or even a label on the back of a cereal box. (p. 225)

But before progressing our discussion any further it is important to acknowledge that
‘lifelong learning’ or ‘learning societies’ are not fixed, nor neutral concepts. They are
always and inevitably tied to particular interests, values and visions for futures (Young,
1998). Thus when stating our interests in education and physical education being
(re)conceptualised as lifelong processes, we need to add a caveat. Our specific interests
are in notions of lifelong learning and learning society which have embedded in them a
commitment to enhancing social justice and inclusion, with opportunities being provided
for all individuals ‘to acquire the knowledge and skills for self-development as well as for
the benefit of others’ (Quicke, 1999, p. vii) at any stage of life (see also Bentley, 1998;
Edwards & Kelly, 1998; Young, 1998). From this perspective education emerges as a
lifelong endeavour, not something that can be pre-defined, pre-prescribed, or simplisti-
cally ‘delivered’ in a specified shot. The concern is with a process, not a fixed product.
Furthermore, the entitlement to be secured is entitlement to

> … a form of curriculum which will cater appropriately to the growth and
development of every capacity, which will promote the acquisition of those
understandings which will facilitate intelligent participation in democratic
processes, which will offer genuine social and political empowerment, and
which will in general enrich and enhance the life potential of every individual.
(Edwards & Kelly, 1998, p. 16)

In physical education part of the enrichment, enhancement and indeed, social and
political empowerment relates to our interest in physically active lives. We share with
others within the profession (and in some political and policy arenas; see below) a
commitment to the development of informed learners capable of critical engagement
with activity agendas, opportunities and barriers experienced throughout their lives. Such
a commitment is articulated in the opening statement in the Health and Physical Education
in the New Zealand Curriculum document:

> Through learning in health and physical education students will develop the
knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation to make informed decisions and act
in ways that contribute to their personal well-being, the well-being of other
people, and that of society as a whole. (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 6)

and similarly, in the Western Australian Premier’s Physical Activity Taskforce’s (2001)
concern that consideration be given to ‘providing children and youth with the knowl-
edge, understanding, attitudes and skills to enable them to live healthy and active lifestyles' (p. 27). These interests relate to, but are at the same time fundamentally different from, a primary (or sole) concern with increasing temporary participation rates in particular types of activity.

But we are still left with an important question unanswered: what exactly do 'healthy and active lifestyles' involve? If we are to develop proposals that will make realistic and educationally sound linkages between physical education and physical activity agendas, we need to have a clear view of what such lives entail. Secondly (and only then), we need to revisit the skills, knowledge and understanding that will be required to pursue and maintain them. Through extensive discussions and shared personal reflection, we have been endeavouring to 'unpack' these challenging issues and thereby provide a stronger foundation from which to develop curriculum proposals that foreground interests in physical activity and active lives. In the next section of the paper we present a multidimensional 'lifelong physical activity' (LLPA) framework. The framework is intended to serve dual purposes: to enable LLPA to be explored and described in a notably holistic way and thereby avoid attention being confined to isolated incidences or types of activity; and to be a reference point for planning provision to support LLPA.

**Physical Activity in an Active Life**

As indicated above, our aim is to be promoting an 'all encompassing' view of physical activity in people's lives and recognising the diverse types of activity that we become involved in, for many and varied reasons. We take the view that it is important that this full scope of activity in one's life is acknowledged as worthy of educational engagement. In all of these respects we see the framework and curriculum proposals that follow as markedly different from past initiatives purportedly concerned with physical activity or active lives.4

LLPA conceptualised holistically is presented as having four dimensions. We recognise lives as involving ever changing:

- **functional** physical activity (FPA), in response to demands of everyday work and home life;
- **recreational** physical activity (RPA), as a leisure pursuit, which, for many, is a socially-orientated activity;
- **health-related** physical activity (HRPA), concerned with fitness, well-being and/or rehabilitation;
- **performance-related** physical activity (PRPA), concerned with self-improvement and/or success in performance environments.

