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The impact of School Sport Partnerships on primary schools: An in-depth evaluation

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The impact of School Sport Partnerships on primary schools:
An in-depth evaluation

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Abstract

In the five years to 2008, the Labour Government invested over £1.5 billion in physical education. School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) have been at the heart of this unprecedented investment in the subject. Introduced in 2000, the SSP initiative underwent a phased process of nationwide implementation. All state maintained schools are now attached to a SSP. Consisting of a small staff force, SSPs work with groups of primary and secondary schools to increase the quality and quantity of physical education and school sport, and to promote healthy lifestyles.

There have been several national, largely quantitative evaluations of SSPs, which report encouraging findings; the initiative has fulfilled and even surpassed many of its core goals. Whilst such findings are positive, little independent and/or qualitative research has been conducted into the impact of SSPs. This research aims to fill the lacuna by providing an in-depth evaluation of the impact the initiative has had in three primary schools in the north east of England. This evaluation focuses specifically on the views of teaching staff *vis-à-vis* the implementation of the initiative.

The empirical research consists of semi-structured interviews with teaching staff (n=36) and senior county council and Youth Sport Trust staff. Observation of PE lessons and analysis of schools' physical education documentation was also conducted. Building on the realistic evaluation method outlined by Pawson and Tilley (1997), the thesis examines the different Contexts, Mechanisms, and Outcomes (CMO) in each of the case-study schools. The CMO configurations are critically explored to assess the different impacts that SSPs have in the schools.

The small sample size allows for an in-depth analysis of each school. The findings suggest that, whilst each school has been affected by their SSP, not all schools benefit from the initiative. In particular, there have been several detrimental outcomes in small rural schools. The goals of SSPs often run contrary to the needs of such schools, with SSP-organised events being inappropriate for schools with small pupil numbers. However, the impact on one of the case study schools – located in a deprived urban area – has been 'invaluable'.

The findings suggest that further qualitative research should be conducted into the impact of SSPs. Many of the issues raised in the thesis have not been identified in past evaluations, and thus demand further exploration.

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List of abbreviations

ASFA   A Sporting Future for All

BMI   Body mass index

CMO   Context, mechanism, outcome

DCSF   Department for Children, Schools and Families

DCMS   Department of Culture, Media and Sport

DfEE   Department for Education and Employment

DfES   Department for Education and Skills

Defra   Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

DoH   Department of Health

GT   Gifted and talented

NCPE   National Curriculum for Physical Education

NHS   National Health Service

PDM   Partnership Development Manager

PE   Physical education

PESS   Physical education and school sport

PESSCL   Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links Strategy

PESSYP   Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People

PLT   Primary Link Teacher

SSC   Specialist Sports College

SSCo   School Sport Coordinator

SSP   School Sport Partnership

YST   Youth Sport Trust

Contents

Chapter 4: Methodology 108

Chapter 5: Methods (Part A) 129

Chapter 5a: Methods (Part B) 150

Chapter 6: Findings 164

The wider view: 'transforming PE and school sport' 164

Carraway Juniors 173

Tweedale Juniors 183

West Hill Junior School 194

Chapter 7: Analysis 204

Chapter 8: Concluding remarks 228

Recommendations for future research 237

Postscript 240

Appendix 242

Bibliography 247

Figures and Tables

Introduction

School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) are central to physical education and school sport (PESS) in state maintained schools in England. All primary and secondary schools are now affiliated with a SSP (with, perhaps, a minority that have withdrawn from the scheme). The initiative was introduced by Tony Blair's New Labour government in 2000,[1] in *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000). In a phased process of implementation SSPs would soon become central to PESS in all schools. The initiative has remained at the heart of the government's strategy for PESS ever since, with the national strategies for physical education (PE) – the PE, School Sport and Club Links strategy (PESSCL) and its successor, the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) – pivoting around SSPs. It is no exaggeration to suggest that SSPs reformed, at least structurally, PE in English schools. The level of financial investment in the SSP initiative has been historically unprecedented in England; prior to the 2010 general election, Labour forecasts put the total level of investment in PESS (a majority of which went to SSPs) at over £2.4 billion between 2003-2011.

Prior to the introduction of SSPs, PE was delivered by class teachers or a specialist PE teacher (the latter primarily being the case in secondary schools). Thus, the delivery of PE was largely an 'in-house' activity - this would be complimented by an extra-curricular programme of sport-based activities. The after school activities tended to be intra-school clubs, with a less frequent range of inter-school events. The role of SSPs was, *inter alia*, to increase the amount of external assistance schools receive in delivering PESS and revitalise the provision of after-school hours activities.

School Sport Partnerships consist of a team of staff who work with a group of local schools. Each SSP has a Partnership Development Manager (PDM), who is in charge of the overall organisation of the Partnership. The PDM is not employed by any particular school, and works specifically for the Partnership. Under the direction of the PDM are several School Sport Coordinators (SSCos). The SSCos work to improve PESS opportunities in secondary schools (ages 11-15/17). Full-time SSCos work with a group of secondary schools to help

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[1] Between 1994 and 1997 the UK Labour Party rebranded itself as 'New Labour.' The term 'New Labour,' which has been synonymous with the Party since 1997 has no official status. When reference is made to the incumbent Labour Party (1997-2010), it will be referred to without the prefix, as 'Labour.'

improve the PESS pupils receive, and part-time SSCos divide their time between teaching duties within a secondary school and their SSP responsibilities. Each secondary school has a SSCo, whether full- or part-time, working with their school. If the SSCo is a member of the school's teaching staff, the school receives payment to release the SSCo for two days per week in order to fulfil their Partnership duties. Primary schools (ages 4-10) are represented by a Primary Link Teacher (PLT) who works with their SSCo to improve PESS in their particular school. The PLT is an existing teacher who is released from teaching for 12 days each year for Partnership obligations. Together, the Partnership staff should work collaboratively to improve the PESS on offer to *all* children.

Specialist Sports Colleges (SSC) are relatively recent initiative aimed at improving PESS in the education system. The Colleges are secondary schools that locate sport at the heart of the school's curriculum. SSCs were to act as the hub of SSPs; if a Partnership is not based in a SSC, the staff work closely with the school's staff. With the SSC at the hub, the SSP programme was to build a 'family' of local schools, where expertise, resources and facilities would be shared so as to improve the PESS on offer in each school, and to all children. The SSP initiative has had many aims and objectives, however, consistently underpinning the work of Partnerships has been the delivery of high quality PESS to all school children.

Thesis aim and research objectives

The overall aim is to evaluate the impact that SSPs have had in primary schools. The research is qualitative, and specifically focuses on the effects of SSPs in three primary schools in the north east of England. The central goal is to determine the impact that the introduction of the SSP initiative has had upon the schools. As each school operates within a set of unique contextual conditions and receives assistance from a different SSP, it is hoped that inter-school comparisons can be made, so as to make heuristic suggestions relating to what does and does not work, and for what reasons. Michel Foucault's influential concept of 'governmentality' (see Chapter Three) will be applied to PESS in an attempt to help explain what messages are being filtered down to children.

