Introduction

Physical education has been a regular feature of the school curriculum in many countries around the world for at least a century (Puhse and Gerber, 2005). Even in school systems where it has been described as a ‘non-cognitive activity’, as it was by the Munn Report in 1970s Scotland (Scottish education Department, 1977), it nevertheless managed to establish itself within the core curriculum, albeit with less curriculum time than the more lauded subjects of English, Maths and Science. There have been some individuals, such as philosopher of education John White (1973), who have vociferously disputed that physical education is in any sense a ‘school subject’, and indeed argued that its place in the school curriculum has most often been supported by disreputable claims about character development and brain functioning. Richard Peters’ (1966) apparently knock-down arguments, though directed at ‘games’ rather than physical education, should have seen an end to any pretensions physical educators may have had to argue that their field’s existence in schools could not only be supported by reputable arguments but could also be of educational value. But still physical education persisted in schools and in many respects has actually thrived since the 1960s. As Hendry (1976) noted somewhat prophetically, while the physical education teacher may occupy a ‘marginal role’ in schools, she was nevertheless a survivor.

Whatever else we might say about physical education’s situation in the school curriculum, we can be in no doubt that the existence and persistence of this ‘school subject’ has been a problem for the philosophy of education or, at least, for the analytical philosophy popular in the UK from the middle of the twentieth century. While analytical philosophy of education may no longer be the force it once was, the questions it raised about physical education’s educational status have never been conclusively resolved to the extent that it has parity of esteem with other curriculum topics. In part this is due to the fact that 1960s analytical philosophy of education tapped into an already existing ‘common sense consensus’ (Kirk, 1988) about physical education, that it was a practical activity involving limited ‘cognitive content’. In school systems where an Enlightenment view of education has dominated, where cognition is a defining feature of legitimate school subjects, the philosophising of individuals like Peters merely seemed to confirm what everyone already knew - whatever else it may offer, physical education was of limited educational value.
This is not to deny that many philosophers offered excellent and persuasive defence of physical education (Morgan, 2006). My view is that notwithstanding the excellence of this scholarly work, it travelled little beyond the pages of the journals and books in which it was recorded. Meanwhile, despite the fact that its stocks have been rising in educational systems since the 1970s, the sport-based form of physical education that was a source of much optimism among physical educators in the 1950s and 1960s had degenerated into an institutionalised form shaped to meet the requirements of the school rather than realise the rich potential of the subject and the benefits it could provide to young people (Kirk, 2010).

There is considerable irony in this, but also some tragedy. Perhaps physical educators have been so seduced by their subject’s success that they have failed to fully acknowledge that they have never achieved their most cherished aspiration, that young people would as a result of their physical education experience engage in lifelong physical activity.

My purpose in this paper is to revisit the enduring conundrum of physical education’s situation in the school curriculum and to offer a different way of thinking about educational value from what I will call a models-based approach. The crux of my argument is that physical education is such a large, rich and complex field of practice that it can legitimately aspire to achieve a wide range of educational outcomes for school-age children and youth. In order to do this, however, it needs to take particular and different forms in contrast to its current and traditional ‘one-size-fits-all’, sport technique-based, multi-activity form. Moreover, I will provide two examples of pedagogical models for physical education that require different justificatory arguments for their educational value, an argument based in ethics for Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994) and in phenomenology and existentialism for Physical Literacy (Whitehead, 2010). There are a range of pedagogical models from which to choose in addition to the two already mentioned, including Teaching Games for Understanding (Oslin and Mitchell, 2006), Cooperative Learning (Dyson and Casey, 2012), Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison, 2011) and Health-based Physical Education (Haerens et al, 2011). The first example, Sport Education, is chosen because it is without a doubt the most researched of all available pedagogical models, and because it is in my view currently the most soundly justified philosophically. The second example of Physical Literacy is chosen because it demonstrates a well-argued philosophical position on physical education that is in my view ripe for development as a pedagogical model.
I begin with a discussion of the problem of physical education for the philosophy of education and highlight two enduring issues, the first a view that only one justificatory argument for the educational value of physical education is possible, and the second that most philosophers of physical education’s work has been completely uniformed by the products of empirical research. I then present a short exposition of a models-based approach to physical education informed in the main by the work of Jewett, Bain and Ennis (1995) and Metzler (2005) and argue for my preferred conceptualisation of pedagogical models. In this section I then provide two examples to illustrate my arguments. The first is of the pedagogical model of Sport Education and its underpinning justificatory argument in the virtue ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre (1985). While, as I have noted, this first example is in my view the most mature development of this models-based approach currently available to us, the second is very much a work in progress. This latter is an approach to physical education informed by Whitehead’s (2010) work on Physical Literacy, which I argue is a justificatory argument seeking a pedagogical model. Before I provide these examples, we must confront the problem of physical education for the philosophy of education.