All of these dimensions can be seen to involve different activity demands, needs and interests at different times in our lives—as we prepare for and then progress through school years, enter into adult and working life, perhaps change jobs, have families, move into later adulthood and retirement. The issue of categorisation is an interesting and to some extent problematic issue arising from our identification of the four dimensions. The key matter to keep in the foreground is the purpose(s) of an activity. Activities per se are not inherently associated with a single dimension. Rather, associations may well vary as individuals engage in particular activities for specific reasons. Thus, walking a dog may be seen as an essential functional activity (it is an everyday task that needs to be fulfilled), but in some people's lives it will also represent a valuable 'health-related' activity and may be seen as primarily that, rather than a 'chore'. The same activity may also be an
important recreational and social activity. An activity thus needs to be acknowledged as potentially associated with a number of LLPA dimensions. If we consider training for performance/participation in sport, many of us will recognise instances in which performance-related, recreational and health-related dimensions overlap. Therefore we have emphasised personal meaning and purpose(s) as the key consideration in mapping activities across the dimensions and within what we have termed a LLPA ‘lifeline’ (see Appendices 1 and 2).

Mapping out one’s ‘lifelong’ activity patterns using the multidimensional framework might seem somewhat self-indulgent or an unnecessary distraction from policy and curriculum development issues. However, we suggest that compiling LLPA ‘lifelines’ may be a worthwhile and informative exercise, particularly if the mapping is accompanied by reflection upon some clearly pertinent questions.

- To what extent did school physical education provide a sound foundation for LLPA in all its dimensions?
- Where else has support and ‘education’ for changing activity demands, needs and interests come from during life?
- How have those activity demands, needs and interests related to personal health (conceptualised holistically and therefore encompassing physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual health) and to what extent has ongoing ‘education’ effectively addressed this relationship?
- Are we looking to the future confident that we either have, or can access, new skills and knowledge relevant to once again changing activity patterns, demands, interests and opportunities?
- Where, how and in what ways have we supported others’ participation in physical activity? How may we do so in the future? And has education prepared us for these roles?

Once complete, LLPA lifelines such as those presented in Appendix 2 give us a better grasp of the diversity of activity issues and interests that can feature across one’s life, and the range of support roles that we may voluntarily or inadvertently come to play in relation to others’ activity. Furthermore, it draws attention to the need to recognise education for ‘physically active and healthy lives’ as necessarily a collective endeavour; that we need to be concerned with lives of ongoing learning, not just activity.

**A Life of Learning in Learning Communities**

In reflecting on our LLPE lifeline it is important to recognise that our ‘physical education’ and learning has extended well beyond the school curriculum and school years and that we have been more fortunate than many in this respect. Our lifelines (see Appendix 2) confirm that particularly in early childhood, family members were important physical educators. Homes, gardens, streets and parks were places where a lot of learning happened. The development of particular skills and interests owed much to family members having a passion for particular sports, being willing to spend time playing with us and later, support our involvement in local sports clubs and youth groups. Both of these emerge as important sites of continued learning in a widening range of activities. We also recognise that our ongoing ‘active lives’ have increasingly been reliant upon us developing as ‘independent learners’, accessing specialist books, magazines and the internet to develop training programs and find out about events, equipment, injury prevention and rehabilitation.
Our learning networks, communities and sources of education have thus changed considerably over the years. Learning and experiences in one arena have frequently enabled transition to another. Improved motor competencies, personal fitness, knowledge about training but also self-management and interpersonal skills have all played their part in this process. In parallel, our support for others' learning and activity has involved us playing various roles, as formal coaches, supportive friends and caring parent, sibling, daughter or son.