There have been numerous evaluations of the SSP initative on a national level (see Loughborough Partnership (2005-2009), Ofsted (2003-2006) and the annual PESSCL and

PESSYP surveys (DfES and DCMS, 2004; DCMS and DfES, 2005; DCMS and DfES, 2006; Quick, 2007; Quick *et al*., 2008; 2009; 2010)) and fewer qualitative studies (Flintoff, 2003 and 2008, Griggs and Ward, 2010 and Smith and Leech, 2010). Whilst each evaluation is useful in its own right, there still remains a lack of in-depth knowledge of the impact SSPs have had in primary schools. The qualitative studies of Flintoff (2003, 2008) and Smith and Leech (2010) focus on the opinions of the SSP staff (PDMs, SSCos, PLTs) *vis-à-vis* the Partnership's overall operation. Similarly, Griggs and Ward's (2010) work considers only the views of PLTs. The nationwide surveys, on the other hand, are largely quantitative analyses of the programme (with the notable exception of the case study reports by the Loughborough Partnership (2004 and 2004a, for example), which explore the operation of individual SSPs). This thesis seeks to fulfil the lacuna of research into the programme's impact on individual primary schools.

As it is teaching staff who deliver PESS to children, it is also they who are likely to have the greatest knowledge of what impact the SSP has upon the individual school. Hearing the views and opinions of school staff will provide a new insight into the impact SSPs have had. Many of the issues faced by schools may not be detected in the quantitative studies, so it is hoped that this thesis will allow any hitherto undetected praise or concerns to surface. It can be argued that the real end users of the programme are the school children whose PESS is affected (or not) by the SSP - this is a fair claim. However, it is the teachers who incorporate the SSP into the school's PESS, and it is ultimately the teaching staff that sees first-hand the impact the programme is having. Because SSPs are meant to be ingrained within a school's PESS, it may be difficult for pupils to distinguish between those activities that are organised by the SSP, and those that are the teacher's sole work.

A great deal of consideration was given to the central object of the present study. As the evaluation explores the impacts SSPs have within primary schools, both the SSP and the primary school could have been used as the cases for study. The justification for the focus on schools is, firstly, because there are significantly more primary schools than Partnerships in the sample population. Thus, focusing on primary schools increases the likelihood of gaining access (one Partnership had already opted out of any potential research at an early stage). Secondly, SSPs could refuse to participate; informing schools in their cluster of their decision,

and thus hampering what would become the reserve method of gaining access – this was the case when the previously mentioned SSP was approached. Thirdly, Partnerships in the sample population work with up to 61 primary schools. This means that in-depth analysis, of even a single SSP, would involve a large number of stakeholders (staff in each school within the Partnership's cluster, and the Partnership staff) and be logistically problematic (travel time and costs, gaining access to numerous schools, arranging interviews and observation). Fourth, pivoting the evaluation around a single Partnership depends significantly on a single gatekeeper (the PDM of the Partnership). If the gatekeeper opted out of the research, the study would be in difficulties. The complexity entailed in a sole-researched evaluation of a SSP would reduce the depth of analysis, thereby restricting the capacity for identifying CMO configurations concerning the relationship between schools and SSPs. With these considerations in mind, primary schools were chosen as the main research sites

Overview of the research methods

The main research method will be semi-structured interviews with teaching staff. This will be complimented by interviews with senior county council staff and YST board members. Observation of PE lessons and an analysis of any PESS-related documentation that the schools make available, will also inform the findings. Interviews with senior council staff (with a remit focused on PESS) and YST board members will provide a top-down view of the programme's impact. This information will help identify issues that are worthy of exploration in the case study schools and focus the scope of the study. Through a series of repeat interviews in each school, a rich case study can be formulated. This will not only contain individual opinions, but should also provide a more comprehensive picture of the overall impact SSPs have. The interviews will address a wide range of issues relating to the purpose of PESS and the impact the SSP has had in relation to a series of topics (for example, the range of activities on offer, school- and club-links, and gifted and talented provision). Access to any documentation that the school holds on PESS will deepen the understanding of the impact SSPs have on the school's curriculum and after-school hours provision, and provide an insight into the overall PE curriculum. Structured lesson observation is intended to provide an insight into the activities that dominate PE lessons, and to facilitate the examination of the actual length of time that children are engaged in physical activity for.

Unfortunately, one of the case study schools was unwilling to allow me to observe lessons and did not grant access to any PESS documentation. For this reason, the analysis of the documents and observation material occupies a peripheral position in the analysis, so as to maintain as much continuity between the case studies as possible.

Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realist evaluation methodology will be used as the evaluation framework. The evaluation method lends great significance to the context in which policies are introduced. When programmes are implemented into pre-existing contextual conditions underlying mechanisms are triggered. It is the combination of the context into which a policy is introduced, combined with the underlying mechanisms, that produces the outcome. As each school operates within a set of different contexts, care was taken in selecting a sample that would represent a variety of contextual conditions. Through examining the impact of three SSPs, in three different primary schools, it is hoped that comparisons/distinctions can be made between the schools. The themes that underpinned the sample selection were informed by the data gathered in the interviews with council staff and YST board members.

In its present state, the research is targeted at a largely academic audience. The implications of the findings will be of interest to many other agencies (schools, SSPs, the YST, etc.), but the presentation of the findings requires significant restructuring and condensing before dissemination to these audiences. Whilst the thesis is not intended to provide a guide for effective partnership working, an awareness of some of the findings could benefit those involved in implementing the SSPs, from both a grassroots and top-down perspective.

Thesis structure

The thesis will follow a conventional format. The first two chapters provide the review of literature related to PE. Chapter One will examine the development of PE in the twentieth century, up until the introduction of SSPs in 2000. For present purposes it is not necessary to extend the discussion further back in time. The chapter will cover the decades preceding the introduction of SSPs in relatively little depth, with the core of the chapter focusing on post-1997 policy. The focus of the discussions will be on PE policy and the changing nature and content of the subject as it has developed. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the impact SSPs have had in primary schools. The second chapter will deepen the understanding

of why the Labour government invested so heavily (in relation to the historical investment in the subject). The rationale behind the increased interest in PE will be critically considered, and the concept of partnership working – an idea at the heart of post-2000 PE – will also be examined. The content of these first two chapters will provide much of the material that will inform the empirical research and analysis.

Chapter three provides the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. The chapter builds on Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality. The chapter argues that neo-liberal modes of government are primarily concerned with the incumbent political regime guiding the behaviour and conduct of its citizens. School is seen as a prime site through which the ruling party can encourage certain views and forms of behaviour. The chapter goes onto consider the technologies of government that have been used to address the so called 'obesity epidemic.'

In Chapter Four the methodology guiding the research is considered. The first half of the chapter explores the 'policy cycle' and locates the thesis within this framework. The bulk of the chapter, however, addresses the method of evaluation that will be used as a theoretical tool to conduct the research. The realist evaluation method is discussed at length, with an accompanying discussion of the critical realist philosophical tradition in the footnotes. This chapter will demonstrate the rationale behind the evaluation framework adopted and discuss the potential benefits of the method.