The Problem of Physical Education for the Philosophy of Education

Morgan (2006) argued that the philosophy of physical education had already been eclipsed by the rising star of the philosophy of sport by the 1960s in the USA and the 1970s in the UK. As a sub-discipline of the philosophy of education, the philosophy of physical education in the UK had, unlike its eclectic North American counterpart, been strongly influenced by an approach to analytical philosophy of education championed by Richard Peters and others, which tended to focus scholars on epistemological questions of the educational value of physical education. Morgan argued that as the philosophy of sport gained parity with other branches of philosophy from the late 1960s its concerns tended to centre on issues of value surrounding sport, and particularly ethical value. In his estimation, the spirited responses of philosophers of physical education successfully challenged the unfavourable outcomes for their field of Peters’ and others’ rather sweeping and uncompromising conceptual analyses of education. But, as Morgan implied and I will argue here explicitly, the critiques of the Petersian approach by, for example, Carlisle (1969), Best (1978), Carr (1979) and Meakin (1982) were, at best, Pyrrhic victories.
The damage to physical education’s credibility as an educational activity had already been done. This was in large part because the Petersian view on educationally worthwhile activities merely reinforced what Green (2008) has called the ‘standard view’ of education and what I had named earlier the ‘commonsense consensus’ (Kirk, 1988). As a ‘practical’ curriculum activity, physical education self-evidently lacked the ‘cognitive content’ of science, literature and, of course, without even a blush of self-consciousness on Peters’ part, philosophy. A close reading of chapter 5 of Peters’ *Ethics and Education* (1966) today, with the benefit of considerable analytical distance created by social and cultural change, reveals a range of assumptions made by Peters that were clearly the product of a particular, socially elite form of education (McNamee, 2009). This elitist view of culture is evident in his put-downs of ‘Bingo’ and ‘Billiards’ and his insistence on using a public school notion of ‘games’ as his anti-thesis of an educationally worthwhile activity, while at the same time ignoring an already 80 year old tradition of physical training in women’s education and the education of the working classes.

As Morgan (2006) noted, by the mid 1980s this ideologically-loaded language analysis approach began to be exposed through the application to physical education of various approaches to ‘new directions’ sociology of education. Introduced to Anglophone physical education scholars by Evans and Davies’ (1986), this sociological challenge to analytical philosophy of education had its origins in the work of Young (1971) and colleagues concerned with the social construction and reproduction of knowledge. Parry (1988) had already noted the ideological nature of Petersian philosophers’ educational theorising. It took detailed empirical studies of the historical and contemporary policy and practice of physical education, however, to show that what physical education is and any educational value it might possess can be found in the practices undertaken in its name (Kirk, 1992).

This point was summarised succinctly by McNamee, who observed that “those who look for conceptual unity are simply wasting their time. There is no meaningful essence to the concept (of physical education)” (McNamee, 2009, p.24). At the same time, McNamee is not entirely dismissive of Petersian thinking, urging a less radical critique, and favouring a re-interpretation of Peters’ concept of education as “initiation into a range of cultural practices that have the capacity to open up the possibilities of living a full and worthwhile life” (McNamee, 2009, p.23). A similar position is endorsed by Green (2008), who has noted that
while physical education is socially constructed, if it is justified as a curriculum topic at all, it is as a medium for transmitting valued cultural practices in the formation of persons.