As indicated earlier, our contention is that the lifeline is not merely a tool for description. Rather, it also represents a potentially powerful reference point for policy and curriculum development relating to physical education, sport, physical activity and health. Producing LLPA lifelines and engaging with the reflective questions above leads us to suggest that the physical education curriculum as it has traditionally been conceptualised and organised is destined to have partial and short-lived relevance to many people's lives. Although our own school physical education provided us with a good foundation for recreational and performance-related participation in games that we enjoyed in childhood and some of which we still enjoy today, we are acutely aware that this is by no means the case for all of our peers. Furthermore, the content and focus of school physical education has seemed increasingly removed from our activity needs and interests as our lives have progressed, life circumstances and interests changed. This is not to imply that school physical education should somehow seek to encompass an ever expanding array of youth and adult active leisure pursuits, but rather that curriculum planning should focus on transferable skills, knowledge and understanding.

Both of us therefore reflect that in some respects we have definitely been empowered and enabled by our school physical education. 'Social dance was fun (but we couldn’t admit it!!) and has prepared me for involvement in many social dance situations' (Mike). Yet in other respects we can identify that we were left notably disempowered—poorly placed to engage with some of the activity and health demands and opportunities that have arisen and continue to arise in the various arenas of our lives.

In recent years I have looked back with regret at the apparent absence of activities within my education and physical education that may have done more for my coordination, balance, posture and what we might term 'bodily confidence'—the sort of bodily confidence that is a prerequisite for entry to a wide range of activity, social and educational contexts; the sort of confidence that would mean that I could walk into a gym or go to an aerobics class without feeling immediately self-conscious and inadequate. (Dawn)

Certainly we have personally struggled to see ways in which our own 'games dominated' physical education connected at all with what we have termed the 'functional dimension' of activity. Many of the activity demands of our workplaces would typically be labelled merely as 'inactivity'—to be compensated for rather than considered worthy of attention in their own right. Yet the activity demands of office-based and other jobs are surely well worthy of attention from a positive, not merely compensatory, educational and health perspective. Arguably, there is a strong case for an education that addresses skills, knowledge and understanding relating, for example, to good posture while sitting at desks and computers, or to lifting and carrying loads. These are just some of the everyday activities that are seemingly beyond the legitimate boundaries of current curriculum thinking. We are left wondering why movement skills, knowledge and understanding that are fundamental to our everyday lives and essential to our lifelong activity and health are not an integral, explicit and valued element of physical education. The omission is
arguably all the more notable at a time when there is growing recognition in health and physical activity policy that so called ‘incidental’ physical activity is in fact highly significant in people’s lives—with data supporting a focus on the ‘functional’. For example, the Premier’s Physical Activity Taskforce report of the physical activity levels of Western Australian adults in 2002 (McCormack et al., 2003) identified gardening and walking for transport as respectively the second and third most popular activities undertaken in the preceding week (with walking for recreation the most popular), and ‘the home’ as the second most frequently used ‘facility’ for physical activity—with local streets and paths the most frequently used facility. Similarly, the strategic direction report from the Taskforce pointed out that:

Walking or cycling 1 kilometre to the railway station saves 0.2 to 0.3kg greenhouse gas emissions, other air pollutants and fuel costs. The traveller’s moderate physical activity in walking to the station and climbing the station steps to the train would also meet between one third and on half of the daily recommended amount of physical activity. (Premier’s Physical Activity Taskforce, 2001, p. 12)

Needless to say, neither these activities nor these purposes featured in our physical education. So where does the multidimensional framework take us in re-thinking prospective curriculum development for ‘active and healthy lives’?