The fifth chapter is divided into two sections. The first and more substantial part of the chapter is an overview of the research methods that will be used. The discussion will focus on case-based research and outline issues related to sampling and access. Interviews are the primary research method that will be used, so the benefits and limitations of this method will be discussed. The secondary method, observation, will also be discussed, however, this will be in less depth. The second broad part of the chapter is a more reflective account of the empirical process. Due to the 'messy' nature of conducting qualitative research, it is important to discuss the issues that were faced in the data collection stages. The section will also take the reader through the actual research process in order to validate the findings.

The first five chapters are intended to provide sufficient background information for the empirical stage of the research and the ensuing analysis. At this point in the thesis attention turns to explore the findings of the empirical research. Chapter Six begins with an overview of the data collected from interviews with senior personnel. This section provides a 'top-down' view of the impact SSPs have had. Following this, the findings from the case study schools will be discussed. Each school will be examined individually and the main findings coming from each case will be discussed in-depth. At this point in the thesis the data will be presented without interpretation; the aim is to allow the data to speak for itself. The discussion will be presented in a narrative format that allows the reader to get a feel, so to speak, for the individual schools.

Chapter Seven acts as the analysis section. This chapter builds on the content of the first three chapters to help interpret and explain the findings from the case study schools. The chapter commences with an overview of the impact of SSPs in all three schools; this will provide succinct discussions of the main themes to have emerged. Building on the evaluation framework laid out in the methodology chapter, the chapter will also focus on the *different* impacts that SSPs have had in the case study schools (with reference to the CMO configurations). To conclude the analysis, the findings will be discussed in relation to the governmentality literature discussed in Chapter Three.

The final chapter provides some general conclusions. Reflecting on the research process and main findings, the key arguments of the thesis will be restated. Whilst the thesis does not attempt nor claim to generalise to the wider primary school population, some of the findings and conclusions may well extend to reflect the impact in other schools. The final chapter includes a section that suggests further research opportunities. Due to the breadth of the study, some issues are only touched upon in the findings and analysis sections, however the importance of some of the emergent themes may prove to be significant in the provision of PESS and the partnerships between schools and SSPs.

Chapter 1

Physical education in the twentieth-century

To understand the purpose and status of contemporary PE in English schools, it is important to have an historical awareness of the discipline. The following section will provide an overview of PE in the twentieth-century. Little attention will be paid to policy *per se*, but rather the different developmental stages (the paradigmatic shifts) in the content of PE. The analysis is purposely selective and makes no claim to be a comprehensive history of the subject (for more extensive analyses see McIntosh, 1968; Kirk, 1992 and Bailey *et al*., 2009: 3-10). The first part of the chapter will cover a relatively large time period (early-1900s – mid-1990s) in limited depth. In the latter part of the chapter, the focus turns specifically to PE-related policies that were introduced under Labour's incumbency (1997-2010). Policies introduced by Labour are vital to framing the focus of the thesis, and therefore require greater exploration.

Physical education is not a neutral subject area. In all educational disciplines, definitions of what should form the subject's content change over time (Kirk, 1992: 25).[2] For Apple and King (1983: 83), research into educational curricular is fundamentally a study of ideology, 'of what is considered legitimate knowledge by specific social groups and classes, in specific institutions, at specific historical moments.' PE is no exception from this declaration, for political parties have long recognised the subject's potential in servicing their agenda (Waring and Warburton, 2000: 159). The discourses that have achieved dominance in PE throughout the twentieth century have done so with the support of, and close alliance to, wider society's hegemonic discourse (Garrett and Wrench, 2007: 27). Ways in which the content and 'rhetorical mission' (Gard and Kirk, 2007: 24) of PE has shifted over the course of the twentieth century, and the wider rationale prompting such shifts, will be considered in the following discussion.

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[2] Murphy *et al*. (2009: 28-31) discuss in greater depth the components (beliefs) of a selection of major educational ideologies.

Pre-1945: militaristic gymnastics

The years between the early 1900s and the turn of the millennium gave rise to dramatic changes in the nature and content of PE in English schools. The Swedish system of gymnastics (the Ling system)[3] dominated physical education in state schools between the mid 1870s and 1930s.[4] The Ling system consisted of 'free-standing exercises set out in tables and sought to systematically exercise each part of the body through increasingly intricate flexions and extensions' (Kirk, 1992: 55). The method was based on an ethos that considered physical training to be a core part of general education, national defence and medical remediation (Penn, 1999: 41). Critics of the approach argued that it was comprised of 'formal, mechanical and therefore "unnatural" movements, [which] were "non-creative" and dull, merely a sequence of unnatural movements put together without meaning' (Wardle, cited in Kirk, 1992: 58).

In the early 1900s, therefore, 'physical training' consisted largely of a form of military drill inspired by the Ling system. The commitment to military drill as *the* form of physically educating children was formalised in 1902, through the Board of Education and the War Office's joint publication, *A Model Course of Physical Training* (Penn, 1999: 102). In 1903 the Royal Commission on Physical Training made a landmark recommendation that 'physical exercises become a universal activity in mass schooling in Britain' (Kirk, 1988: 53). The rationale behind this early interest in 'education through the physical' was firmly tied to the perceived degeneration of men fit for service' (Thomson, 1978: 16); justification that, by and large, persisted from the start of the Boer War through the end of the First World War (McIntosh, 1968: 180-206). The advent of war in 1914 provided supporters of military drill with an opportunity to further ingrain militaristic methods in schools. This was exemplified in the controversial introduction of rifles in some school lessons (Penn, 1999: 131). Although there was unprecedented demand for physically fit men and women, the war effort

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[3] Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) introduced a form of gymnastics inspired physical exercise in Sweden, which was subsequently transported to nations across Europe.

[4] Provision of games and sports did have (limited) presence in state schools at the time – particularly in the three years following the 1906 publication of the Board of Education's annual *The Health of the School Child* (McIntosh, 1968: 158-159). However, the 1909 document took a step away from games and sports (McIntosh, 1968: 158). In contrast, games and sports had been a distinctive feature of fee-paying schools (Holt, 1989: 139).

propagated significant cutbacks for PE (as with most areas of social expenditure). Overwhelmingly, what time and resources physical education did receive during the war years were directed to military drill (McIntosh, 1968: 180).

After the First World War the content and rationale behind PE began to change. Although gymnastics continued to occupy the central position in the subject, the 1931 formation of a Physical Education Department gave 'physical training, boxing, fencing, swimming and allied activities' a more prominent position (McIntosh, 1968: 220). This marks the first notable move away from the Swedish inspired (militaristic) PE. The formality of Swedish gymnastics and its unsuitability for young children had long prompted widespread concern, but towards the end of the 1930s hostility to the method gathered momentum, 'due to the uncomfortably close associations of these methods with the mass exercising of the Fascist and Nazi Youth Movements' (Kirk, 1992: 57). Phillips and Roper (2006: 133) note that after the war, the emphasis on 'physical development' was gradually replaced by a mode of participation premised on 'social and moral factors: countering unwanted behaviour.' PE teachers were no longer charged with the development of a fighting fit battalion, but rather the supervision and guidance of pupils' physical development throughout their school life.