McNamee (2009, p.24) has, in turn, offered a key insight into the situation of physical education within the philosophy of education. He has noted that “historically, there have been two strands in what is called physical education: sport and health (or in older times hygiene, posture, and so forth). It seems clear that a different type of justificatory argument is required to support each.”

As Williams (1985) had pointed out, there were in fact, historically, from the 1950s in the UK, at least three major ‘legitimating publics’ for school physical education, sport, health and physical recreation, but at least McNamee is on the right lines with this insightful comment. Throughout the period of influence of analytical philosophy of education, most philosophers of physical education seemed to believe that only one ‘type of justificatory argument’ was possible. This outcome may, in part, have been due to most of these philosophers holding a mainly historical understanding of physical education. Or, at least, some of the justificatory arguments for physical education may have reflected a particular moment in the history of physical education, such as, for example, the various arguments for physical education as an aesthetic activity following the (relatively briefly) influential trend towards child-centred educational gymnastics and movement education (Kirk, 1984).

This is not, however, the full extent of McNamee’s insight. Following the end of World War Two, and building on ‘New Directions’ sociology-inspired curriculum history and mainly qualitative contemporary studies, the emergence of a new configuration of physical education in British schools was recorded. As I have argued elsewhere (Kirk, 2010), the 1950s marked a fundamental and far-reaching re-alignment of the ‘discourses’ - the public categories of knowledge through which we could make sense of a school curriculum topic - from physical education-as-gymnastics to physical education-as-sport techniques. The everyday practice of physical education consolidated in schools over time was the teaching and learning of (mostly) de-contextualised sport techniques in short lessons of 40 to 80 minutes duration, often up to as recently as the 1990s in indoor facilities such as the 60’x30’ gymnasium built to suit the practices of the earlier gymnastics era. Notwithstanding the ‘breadth and depth’ the new National Curriculum appeared to provide physical education from the early 1990s in England and Wales, the actual everyday ‘classroom’ practice of physical education remained...
the same, mostly irrespective of the category of activity (be it gymnastics, dance, games, aquatics, OAA or athletics). Children practiced the techniques of these ‘sports’, seldom engaging in anything like the authentic sport itself, in short lessons within short units, repeating (in Siedentop’s words) ‘the same introductory unit again and again again’ (Siedentop, 2002a). Indeed, in the USA to which Siedentop’s observations primarily refer, the term to describe this form of physical education is the ‘multi-activity curriculum model’.

So physical education presented two problems to this dominant, language analysis, approach to the philosophy of education, which have yet to be satisfactorily resolved, despite the various clever critiques of Peters’ original formulation in Ethics and Education. The first was not simply the dominance of Petersian thinking, and the fact that it confirmed the commonsense consensus among individuals, many of whom were influential politicians, civil servants, and other ‘movers and shakers’ who enjoyed a similar education and shared Peters’ social class position, tastes and world-view. As Morgan (2006) argued, the collective responses by Peters’ critics contradicted the commonsense consensus, often on all three bases outlined by McNamee (2009). Taken together, these spirited rejoinders suggested that physical education could be of educational value on the basis of a number of justificatory arguments. But this is a benefit of hindsight, I suggest, and was not at the time how the philosophers involved actually saw the challenge. The first problem, in summary, was their apparent view that each justificatory argument competed with others and only one could be right; there was, in short, only one ‘essence’ of physical education.

Meanwhile, away from the heat of the debate itself, and taking the philosophers’ justificatory arguments together, others appeared to be coming round to a more eclectic view, that physical education produces multiple educational benefits across a range of domains (see, eg. Randall, 1972; Morgan, 1973; Qualifications Curriculum Authority (1999). The second problem was then that, lacking any empirical basis to their philosophical speculations beyond their own lived experiences, most philosophers could have had little sense of the extremely limited form of physical education-as-sport techniques that had taken root in schools during the post-WW2 period. While in theory it was possible to show that there were epistemological, or aesthetic, or ethical (etc.) bases to justificatory arguments for the educational value of physical education, and a range of educational benefits that might then accrue, the actual, everyday practice of the subject in schools could provide little or no
evidence to support such theories. This was not the same thing as supporting the Petersian position, since Peters had himself only a limited and personal and class-specific experience of the practice of physical education on which to draw.