**Development: Destinations and Directions**

First, it is worth re-emphasising the need to keep the visions and hopes that we have for young people’s futures at the fore of our thinking about how to enable and support the realisation of those futures. In tracking policy and curriculum development through the introduction and two revisions of a national curriculum in England, we have witnessed this basic linkage being rapidly lost. Typically, specific sports or activities and related specialised skills—rather than young people’s lives, needs and interests—have almost immediately come to the fore in commentaries, debates, recommendations and requirements (Evans & Penney, 1995; Penney & Evans, 1999). The ongoing dominance of the ‘multi-activity model’ is evidence of this shift in focus and a phenomenon far from unique to England (Locke, 1992; Crum, 1993; Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000). Repeatedly it seems that the relevance and purpose of the activities being advocated and enshrined in policies and curricula have been left inadequately explored, leading Laventure (2003) to reflect that:

Perhaps we have missed something in the past by being over-concerned about the nature and attractions of individual activities themselves and the extent to which they are competing (literally) for the hearts as well as the minds of young people. Perhaps also we have fallen into the trap of seeing a breadth of activities as being sufficient to interest young people for a lifetime of activity. (Laventure, 2003, p. 41)

and we would add, remaining far too narrow in our thinking about the skills, knowledge and understanding that underpin active and healthy lives.

If we take on board the conceptualisations of lifelong learning and LLPA that have been put forward in the preceding discussion, then developing policies and practices ‘for active and healthy futures’ undoubtedly becomes a more complex and ‘messy’ business than we would maybe like it to be. It becomes concerned with whole not partial lives and with ‘more and different’ skills, knowledge and understanding than is currently the case.
Simultaneously, instead of envisaging that we will be able to clearly prescribe the skills and knowledge needed for ‘active and healthy futures’ and then legislate that they be ‘transmitted’ or ‘delivered’, we face the uncomfortable prospect of being asked to plan for learning that will always be unfinished, ongoing and in need of review in the context of changing lives. Fixed views of who educational provision will involve, when and where it will happen are all rendered redundant as reference points for policy planning. Planning has to instead align itself with a view of education and learning as ‘ongoing and dispersed processes’, with the individual learner at the centre, ‘an intelligent agent with the potential to learn from any and all of her encounters with the world around her’ (Bentley, 1998, p. 1).

Policy and curriculum development that is futures driven and orientated will thus, by necessity, be a multi-agency undertaking with all agencies challenged to consider the ways and places in which they can facilitate activity and learning opportunities—appropriate for people in various life circumstances with differing, diverse and ever changing ‘activity and health-related learning’ needs and interests. Plummeridge and Swanwick (2003) capture this in addressing similar issues from a different subject/learning area standpoint. They emphasise that ‘It has to be recognised that schools and colleges cannot be musical islands. They need to be part of a music network and might best be seen as facilitating agencies rather than sole “providers”’ (p. 135), with a shift in emphasis therefore, ‘from the organisation of teaching to the facilitating of learning’ (p. 135)—in various places and with various people. Curriculum, pedagogy, the creation and maintenance of supportive, inclusive ‘active learning environments’ necessarily becomes a collective and community concern, for all ‘prospective educators’ (family, friends, sports coaches, leaders …) in reconfigured and expanded learning networks and communities.

Perhaps most obviously for physical education, the case emerging from our discussion is for a curriculum that engages with all of the dimensions within the LLPA lifeline, and that is not confined to, nor will always centre on, formal education institutions. ‘Physical education’ takes on a somewhat unfamiliar identity in terms of scope and focus, while provision and facilitation of learning opportunities is recognised as many people’s responsibility. Undoubtedly a number of a number of potentially contentious issues then arise for professional debate. The following discussion provides an illustrative insight into some of those issues.

Which of the activity dimensions that we have outlined are various agencies positioned and also willing to direct their energies towards? Certainly, it would be naïve to expect that the current mix of interests in and for physical education will disappear. The prospective ‘new’ agendas that we have introduced will inevitably be viewed and ultimately positioned in relation to existing, diverse interests in and for the subject/learning area. The parallel and/or overlying interests need to be openly discussed in the context of collaborative planning and discussion should help to identify which dimensions it is most obvious for particular agencies to address.

Who will ensure coverage and coherency of LLPA networks—for people of various ages with various activity-related learning needs and interests? In the case of young people, do coordination and collaborative planning to facilitate opportunities beyond schools (pre-, in parallel with, and post-school-based experiences) emerge as the key role for physical education teachers in schools?