1945-1992: the eradication of formal gymnastics and the rise of sport

By the end of the Second World War military drill had been all but eradicated. Kirk (2010: 75) found that the 1937-38 syllabus for teacher training at Carnegie – a major teacher training college - was dominated by Swedish gymnastics. In the 1955 syllabus, however, there is no mention of the Swedish system. The basis of PE changed. The link between gymnastics and physical education had become so great that they 'were virtually synonymous' (Kirk, 1992: 54). This 'new' gymnastics, which built on Laban's principles of movement (focusing on natural movement and dance), was a more child-focused 'educational' version of gymnastics (Kirk, 1992: 58). In contrast to the restricted militaristic focus, PE had by the middle of the century become a linchpin in the 'education of the whole man' [*sic*] (McIntosh, 1968: 220).

In the immediate post-War years the teaching of PE was an overwhelmingly female occupation.[5] In fact, there were few institutions that even offered subject-specific teacher training courses to men (Kirk, 1992: 66). After the War, and concomitant with the proliferation in numbers of secondary schools, however, the demand for more teachers led to the emergence of new short courses for male PE teacher trainees (Kirk, 1992: 66). This new male cohort of teachers had a different pedagogical approach to the discipline than their female counterparts. Female teachers continued to advocate a gymnastics inspired curriculum – although, the version endorsed was more moderate than the now defunct Ling system (Kirk, 1992: 64). Male teachers, on the other hand, were being taught (and therefore teaching) in a tradition leaning towards the development of sports skills (Kirk, 2006a). By the 1960s there was a resolution between the competing traditions, 'resulting in consolidation around competitive team games for both boys and girls and the steady marginalisation […] of a variety of forms of gymnastics' (Houlihan and White, 2002: 15). The team games that gained prominence and subsequently came to be seen as 'traditional' PE pursuits were football, rugby and cricket, in particular (Kirk, 2006a: 10).[6] To put this in perspective, the same competitive sports being promoted in state schools had been familiar to the English public school fields, and Oxbridge universities, since around the 1850s (Holt, 1989: 81-86).

Although PE has been through a long and at times bitter developmental process, up until the 1960s politicians paid only marginal attention to the subject.[7] In the late 1950s, as the performance of British athletes and sporting teams was seen to be declining on the international level (Houlihan, 1991: 27), the government was compelled to act. Part of Macmillan's Conservative Government's response came in the publication of the influential *Wolfenden Report* (CCPR, 1960). The most significant of the Wolfenden Committee's recommendations was the establishment of the Sports Advisory Council. The Council's inception in 1965 placed an emphasis on planning and co-ordination in the provision of sport

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[5] The lack of male PE teachers was due largely to the subject's occupational status. Males that were in the profession before the end of the War were mostly 'former army non-commissioned officers' who 'were generally regarded by teachers as their social inferiors' (Kirk, 1992: 66).
[6] By the mid 1960s a version of PE which had only been present in state schools for just over a decade, came to be seen as the 'traditional' version of the subject. In fact, this traditional physical education had only been 'traditional' to the British private schools (Kirk, 1992: 84). The 'tradition' can, therefore, be seen as an invention of a tradition, seeking to 'inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1).

[7] McNamee (2005: 2) likens PE's status in the wider curriculum to 'little more than a Cinderella existence […] throughout the twentieth century.'

and sports facilities (Houlihan, 1991: 28). This was the first time that a political party had, albeit implicitly, acknowledged that 'physical education and elite sport performance were both components of a single system that contributed to 'the national interest'' (Kirk and Gorely, 2000: 121). As will be demonstrated below, this remained a pervasive theme throughout much of the twentieth century.

The government's interest in sport soon filtered down into PE. Along with the supposed weakening of a British national identity in the international sporting arena, sport was justified as being the basis of PE due to its supposedly civilising and liberating potential (Kirk, 2001: 481). Through participation in sport and competitive team games 'students will acquire culturally valued attributes [and] attitudes […] as well as particular physical skills and abilities' (Garrett and Wrench, 2007: 27). Indeed, sport has for many years been seen as a means to develop 'life skills' and as a mechanism to 'tackle pressing societal problems' (Andrews, 2009: 27; see also Policy Action Team, 2000 and Collins, 2003). Green (2008: 227) draws attention to a 'sportization' process in PE; the subject, which should, at least, have a nominal focus on education, is now seen by Green and many others as essentially focused on sport. That PE and sport are widely viewed as synonymous is an issue of concern (Capel, 2000). Interestingly, though, if this argument is viewed from a different angle, it could be argued that sport development has to a significant extent undergone a 'healthization' or 'educationalization,' in that 'mapping the territory of youth sport development in England is extremely difficult as it [has] become increasingly interconnected with policy areas such as health and education' (Phillpots, 2011: 131).

The preceding discussion attempted to demonstrate that PE is not a subject with a fixed discursive content or meaning. The content and status of the subject is tied in to the wider Zeitgeist; the desired educational (or other) outcomes reflect societal demands and/or norms. As can be seen from the above, PE at the beginning of the twentieth century is virtually unrecognisable to that provided at the end of the century. Attention will now turn to PE since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1992.

'Major' changes to the status of PESS: 1992 – 1997

Along with disciplines such as art, drama, and music, PE is often classified as a low-status education subject (Sparkes *et al.*, 1990: 11). It has been difficult for PE teachers to shed this perception of their subject being 'qualitatively different' from other disciplines (Houlihan, 1997: 243). As a result PE 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
>
> (Evans, 2004: 95-96).

These sentiments of Evans' do not seem controversial, as it is largely taken for granted that PE *should* address wider (educational, behavioural, social, physical, and mental) objectives. However, as Evans goes on to argue, 'We would be hard pressed to find, for example, maths or English teachers justifying their existence principally in terms of what they can do, not for a child's literacy or numeracy, but their mental health, self-esteem or social welfare' (2004: 96). This has become increasingly explicit, and will be the subject of greater attention below. This brief and rather fatalistic description of PE's status within the wider school curriculum is worth bearing in mind in the following discussion. From 1992 onwards PE has become a more established and, arguably, respected subject in schools. The following discussion will briefly introduce the NCPE and the subsequent Conservative paper *Sport: Raising the Game*, before attention turns to the policies introduced under Labour (post-1997).

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1992 was the first time a centrally defined view of what experiences children should receive in their PE had been made. Penney and Evans (1999: 33) note that the National Curriculum merely 'sought to 're-establish' a 'traditional' and easily recognisable curriculum.' The Curriculum re-asserted the status of certain 'Core' subjects (English, maths, science) over 'Foundation' subjects (history, geography, and PE, for example). Since 1992, various National Curriculum revisions have provided the legal requirements of the entitlement children aged 5-16 should receive (DfE/WO, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999). For present purposes, rather than attempting an analysis of the subsequent revisions, a brief summary of the central focus and most important

elements of these documents - seen as a single discourse, and specifically in relation to PE - will suffice (for more detailed analyses of the NCPE see Evans and Penney, 1995; Houlihan 1997, 2000 and Penney and Evans, 1999).