Scrutinising these claims, Bailey (2009) noted that “in each of the domains discussed - physical, lifestyle, affective, social, and cognitive - there is evidence that PES (physical education and sport) can have a positive and profound effect. In some respects, such an effect is unique, owing to the distinctive contexts in which PES take place … (however) … the scientific evidence does not support the claim that these effects will occur automatically” (Bailey, 2009, p.399). The scientific evidence was lacking, I suggest, because physical education-as-sports techniques, or multi-activity physical education as the Americans prefer, is effectively a one-size-fits-all approach, in practice, to a field that has the potential to produce a range of different educational benefits for young people. To put this analogy slightly differently, it is a mono-linguistic response to a multi-linguistic problem. This is a problem for an approach to the philosophy of education that had no empirical referents beyond the life experience of the philosophers.

A Models-Based Approach to Physical Education

A models-based approach to physical education offers a potential solution to the two problems physical education poses for the philosophy of education. It does so by first of all affirming the notion that physical education as a field of practice has the potential to contribute to the achievement of a range of educationally beneficial outcomes for students, across a range of domains (Bailey et al, 2009), a potential that can be confirmed empirically. In order to do this, however, it must go beyond the entrenched practice of physical education-as-sport techniques, the one-size-fits-all form of the subject. A models-based approach suggests the need for a number of forms of physical education. In so doing, it also proposes that each of these forms might require, as foreseen by McNamee (2009), different types of justificatory argument.

The notion of a models-based approach builds on the foundational work of Jewett, Bain and Ennis (1995), Metzler (2005), and Lund and Tannehill (2005). While each of these authors offers different models and different ways of thinking about such an approach, a unifying
element of their work is the notion that physical education has the potential to contribute to
the achievement of a range of educationally beneficial outcomes and that in order to do this
we need new and multiple versions or ‘models’ of physical education. My preference is to
speak of pedagogical models of physical education which rest on a concept of pedagogy that
consists of the interdependent elements of curriculum, learning and teaching (Armour, 2011).
A pedagogical model identifies distinctive learning outcomes and shows how these might be
best achieved through their tight alignment with teaching strategies and curriculum or subject
matter. Moreover, each pedagogical model is a design specification that can be used by
teachers or curriculum writers to create programs that are suited to the specific circumstances
of their local contexts. Each model, thus, prescribes some specific ‘non-negotiable’ features
that make it distinctive, a term I prefer to Metzler’s (2005) ‘teacher and student benchmarks’
but which perform the same function. Without these non-negotiable features the achievement
of the stated learning outcomes are, I propose, less likely to be achieved. At the same time, as
a design specification each model leaves enough space for local adaptation, a feature Bailey
et al (2009) among many others have noted is vital to successful sustainable innovative
practice in schools.

A models-based approach to physical education would make use of a range of pedagogical
models, each with its unique and distinctive learning outcomes and its alignment of learning
outcomes with teaching strategies and subject matter, and each with its non-negotiable
features in terms of what teaches and learners must do in order to faithfully implement the
model. The actual models used in any one program of physical education is a matter of
choice at either school, local district or national level, depending on how educational systems
are organised. Considerations that would influence the selection of specific pedagogical
models will include the appropriateness of the model to the age and stage of the learners, the
sequencing of the models so that there is some cumulative and mutually reinforcing effect
and, behind these factors, the broader educational values schools, local districts or national
systems seek to celebrate, reproduce, reconstruct and sustain.