In relation to physical education or health and physical education in schools, how do current frameworks and requirements match with a concern for a more holistic outlook on ‘activity’—if indeed, it is an outlook that we are willing to embrace. Can we contemplate some notable extensions to teaching and learning while also acknowledging that this cannot be simply
a matter of ‘adding more’; that in some areas it will mean ‘doing less’ and doing some things differently? Are we ready and willing to foreground in curriculum planning an interest in developing young people’s abilities and interests to selectively and creatively use and apply the skills and knowledge that they are learning?

The final section of the paper further explores this latter point. It outlines three possible scenarios for curriculum development in physical education.

Curriculum Futures

In the first scenario, the dimensions are mapped onto a curriculum in which specific activities or areas/categories of activity remain the dominant structural feature and organising principle in curriculum planning. The form or format of the ‘traditional’ multi-activity program, comprising units of work each relating to a specific activity, is retained. The multidimensional conceptualisation of activity challenges us to envisage ways in which ‘activity-based units’ could be designed and taught so as to promote connections with the multiple dimensions. The emphasis is upon the skills, knowledge and understanding that are being taught in and through the activity context being applied to a learner’s functional, recreational, health-related and performance orientated activity needs and interests. Irrespective of the activity context, the full range of potential applications could be considered and students provided with opportunities (including extended learning opportunities that involve them linking with other sites and agencies in the local learning network/community) to prioritise particular applications in the light of their individual interests. The personal relevance of skills, knowledge and understanding is therefore scrutinised and developed. In this scenario we may well reach a realisation that there is a need to introduce a wider range of activities/activity contexts in order to make relevant and ‘authentic’ connections with young people’s lives and activity within them (Ennis, 2003).

In embracing the multiple dimensions as outlined in this scenario, we may better cater for students with vocational, recreational, health-related and performance-related interests in physical education. However, there is also a need to consider whether the activity-based structure will continue to have a ‘defining influence’ upon teaching and learning, teachers and learners—such that irrespective of new guidance or requirements articulating the focus on the multiple dimensions of activity, the lived teaching and learning experience reverts to one that openly privileges elite performance, sport specific agendas.

In our second scenario, the dimensions are mapped onto a curriculum in which strands or aspects of learning have been established as the key structural feature of the curriculum—in ‘official policy texts’ even if not in the practical implementation of requirements (see Penney, 1998). Examples of such texts are the framework for health and physical education (HPE) in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1998) and HPE within the curriculum framework in Western Australia (Education Department of Western Australia, 1998). In these contexts the multidimensional LLPA framework challenges us to review the appropriateness of current strands and/or sub-strands. It also prompts us to re-examine the learning outcomes currently developed within strands such as ‘Personal Health and Physical Development’ and ‘Movement Concepts and Motor Skills’ (Ministry of Education, 1998), or ‘Skills for Physical Activity’ (SPA) (Education Department of Western Australia, 1998). Specifically we can question the extent to which the outcomes link with the holistic vision of physical activity or, in contrast, ‘fall short’
of that vision. Limitations of space prevent us from exploring these matters in detail. However, outcome statements such as 'The student demonstrates the movement skills and strategic thinking required for high level performance in selected physical activities' (level 8 statement for the SPA strand within HPE in WA) indicate the need for some modification of outcome statements if the multidimensional conceptualisation is taken up.