At the expense of subordinating the educational objectives associated with planning and evaluating (Houlihan, 2000: 173), the NCPE placed great emphasis on children's 'performance' in PE. Lockwood (2000: 123) suggests that before the NCPE, PE was largely focused on the 'process of learning' – physical development and improving physical competence – however, after the introduction of the NCPE, the focus shifted towards the final 'product' (performance). The 2000 NCPE did, however, signal a shift back to 'process' of learning. The activities that were to be explored in PE lessons were largely 'games,' and more specifically, competitive team games (Almond *et al.*, 1996: 8). This, again, was not a break with the past but rather 'an endorsement of the long established practices which prioritized gender-based team games over a more thematic and integrated physical education' (Houlihan, 2000: 173). The structure of the curriculum prescribes that children are assessed in accordance with nine stringent levels of performance (including 'Exceptional Performance'), at the end of each Key Stage (KS)[8] (QCA, 1999). Therefore, all children learn that development is ubiquitous and that each child, regardless of personal characteristics, must perform to a certain level, broadly in association with age (Evans and Penney, 2008: 42). Those children falling below the approved level of performance for their age are labelled as 'developmentally delayed' or in need of 'remedial help' (Burrows and Wright, 2001: 168). As will be discussed in Chapter Two, such methods of assessment can promote a 'motivational climate' that is at odds with a child's optimal development.

Between the 1992 and 2000 NCPE, Prime Minister and sport enthusiast, John Major, introduced *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage, 1995). The publication was, similarly to previous interventions, a response to 'England's poor international record in major men's sport […] and the perceived decline in school sport' (Burgess, 1996: 12). Major's ambition was to ensure that 'our great traditional sports – cricket, hockey, swimming, athletics, football, netball, rugby, tennis and the like – are put firmly at the centre of the stage' (Department of National Heritage, 1995: 3). *Sport: Raising*

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[8] KS 0 (3-5 years old); KS 1 (5-7); KS 2 (7-11); KS 3 (11-14); KS 4 (14-16); KS 5 (Sixth Form, 16-18).

the Game epitomised the wider neo-liberal agenda; emphasising elite sport, sponsorship, competitive sport, scholarships and a general quasi-market approach. The underlying focus on elite athlete development was justified through an argument that suggested elite achievement is highly visible and therefore has a demonstration effect, encouraging many more to participate (Kirk and Gorely, 2000: 123).

Sport: Raising the Game was important for the future of PE for two main reasons; firstly, the publication raised the status of the subject in schools and, secondly, the focus was almost exclusively on *sport*, not *physical education*. The effects of the document have been considered elsewhere (see *The British Journal of Physical Education*, 1996), and there is little need to discuss the document in depth here. However, it is important to be aware of the document because, combined, *Sport: Raising the Game* and *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000) have provided the 'organizational and administrative framework for the shape and direction of sport policy into the twenty-first century' (Green, M, 2004: 371-373). As sport (and sport development) is now central to PE, the policy is of importance not only to sport, but also to physical education. In discussing sport and PE in policy it is important that one is aware of the blurred boundaries between the two, and the incessant interconnectedness of PE and sport - this can be seen in Phillpots's (2011: 133-136) discussion of post-1995 youth sport development, and throughout the following discussion.

New Labour and the modernisation of PESS

Since their landslide victory in 1997, New Labour 'invested unprecedented sums of money in large and ambitious social programs' (Coote *et al.*, 2004: 1). PESS were major beneficiaries in Labour's increased spending. The first action taken by Labour in relation to PESS, came through a Policy Action Team (PAT, 2000) compendium.[9] The PAT's focus on physical activity was premised on the notion that participation in sport could lead to 'neighborhood renewal by improving communities' performance' on the four 'key' indicators of more jobs, less crime, better health and improved educational attainment (PAT, 2000: 37). Reference to physical activity in the report was made exclusively through *sport*, with a significant focus on

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[9] As an integrated approach to tackling problems in deprived areas, 18 PATs were established. The creation of PATs was the direct result of *Bringing Britain Together* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). PAT 10 was entrusted with exploring issues related to 'Arts and Sport' (see NSNR, 2000: 37-40).

'sport in the school.' The key documents underpinning sport and PE[10] during Labour's incumbency - *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000), *The Government's Plan for Sport* (DCMS, 2001) and *Game Plan* (Strategy Unit, 2002) - defined the central policy focus as: a) sport in education; b) sport in the community; c) sporting excellence; and d) modernisation (Strategy Unit, 2002: 163). Three bodies were given responsibility for the respective agendas; for schools (Youth Sport Trust), community sport (Sport England), and elite sport (UK Sport) - modernisation was inherent to all (DCMS, 2008: 6).

Labour argued that 'physical education and sport [had] declined' in too many schools (DCMS, 2000: 7). In 2000, to remedy this decline and foster 'sustainable, long-term change,' *A Sporting Future for All* (*ASFA*) was introduced (DCMS, 2000: 7). The publication provided the framework for the future of PESS in England and Wales. The modernisation process was to begin with a five part plan that would;

- Rebuild school sports facilities;
- Create 110 Specialist Sports Colleges (see below for description) by 2003;
- Extend opportunities for physical education and sport beyond the school day;
- Establish 600 School Sports Co-ordinators (see below for description);
- Ensure the most talented 14-18 year olds have access to necessary coaching

(DCMS, 2000: 7).

An initial investment of £240 million[11] was to fund 'over 200 families of schools and 1000 School Sport Co-ordinators' (DCMS, 2001: 15). It was argued that this would provide the necessary improvements in human and material resources. The emphasis on 'partnership' was central to the plans. Specialist Sports Colleges (SSCs) were to act as the 'hub,' with approximately eight secondary schools connected to each SSC, and a further 45 primary and special schools clustered around these (see Figure 1.1). SSCs were introduced in 1997 as part of the *Specialist Schools Programme*. Schools that successfully bid for Sports College status receive extra funding through government and private investors. SSCs have sport at the

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[10] Due to the closely linked treatment of 'physical education and school sport' and 'sport' in policy, and a widespread belief that sporting excellence is linked to a child's experience in school, large sections of policies that are fundamentally concerned with sport, have significant impacts upon PESS (DCMS, 2000: 7-8; DCMS, 2001: 11-16 and Strategy Unit, 2002: 95-100).