One major advantage possessed by this proposal for a models-based approach to physical
education is that several, well-researched and well-developed pedagogical models already
exist. Indeed they existed in advance of the case I am making here for such an approach.
Thankfully, then, we do not need to linger for long contemplating abstract descriptions. In the
section that follows, I provide two examples to make my case that physical education as a field of practice has the potential to achieve a range of educational outcomes and that different justificatory arguments are required to support their selection and implementation. My first example is Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994), a pedagogical model that is arguably the best developed to date, the most often researched and the most strongly supported by a philosophical justification grounded in virtue ethics. My second example is the notion of Physical Literacy (Whitehead, 2010) which rests on a distinctive philosophical position on physical education grounded in existentialism and phenomenology, which is currently a justification that is ripe for pedagogical development; it is, it could be argued, a philosophy in search of a pedagogical model.

Sport Education

Sport education emerged from the work of Daryl Siedentop (1994) and his dissatisfaction with the way sport is typically represented in traditional physical education programs. ‘Traditional’ here refers to sport-technique based, multi-activity approach I have already discussed above. Siedentop argued that sport is an important part of physical education but, ironically, it is not taught well. In his view, sport is misrepresented and distorted in the traditional, multi-activity approach, and the main educational value of sport is missing. As a consequence, students’ experiences lack authenticity, and within schools sport is often viewed as something trivial, merely an opportunity for ‘letting off steam’. He is careful to argue, at the same time, that the Sport Education model he developed remains only one part of physical education, and does not displace other activity forms such as dance, exercise, outdoor adventure activities nor, as I would prefer and consistent with a models-based approach, other learning outcomes for physical education.

The three distinctive learning outcomes for Sport Education are that learners become competent, literate and enthusiastic sports people. A competent sports person is someone who has developed skills and strategies to the extent that he or she can participate successfully in a game. A literate sports person is someone who understands and is knowledgeable about the rules, traditions, and values associated with a specific sport, and one who can also distinguish between good and bad sport practices. An enthusiastic sports person is someone who plays and behaves in ways that preserve, protect and enhance the sport culture.
The subject matter of Sport Education is not a range of different sports, but sport itself. Siedentop identified the key characteristics of sport as seasons, affiliation, formal competition, a culminating event such as a gala or finals, record keeping and festivity. In contrast to regular, multi-activity physical education where units of work may be as short as four or six lessons, in Sport Education units became seasons of twelve lessons or more. A key feature of Sport Educations’ subject matter and a non-negotiable feature is that students experience a number of roles in addition to player, such as umpire, coach, journalist, timekeeper, equipment officer, and so on. A further key feature of Sport Education is that students remain in the same team - a ‘persisting group’ - for the course of the season.

Finally, in terms of teaching strategies, these can range across Mosston’s Spectrum (Mosston and Ashworth, 1994), from the traditional teacher-centred Command Style to more student-centred Guided-Discovery and Problem-solving, depending on the specific context of Sport Education season. For example, it is typical to see Command Style used more frequently early in a season as students become familiar with the model and its implementation, and for student-centred strategies such as peer-learning to feature as a season gets underway in earnest, with increasing opportunities made available for students to make decisions and take responsibility for their learning.

The justificatory argument for the place of Sport Education in the school curriculum rests for Siedentop primarily on the virtue ethics of MacIntyre (1985) and his concept of social practices. MacIntyre argues that social practices, including games and sports, are defined by three main characteristics, standards of excellence, ‘goods’ that are derived from the pursuit of excellence, and virtues such as honesty, justice and courage that are necessary to achieve these goods. Internal goods such as mastery of skills, understanding etiquette, respect for traditions, are unique to the practice itself and cannot be gained in any other way than through wholehearted participation. External goods such as money or fame are not unique to sport and are a by-product. When the pursuit of external goods dominates sport, Siedentop (2002b) argues that it is susceptible to corruption. Sport is only sustainable when internal goods are prominent and players immerse themselves in the pursuit of these goods (Kirk, 2002).
How are these ideas and values expressed in the model? Siedentop (1994) argued and increasingly research (Hastie et al, 2011) is demonstrating that Sport Education promotes fair play and knowledge of etiquette, respect for opponents, respect for rules, knowledge of traditions, and accountability and responsibility through taking on roles such as team captain, referee, and so on. At the same time, as a radical behaviourist, Siedentop also saw the need for external rewards that reinforce the internal goods of sport such as the pursuit of excellence, and encouraged the use of team points, best and fairest awards, most improved player and team.