Finally, in the third scenario the LLPA dimensions are adopted as the major structural/organisational feature of the curriculum. In effect they are established as new 'strands'. This development would prompt a detailed documentation of (not only physical) skills, knowledge and understanding associated with each dimension, and parallel articulation of level-based progression in those skills, knowledge and understanding. Potentially, units of work may be developed with a singular focus on one dimension, or there may be instances in which overlap of skills, knowledge and understanding is seen to justify units that relate to two or more dimensions. The identified skills, knowledge and understanding would be explored and advanced via various activities and activity contexts, appropriate to students' age, interests, culture and the resources available. Planning from this perspective would also serve to highlight that some of the skills, knowledge and understanding identified (particularly but not exclusively relating to the functional dimension of activity) may be appropriately considered a 'whole school' responsibility, to be developed progressively and consistently through experiences in a number of curriculum subjects or learning areas. However, with the adoption of this 'dispersed' approach it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the skills, knowledge and understanding concerned are a legitimate and important element of the (reformed) physical education curriculum.

**Conclusion: Development Has to Start from the 'Here and Now'**

Perhaps inevitably, the third scenario presented above is likely to be seen as the most abstract and therefore difficult to envisage as a prospective curriculum future for physical education. Yet it is important that we remain open in our curriculum thinking. White (2003) recently emphasised that curriculum planning must not 'start with the status quo' (p. 6). That said, it is both inevitable and arguably appropriate that debates about prospective future policy and curriculum development maintain connections with 'where we are at'. Williams (2003) captured this when speaking from a modern foreign language curriculum viewpoint and commenting that:

> Like the tourist who asks the countryman how to get to a destination and receives the reply, 'If I were going there, I wouldn't start from here', we have to start from here. Although we are not prisoners of our past, there is a sense in which we have to make the best use of what circumstances offer us. (p. 117)

The extent to which current circumstances, interests and priorities within various arenas of policy and practice will appear conducive to the prospective developments that we have discussed will vary. Ultimately the potential for advancement of the developments will be determined by local contexts and the political priorities and power relations within them. While we may urge engagement with the issues raised, it is within curriculum authorities, professional associations, schools and teacher education institutions that discussions need to be initiated. Individuals within all of these arenas need to explore the responses that are politically and practically possible. Undoubtedly, the development of practical examples of how the ideas that we have presented can be applied and developed as curricula in schools and beyond is critical if they are to gain
wider recognition as the basis of a legitimate and viable ‘curriculum future’ for physical education. Furthermore, that development needs to be a collaborative endeavour. On that note it is appropriate to close with the observation that if we are serious about matters of relevance, authenticity and coherency from young people’s perspectives, then we need young people to be involved in the curriculum development process—and not merely be positioned as recipients of proposals or new requirements. As Fitzpatrick (2003) has emphasised, ‘Young people are dynamic and have much to teach us’ (p. 175). We need to build a policy relationship as well as pedagogical relationships with them to secure a curriculum future for physical education that they will be inspired to engage with.

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Notes

[1] England provides a vivid example of diversity of political interests in physical education and school sport. The ‘faith’ currently being shown is reflected in government policy statements such as this: PE and sport in schools, both within and beyond the curriculum, can improve:
- pupil concentration, commitment and self-esteem; leading to higher attendance and better behaviour and attainment;
- fitness levels; active children are less likely to be obese and more likely to pursue sporting activities as adults; thereby reducing their likelihood of heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer; and
- success in international competition by ensuring talented young sports people have a clear pathway to elite sport and competition whatever their circumstances. (DfES/DCMS, 2003, p. 1; see also Conway, 2003)


[3] The Networked Learning Community (NLC) program is an initiative being developed by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in partnership with the DiES, the Teacher Training Agency and the General Teaching Council. A networked learning community is a cluster of schools working with others, such as Higher Education Institutions, Local Education Authorities, FE colleges or community groups to: raise standards by improving the learning of pupils and staff, and school—school learning; develop leadership for learning by developing and harnessing the leadership potential of a wide range of people; build capacity for growth and continuous improvement by schools developing evidence-informed practice and resources (NCSL, 2002, p. 1). It is a pilot program in which the NCSL and DiES provide funding to support the development of the community (up to £50,000 p.a. for three years), facilitate learning between networks and initiate wider dissemination. Each NLC identifies a ‘Learning Focus’ as its ‘unifying theme and objective’ and agreed upon by all member organisations. The objective ‘must be shown to add significant value to what the schools (individually or as an existing network) are already doing’ (NCSL, 2002, p. 6).