[11] In subsequent years funding for PESS increased – in the five years to 2008 more than £1.5billion was invested (DCSF, 2008). Prior to Labour's 2010 general election defeat, funding for PESS was set to exceed £2.4 billion between 2003-2011 (Sport England and YST, 2009: 15).

centre of the curriculum, and aim to enhance physical activity opportunities and improve children's education through the increased use of sport and exercise. SSCs share 'their expertise, resources, and good practice, so that locally there is a 'family of schools' working together' (DCMS, 2000: 30). Each Partnership (family) was to receive £270,000 per year in direct government funding to provide the following statutory positions;

> a full time Partnership Development Manager (PDM); the release of one teacher from each secondary school two days a week to allow them to take on the role of School Sport Coordinator (SSCo); the release of one teacher from each primary or special school 12 days a year to allow them to become Link Teachers (PLT); and Specialist Link Teachers who fill the gaps created by teacher release

(DfES and DCMS, 2003: 6).[12]

As the plans were implemented, some goals and terminology changed. Although *ASFA* firmly placed SSPs at the centre of PESS, for example, the phrase 'School Sport Partnership' was not used in the paper. Initially referred to as 'families of schools,' the driving force behind the plans was later termed 'School Sport Co-ordinator Partnerships' and finally 'School Sport Partnerships.' The plethora of papers following *ASFA* (produced by various government departments and quangos) make it difficult to ascertain exactly what the government hoped to achieve through PESS. This ambiguity is alluded to towards the end of the influential *Game Plan*, where the need for clarity is made explicit;

> Among the national bodies with a responsibility for sport [including PE] there are at least twelve different statements of priority, each with a slightly different emphasis […] The problem is that priorities are not always expressed or articulated in the same way. The four core policy areas contained in *A Sporting Future for All* are not consistently addressed, even across government and the sports councils' strategies. This reflects a lack of clarity about who leads on setting the national strategy for sport in England

(Strategy Unit, 2002: 163).

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[12] PDMs are charged with the overall organisation and strategic direction of a Partnership, and liaising with other agencies. The Sports College in which they are based is given funding for their role. SSCos are based in secondary schools and concentrate 'on improving school sport opportunities, including out of hours school learning, intra and inter-school competition and club links, across a family of schools' (YST, 2009). PLTs (based in every primary school) work to improve PESS in their particular school. Competition Managers are a more recent addition to SSPs, their role is to promote and organise inter- and intra-school competition between schools in the SSP and from wider afield. Partnership staff work towards the same end goals, each individual has their individual role in the overall strategy.

Figure 1.1. Typical School Sport Partnership model.
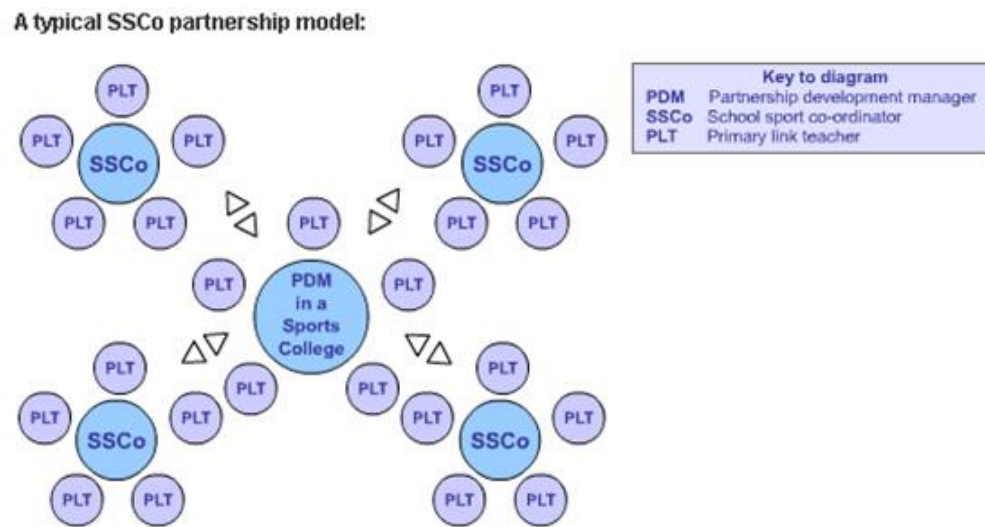
<div align="right">(YST, 2010).</div>

The concerns over clarity appeared to result in little change. Indeed, in the vast literature surrounding PESS since 2000, a large number of targets (actual and potential) have been cited.[13] Here, again, PE is being used to satisfy myriad goals, many of which are 'non-sports objectives' (Smith and Leech, 2010: 329). Only from 2000 onwards, the scope PE is seen to have for remedying certain ills widened to incorporate a wealth of end goals.

Many aims and objectives were discussed in *ASFA*, however greatest attention was given to; rebuilding school sports facilities - especially in primary schools (DCMS, 2000: 7), providing more sporting opportunities within and after school hours, catering for gifted and talented

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[13] To name but a few, objectives (excluding those in *ASFA*) include improvements in; mental well being (Loughborough Partnership, 2008: 4), academic standards and behaviour in schools (DfEE and QCA, 1999: 8; DCMS/QCA, 2007; ContinYou *et al.*, 2008: 2; Sport England and YST, 2009: 5), community engagement/ improvement (HM Government, 2003: 10), physical health, rates of sedentary activity and the prevalence of obesity (National Audit Office, 2001; Strategy Unit, 2002: 46; DoH, 2004; Cross-Government Obesity Unit; Change4Life, PE&Sport for Young People and YST, 2009), gifted and talented provision (Sport England and YST, 2008: 2), opportunities for competitive sport (DoH, 2004: 63), international sporting success (Strategy Unit, 2002: 29; DCMS, 2008: 1-3), club and community links (DfES and DCMS, 2003: 13; HM Government, 2003: 7; Sport England, 2007: 12; Sport England and YST, 2008: 2), leadership and volunteering (DCMS/QCA, 2007; YST, 2010b), and the quantity, quality and range of sport and physical activity children can access (DCMS, 2002: 4).

children, promoting club links, and ensuring schools work in partnership. These aims remained central to the Physical Education and School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCL), launched in 2002. PESSCL was a cross-departmental strategy delivered through eight programmes.[14] Central to PESSCL was the Public Service Agreement 22 (PSA 22) target to 'Deliver a successful Olympic Games and Paralympic Games with a sustainable legacy and get more children and young people taking part in high quality PE and sport' (NAO, 2010).[15] As part of PSA 22 the government aimed to 'increase the percentage of school children in England who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum to 75% by 2006' (DfES and DCMS, 2003: 2). This target subsequently increased to 85% by 2008 (Sport England, 2003). Aside from the participation targets and general PESS improvements, PESSCL placed the following items high on the agenda; 'high quality' opportunities (see DfES and DCMS, 2004: 3), partnership working (between schools and school-club links), gifted and talented development, volunteering and leadership, and teacher and coach development.

A National Competition Framework for young people was introduced in September 2005. Building on the objectives of PESSCL, the framework's focus was explicitly upon providing competitive opportunities for children. The goals of the framework demonstrate the commitment to competitive sporting opportunities in school. Competition Managers were to head up the initiative throughout their County. The purpose was to develop;

- A world-class system of competitive sport for young people
- Transformation of the content, structure and presentation of competitive opportunities for young people of school age
- A heightened profile for school sport and, specifically, competitive opportunities

(YST, 2011).

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[14] Specialist Sports Colleges, School Sport Coordinators, Gifted and Talented, QCA PE and School Sport Investigation, Step into Sport, Professional Development, School/Club Links, and Swimming (DfES and DCMS, 2003).