In summary, Siedentop (1994) argued that sport derives its meaning from play, and a society in which higher forms of ludic activity are pursued vigorously by all people is a more mature society. Morgan (2006) put this argument even more explicitly. He claimed that we do what we have to do (i.e. activities such as work) in order to do what we want to do (play). Siedentop argues then that it is a sign of an advanced level of civilisation that a population plays sport seriously As a serious cultural pursuit, all children should therefore have opportunities through schooling to become literate, competent and enthusiastic sportspeople.

Physical Literacy

Physical Literacy is a particular and distinctive philosophical position on physical education derived primarily from the work of Whitehead (2010) and her program of study in existentialism and phenomenology. Whitehead’s enduring concerns have been the dominance of mind-body dualism in thinking about physical education and, in particular, the objectification of the body as an ‘instrument’ for work, health maintenance and elite sport.

She has argued consistently that the dominance of dualist thinking has meant that lived embodiment has been overlooked by physical educators. She claims, as a counterpoint, that every human is an indivisible whole and that embodiment and personhood are inseparable. At the same time, she accepts the notion of ‘body-as-lived’ includes both the lived experience of embodiment and instrumental uses of the body. In her critique of dualist thinking, her starting point is that the body-as-lived is ‘the ongoing axis of thought and knowing’ (Whitehead, 2010, p.26). She argues that since individuals create themselves through interaction with their environment, motility (the ability to move) is an essential aspect of being and becoming.
On the basis of this position, Whitehead proposes that Physical Literacy “can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the lifecourse”, adding the qualification “appropriate to each individual’s endowment” (Whitehead, 2010, pp. 11-12). Consistent with this definition, she argues Physical Literacy is a disposition characterised by the motivation to capitalise on innate movement potential to make a significant contribution to the quality of life. Individuals who are physically literate will, according to Whitehead, move with poise, economy and confidence in a wide variety of physically challenging situations. Furthermore, physically literate individuals will be perceptive in ‘reading’ all aspects of the physical environment. Whitehead argues they will have a well-established sense of self-as-embodied-in-the-world and sensitivity to and awareness of embodied capability that leads to fluent self-expression and empathetic interaction.

While this account of Physical Literacy has clear implications for the pedagogy (teaching, learning and curriculum) of physical education, it is not in itself a pedagogical model in the sense in which the term is used here. Whitehead and colleagues (in Whitehead, 2010) have begun to explore these pedagogical implications for physical education, both within and beyond the school, for both children and adults, emphasising in the process the importance of Physical Literacy ‘throughout the lifecourse’. In an earlier work, Killingbeck et al. (2007) sought to identify how the attributes of Physical Literacy, in particular ‘physical competencies’, ‘reading the environment’, ‘interaction’, ‘expression/communication’ and ‘health’, could be identified within the (at the time current) National Curriculum Physical Education categories of athletics, dance, games and Outdoor and Adventurous Activities.

More recently, Whitehead (2011) has begun the task of outlining a pedagogical model for Physical Literacy drawing on the work of Metzler (2005) in particular. In so doing, she has pointed out that the key learning outcomes of a pedagogical model for Physical Literacy are captured in her definition in terms of ‘motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding’. In pursuit of these outcomes, she provides some detailed analysis of the teacher and student behaviours that form the basis of the ‘benchmarks’ (in Metzler’s terms) or as I prefer ‘non-negotiable’ features that provide the model with its distinctive identity. She proposes that teachers will show respect for the individual and recognise effort, progress and achievement, utilise assessment for learning, and act to
empower learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers will effectively
model ways of being for students, and thus these four aspects of teacher behaviour will,
Whitehead argues, be reflected in student behaviour. For example, students will demonstrate
respect for persons in all of their interactions with their peers, before, during and after
lessons.