References


Appendix 1. The LLPA Lifeline Template

The LLPA lifeline template includes the four ‘activity’ dimensions described above, and one that we have termed ‘support’. This reflects our interest in not merely self-development but also the ongoing roles that we can all play in supporting others’ pursuit of ‘healthy’ and ‘active’ futures. The ‘phases’ identified are intended to be flexible rather than fixed. Different people will have different points of ‘transition’, which may relate to significant changes in family life circumstances, a ‘significant other’ (child, partner, friend …) entering or leaving your life, a change in place or type of work, or changes in personal health.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Pre-school years</th>
<th>Infant/primary school years</th>
<th>Secondary/high school years</th>
<th>Further education/university years</th>
<th>Post-school/university years... (20–30)</th>
<th>(30–40)</th>
<th>(40–50)</th>
<th>(50–60)</th>
<th>Late adulthood (over 60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>(what were the activity demands of everyday life?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>(what activity did I do for fun?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-related</td>
<td>(what activity did I do for fitness, well-being or rehabilitation?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance-related</td>
<td>(what activity did I do with a focus on standard of performance?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>(how have I supported others’ involvement in activity?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2. Dawn’s physical activity lifeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Infant/primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Sixth form uni</th>
<th>Post uni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Functional**  | *Attending school...what did it demand?...*  
Walk to bus stop  
Climb and descend stairs on bus  
Carry school books  
Sit in class  
Participate in PE lessons, playground activities and sports teams (netball, rounders, athletics)  
*At home...*  
Walking the dog | *Attending school...*  
Walk to school (2 miles each way)  
Carry heavy bag of books  
Sit in class  
Participate in PE lessons and sports clubs/teams (netball, hockey, athletics, skiing)  
*At home...*  
Walking the dog  
Cycle to sport and recreational activities/clubs | *Attending college/uni...*  
Cycling to college/uni lectures  
Sit in class and at computers  
Participate in PE lessons, lectures and sports clubs/teams (hockey, basketball, cricket, lifesaving, soccer)  
*At home...*  
Walking to shops  
Carrying supermarket shopping  
Walking to launderette  
House cleaning  
Cycle to part-time jobs | *Working;*  
Sitting at desks and computers  
Using computers/keyboards  
Using stairs  
Carrying loads  
Walking to work  
Cycling to work  
Driving  
Washing the car and (more often!) bikes |
| **Recreational**| Swimming (casual–family)  
Climbing trees  
Garden games: Football, cricket, 'swingball', badminton  
Outdoor activity/games (at Brownies) | Swimming (casual)  
Garden/park games: Football, cricket, tennis, badminton  
Outdoor activities: camping, canoeing, walking, orienteering (at Guides/Rangers). | Running  
Swimming  
Skiing (downhill)  
Tennis  
Dancing at discos/parties ... feeling hopeless and self-conscious | Swimming  
Tennis  
Walking  
Skiing (cross country)  
Cycling |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health-related</th>
<th>Walking the dog</th>
<th>Walking the dog</th>
<th>Running</th>
<th>Swimming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance-related</td>
<td>Swimming club (soon put-off club-based participation!)</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skiing</td>
<td>Skiing</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Leadership and event planning roles in outdoor activity setting (at Guides/Rangers)</td>
<td>Captain—school/6th form teams</td>
<td>Captain—school/6th form teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captain—school teams</td>
<td>Hockey—umpiring</td>
<td>Hockey—umpiring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leisure and outdoor centre activity leader (rollerskating, badminton, squash, canoeing)</td>
<td>Leisure and outdoor centre activity leader (rollerskating, badminton, squash, canoeing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifeguard</td>
<td>Lifeguard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ski-trip supervisor/assistant</td>
<td>Ski-trip supervisor/assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long distance running