[15] 'High quality PE and school sport produces young people with the skills, understanding, desire and commitment to continue to improve and achieve in a range of PE, sport and health-enhancing physical activities in line with their abilities' (DfES and DCMS, 2002:3).

In July 2007, following the overwhelming success of PESSCL, Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, introduced the 'Five Hours Offer.' This was a '£100 million campaign to give every child the chance of five hours of sport every week' (Brown, 2007). The press release is representative of the views towards PE at the time. It called for;

> a 'united team effort' in the run up to 2012 [London Olympic Games] to make sport a part of every child's day, to build a greater sporting nation and a fitter nation. [The Prime Minister] wants schools, parents, volunteers, coaches and the sports world to offer the equivalent of an hour of sport to every child, every day of the week

(DCSF, 2007).

In January 2008 PESSCL was replaced with the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP). Given momentum by the successful Olympic Games bid in July 2005, there was now a deadline for creating 'a world-class system' of PESS in time for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Sport England and YST, 2009: 9). PESSYP retained the commitment to fulfilling the Prime Minister's 'five hour offer' (Sport England and YST, 2009: 6), and further stressed the importance of flexibility and specificity in the offer children receive. Such a service, it was argued, could only be delivered through partnership working. SSPs, County Sport Partnerships, National Governing Bodies, Health Providers, Primary Care Trusts, and many additional community providers would collectively ensure all young people – whether 'already engaged,' 'partially engaged' or 'not yet engaged' – participate in five hours of PE and sport (pp. 14-15).

In this discussion, only the most relevant and influential policies have been considered. Due to the volume of PESS-related publications since 2000 it would be futile to attempt any 'comprehensive' review here. Labour published an unprecedented number of papers related to education in general. As Ball (2001: 45) comments, 'Whatever else one would want to say about Labour's education policies there is certainly no shortage of them!' Gillies (2008: 42) argues that the frequent introduction of new or updated education policies has become largely symbolic. Prior to 1979 only a handful of educational Acts were passed in the UK. Between 1979 and 2006, however, over 40 were enacted. Gillies (2008: 422) claims that the increased number of publications is motivated, in part, by the politically important need 'to be seen to be active, rather than to wish to enact any precise educational issue.' This is not to suggest that education policy has remained stagnant, neither does it imply that legislation

is not influenced by political ideology. Gillies' suggestion is, rather, that it has become symbolically imperative for political parties to demonstrate a greater interest in education than their opponents and/or predecessors;

> [the] legislative production line has increased the expectation for more of the same, in the sense that if one administration has legislated heavily in education then the succeeding one faces the prospect of being seen to lack interest or commitment if it fails to follow suit. Given Tony Blair's 'education, education, education' mantra, any let-up in legislative action could have risked incurring electoral costs in being seen to be, or portrayed by opponents as, weak or slack on education

> (Gillies, 2008: 422).

Reasoning behind Labour's Investment in PESS

The selection of initiatives that have just been discussed provide sufficient evidence of the government's general aims for the unprecedented investment in PESS. In summary, the fundamental goals were to;

1. Increase the amount of time all 5-16 year olds spend in PESS (thereby reducing sedentary activity and levels of obesity);
2. Provide gifted and talented children with appropriate opportunities to develop their skills (aiming to improve international sporting and athletics success);
3. Develop a world class PESS infrastructure in time for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (since July 2005).[16]

In order to achieve this, the government would first need to;

4. Improve facilities and human and material resource availability for the delivery of PESS;
5. Ensure schools work in partnership (with each other *and* through links with sports clubs).

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[16] Kirk (2010: 9) concurs that increasing the number of individuals winning international sporting events and reducing obesity are central goals. However, in place of developing a world class infrastructure, Kirk claims that the third underlying aim was to ensure 'the good behaviour and citizenship of all members of society.' This difference in view demonstrates not only the subjectivity in determining the core goals of PESS policy, but also the ambiguity in policy and political aspirations for the subject. Whilst good behaviour and citizenship were consistently addressed in PESS policy, their prominence is seen as secondary to a world-class PESS infrastructure, particularly post-2005 (the period which Kirk comments on).

Through consulting the various policy documents and recommendations, the reasons why the government felt it important to achieve these specific goals can be detected. The fundamental goal - to increase the number of children engaged in two (subsequently five) hours of PESS was premised on several hypotheses. Firstly, a focus on health and reductions in sedentary activity and the prevalence of obesity were central to Labour PESS policy. There is a widespread belief that 'regular exercise can be an important health maintenance strategy [...] helping to prevent obesity and its associated problems' (Strategy Unit, 2002: 46). The theory is that 'active children are less likely to be obese and more likely to pursue sporting activities as adults' (DfES and DCMS, 2003: 1). For Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, this was crucial, as 'obesity is [...] creating a future of rising chronic disease and long-term ill-health.' The associated conditions, he argued, including 'heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes have taken the place of 19th century diseases as the illnesses that curtail life prematurely, cause long-term incapacity, reduce quality of life and on which we focus our healthcare resources' (Cross-Government Obesity Unit *et al.*, 2008: iii). The concern with obesity has been filtered down to schools through SSPs. In the 2008 official evaluation of SSPs, 61 percent of PDMs believed that tackling overweight and obesity was an objective of their work in primary schools (58 percent for secondaries) (LP, 2009: 1).

A second hypothesis for increasing the number of children engaged in two hours of physical activity, is an assumption (often implicit) that participation in PESS improves many behavioural and social skills. These include; 'pupil concentration, commitment and self-esteem; leading to higher attendance and better behavior and attainment' (DfES and DCMS, 2003: 1; see also DCMS/QCA, 2007). School sport, in particular, is seen to teach young people 'self-discipline and teamwork skills [and] develop their leadership potential' (DCMS, 2001: 11). The third reason for increasing participation levels is linked to the development of gifted and talented (GT) children. The rationale is intuitive; 'without a broad base of participation we will not draw out the most talented stars of the future' (DCSM, 2000: 52). This links to the second of the overall goals; the development of GT children in PESS.

The identification and development of GT children in PESS has been widely promoted since *ASFA*. The belief is that developing GT athletes and sportspersons will 'increase the likelihood of international [sporting] success' (DCMS, 2000: 19). This may then, it is often

argued, produce a nationwide 'feelgood factor' which will stimulate particular sections of the economy and encourage other members of society to take up sport and athletics (Strategy Unit, 2002: 42). Several factors combined to bring GT development to the fore of the government's PESS agenda. There was a feeling that in many popular sports the UK was 'underachieving' internationally (Strategy Unit, 2002: 29). This concern, combined with the successful 2012 Olympic Games bid (in 2005) and the demands of NGBs and scouts – who had 'gone in search of talent at an earlier and earlier age' (DCMS, 2000: 40) - put pressure on government to focus on GT development. The focus on competitive sport was central to the language used in the surrounding PESS discourse. This is captured by former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Andy Burnham, who believed the government's aim was to 'get more people taking up sport simply for the love of sport; to expand the pool of talented English sportsmen and women; and to break records, win medals and win tournaments for this country' (DCMS, 2008, Secretary of State's foreword). In order to develop this 'pool of talent' a national infrastructure had to be in place to support the most talented youngsters.