In terms of the alignment of curriculum with teacher and student behaviours, Whitehead
considers teachers’ content knowledge expertise, developmentally appropriate and sequenced
learning activities and task structures that are unique to Physical Literacy. While she
considers a range of what she calls ‘Movement Forms’ such as Adventure, Aesthetic and
Expressive, Athletic, Competitive and so on, and knowledge of the effects of movement on
the body and its systems, it is clear that she considers teachers’ knowledge of basic
movement competence to be of considerable – perhaps primary – importance. She draws an
analogy between learning to move and language acquisition, noting the importance of
learning ‘words, sentences and paragraphs’ before reading poetry or experiencing a
Shakespeare play. She goes on to argue, with respect to curriculum and content knowledge,
teachers

“need to know of the nature of movement patterns – seen to be the building blocks of
movement activity. Movement patterns emerge as part of the maturation process and
are developed in the early years through a variety of play situations, both free and semi-
structured. It is suggested that patterns can be located in categories such as locomotion,
flight, manipulation and projection. As the learner develops, these patterns have the
potential to be well established, refined and made more specific.” (Whitehead, 2011, p.
5)

Whitehead is quite clear that Physical Literacy applies not just to the whole of a student’s
school career but also to the whole of the lifecourse. She argues, for instance, that throughout
an individual’s school physical education career, an equal amount of time should be
prescribed for each Movement Form. Nevertheless, it seems to me, on the basis of her
analogy to language acquisition and the statement just quoted, that there is a ‘developmental
imperative’ within Physical Literacy that gives a special emphasis to the importance of early
years physical education. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any kind of worthwhile physical
literacy journey through the lifecourse that is not rooted in positive formative movement experiences in early childhood. In other words, a good quality experience of physical education in the early years would appear to be a necessary condition for the continuing development of physical literacy through the lifecourse.

For this reason, on the basis of this developmental imperative, it seems to me that a first priority for the development of a pedagogical model for Physical Literacy ought to be for the early years, where the fundamental aspects of learning to move and moving to learn can be addressed explicitly. Recent research (e.g. Goodway et al, 2010) in the field of motor development of pre-school children suggests that developmental delay of physical competence can have devastating consequences for children later in their school careers since they lack the skill and disposition to benefit from physical education programs. Only with highly specialised remedial programs is it possible for children who have missed the opportunity for quality motor development in the early years to recover some of the basic reflexes and fundamental movement skills essential to becoming physically literate (Goddard-Blythe, 2005).

**Conclusion**

I have sought to revisit in this paper the enduring conundrum of physical education’s situation in the school curriculum and to offer a different way of thinking about educational value from a models-based approach. At root, my argument is that physical education can legitimately aspire to achieve a wide range of educational outcomes for school-age children and youth but to do this it needs to take particular and different forms in contrast to its current and traditional form. I have provided only two examples to illustrate my argument here, and a future task for educational theorists in physical education is to elaborate the justificatory arguments to support other pedagogical models. It is possible that a models-based form of physical education could thrive without justificatory arguments from philosophers of education. After all, as I have argued here, previous arguments no matter how persuasive appear to have had limited success in terms of challenging the common sense consensus about physical education’s educational status.

However, this does not seem to me to be a good reason not to provide justificatory arguments specific to particular pedagogical models where they are appropriate. To be sure, theoretical
arguments for physical education need to feature more centrally in physical education teacher
education courses and to be made more widely available and understandable among the
general public. If this can be done with complex scientific theories it can also be done with
philosophy and educational theory more generally. We need these arguments in order to think
through the issues surrounding proposed forms of practice in physical education, particularly
where these are in the process of development. Not only can this thinking through provide
greater clarity of ideas, but it can also counter the tendency to simplify, dumb down or
otherwise trivialise the sophisticated forms of educational practice that are pedagogical
models for physical education. And we need, at last, to mount a sustained counter-offence
against the common sense consensus itself, the demise of which would appear to me to be a
necessary condition for the future survival of physical education in the school curriculum.
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