Swimming

Cycling

Gym/weight training activities

Long distance running

Triathlon

Running club committee member

10 km race organiser

Newsletter contributor

Informal organisational and leadership role in cycling and swimming with friends

Ski-trip supervisor/assistant

Encouraging and accompanying my mum and brother in activities,

*Full-time employed:*

Sports development officer

Lecturer/researcher in PE.
## Table 3. Mike’s physical activity lifeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Pre-school</th>
<th>Infant school</th>
<th>Upper primary</th>
<th>Early secondary</th>
<th>Late secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional</strong></td>
<td>Lots of walking (no family car)</td>
<td>Lots of walking (no family car)</td>
<td>Lots of walking (no family car)</td>
<td>Lots of walking (no family car); Milk ‘boy’</td>
<td>Lots of walking (no family car); Paper ‘boy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreational</strong></td>
<td>Playing with brother</td>
<td>Learn to swim</td>
<td>Playing with friends ‘across the busy Glasgow road’</td>
<td>Member of swimming club, Football with pals and a not very serious team</td>
<td>Member of swimming club, Football with pals and a not very serious team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Rough &amp; Tumble’ in the house or ‘back green’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increasingly playing football</td>
<td>Also, ‘up to the park’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking to play on the grass and on the swings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Games at the cubs</td>
<td>Games at the cubs/scouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health-related</strong></td>
<td>Walking to and from places</td>
<td>Walking to and from places</td>
<td>Walking to and from places</td>
<td>Walking to and from places</td>
<td>Walking to and from places + Paper boy Performance-related training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some swimming (until they found out I couldn’t dive)</td>
<td>Rugby training …. really part of the PE programme (last two periods)</td>
<td>Rugby (1st XV for final 3 years, vice-captain &amp; Glasgow Schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helped out in school PE department in final year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand</td>
<td>Early adulthood (part 1) (18–30)</td>
<td>Early adulthood (part 2) (30–40)</td>
<td>Mid adulthood (40–60)</td>
<td>60 + ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional</strong></td>
<td>University and early career still walking and bussing</td>
<td>2 family cars: almost no walking</td>
<td>2 family cars: almost no walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Driving from age 25</td>
<td>Lots of lifting of children</td>
<td>Limited physical activity demands from children … now more a chauffeur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huge decline in walking</td>
<td>Beginning to sit in front of computer screen much more</td>
<td>Even greater amount of time in front of computer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On feet all day as a teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreational</strong></td>
<td>Rugby (24–32)</td>
<td>Football (30–32)</td>
<td>Golf (primarily with son)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intro to golf (24–25)</td>
<td>Running (some social)</td>
<td>Regular family hillwalking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dabbled in many activities (often job-related); basketball, volleyball, football, fencing, squash, badminton, skiing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weekend family skiing in USA (aged 40) then occasional skiing holidays since then</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health-related</strong></td>
<td>Performance-related training (rugby) (18–25)</td>
<td>Regular (ish) running</td>
<td>Regular running</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post 25 years running; limited swimming</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marathon (4:42)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular family hillwalking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td>Rugby 1st XV &amp; representative (18–24)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marathon (3.35)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>As student: part-time youth worker in evenings; school placements in primary and secondary schools covering a wide range of different activity contexts, PE teacher—including organisation of 'out of hours' activities/trips Two years in community role. Lots of work with children with special needs and adult groups. Ran swimming scheme for 600 children.</td>
<td>Head of PE in Kuwait Primary specialist teacher (32–35) Part-time ran an alternative physical activity club for adults, i.e. based around a wide range of activities and choice Entered HE @ age 35 Community-based basic movement programme for children aged 1–10 Parental support for children's activity.</td>
<td>Staff development role Basic Moves programme introduced in Scotland Member of National PA task force and National PE Review Group (+ BERA etc). Parental role … a regular ‘taxi driver’ for children attending activities/sports.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>