The development of human and material resources is central to the previous two objectives and a fundamental component of the remaining two. In relation to PESS facilities, primary schools were identified as the 'worst part of the school sports and arts infrastructure' (DCMS, 2000: 7). The government vowed to invest heavily in school sports facilities (see Strategy Unit, 2002: 98) and 'prevent the sale of [school] playing fields' (DCMS, 2000: 11). High-quality PESS facilities were essential if the government were 'to develop skillful and motivated young people' (DCMS, 2000: 29). So the facilities could also be used by local communities - thus fulfilling wider political objectives - they had to appeal, both financially and practically, to the wider community (Strategy Unit, 2002: 8). Investment in human resources was also vital – this was particularly important in primary schools where there are few specialist PE teachers (DCMS, 2000: 31). It was argued that a child's PESS development is dependent upon the vision of the school's management and how well 'teachers and/or coaches are inspiring and helping young people to learn and achieve' (DfES and DCMS, 2004: 2). Thus, improvements in material and human resources were key to the government's plans to provide all children with high quality PESS and (re-)engage older people in sport and physical activity.

The investment in human and material resources was intended to benefit *all* schools. If a school did not *directly* receive cash injections, it would benefit from investment made in other local schools. It is financially inconceivable to retrain all teachers and build state of the art facilities in each school. For this reason the emphasis on 'partnership' was paramount. Working in partnership, schools would be able to 'broaden and strengthen the range of opportunities available to all young people' (DCMS, 2000: 31). Where strong partnership was in place, so too would there be a culture of sharing facilities, resources and teaching expertise. As Specialist Sports Colleges would have 'top quality facilities,' they were to act as 'local centres of excellence,' sharing their resources and expertise with local primary and secondary schools (DCMS, 2001: 13). Thus, by bringing schools together Labour planned to provide more opportunities, facilitated by expert staff and staged in appropriate facilities. In addition to the partnerships between schools, individual schools would also form links to sport and athletics clubs. These school-club links enable children to fulfil their five hours of PE and sport per week, whilst ensuring that children 'feel comfortable in a club setting and, as a result, [are] more likely to continue participating once they leave school' (DfES and DCMS, 2004: 18). The club links also provide a path for GT children to access the expertise, facilities, resources and competition they need 'to achieve sporting success' (DfES and DCMS, 2006, i).

This discussion has explored the justification behind Labour's investment in PESS and the reasoning behind the strategic and organisational decisions underpinning the strategy's implementation. As the PESSCL (now PESSYP) strategy has now been in place for over 10 years, sufficient time has elapsed for evaluators to comment on the overall impact. In order to assess the impact that SSPs have made, the past evaluations will now be examined.

The impact of SSPs: an analysis of official evaluations

Under 'New' Labour's '*what works?*' mantra, evidence came to the fore in policy making. Due to the need to justify expenditure and demonstrate the impacts of legislation, there was a need 'to understand and explain what works for whom [and] in what circumstances' (Sanderson, 2002: 2). Because of this policy environment the number of state funded evaluations has escalated since 1997 (Taylor and Balloch, 2005: 3-5). There have been three

large-scale evaluations of SSPs, two of which have been funded by government departments, and one independently conducted by Ofsted. The primary evaluation tool has been a largely quantitative national survey conducted by TNS/TNS-BMRB, on behalf of the Department for Education (formerly DCSF). The survey is a self-completion postal questionnaire that all schools are required to return (see Quick *et al.*, 2009: 74-95 for a blank survey).[17] Before examining the findings of the survey it is important to briefly comment on the value and limitations of such research methods. The main benefit of postal surveys is that large and dispersed populations can be surveyed at a relatively low cost (Simmons, 2001: 87). As the findings are usually standardised, due to the closed nature of many questions, surveys tend also to be easily replicated (May, 1993: 66). For the respondents, self-completion surveys are often favoured over other methods as they can be completed at a convenient time, and at a respondent's own pace. Another benefit of self-completion questionnaires is that the 'interviewer-effect' – the possible impact an interviewer may have upon a respondent's answers – is absent (Bryman, 2004: 133).

This lack of human presence can also be seen as a weakness of the self-completion method, however. Self-completion questionnaires must be presented unambiguously to avoid any confusion/misinterpretation, and they must also be worded neutrally (i.e., no leading questions). There may be no opportunity for a respondent to clarify a point with the agency distributing the survey, so clarity is paramount. Additionally, there is no scope to probe respondents for further clarification or elaboration (Bryman, 2004: 134). Specifically in relation to the PESSCL/PESSYP surveys, for example, the questions allow schools to enter information without providing evidence. Thus, there is the 'possibility' that some schools may enter data incorrectly (or even deceptively), in order to improve what are seen as the opportunities the school provides and the participation levels it boasts. There are many more benefits and limitations associated with self-completion (postal) surveys, however, this section has made note of some that are important to be aware of when considering the following findings.

The following analysis compares the findings from the first PESSCL survey (DfES and DCMS, 2004) with the most recent PESSYP survey (Quick *et al.*, 2010) (see table 1.1 for the headline

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[17] Response rates are very high; for example, the 2009/10 survey received a 99.8 percent return rate.

figures).[18] It is important to note that the 2003/04 survey does not account for year 12 and 13 pupils, whereas the 2009/10 survey does. As pupils in this age group typically do less physical activity than other school year groups, it is probable that the like for like comparisons would be slightly different were this accounted for.

In the first PESCCL survey 62 percent of pupils spent at least two hours per week in high quality PESS. By 2007/08 this figure rose to 90 percent. Due to the high percentage of pupils engaged in two hours PESS, subsequent surveys raised the bar to three hours participation. By 2009/10 55 percent of school children spent three hours in PESS. There had been notable improvements over the sample years in the number of year 1 and 2 pupils reaching the target participation levels of two hours in 2003/04 (37 percent for year 1, 40 percent for year 2) and three hours in 2009/10 (57 percent and 61 percent respectively). In 2003/04 pupils spent an average of 103 minutes on curricular PE. This figure was 117 minutes in 2009/10 (123 minutes when years 12 and 13 are excluded). The greatest increases, by year group, for the amount of time spent in activity have been in the primary years; 'Participation levels are highest in Years 4 – 6, and also reasonably high in Years 1 – 3 and Years 7 – 8' (Quick *et al.*, 2008: 2).

The percentage of pupils participating in *intra*-school competition rose from 22 percent in 2003/04 to 78 percent in 2009/10. The largest increase was in year 1; from 6 percent to 70 percent. Regarding *inter*-school competition, the percentage of children participating in the last academic year increased from 33 percent (of year 4-11 pupils) to 49 percent (of year 1-11) over the sample period. Data for years 1-3 was not collected until 2006/07; since then, however, there have been annual increases in the number of year 1-3 pupils engaged in inter-school competition. In 2009/10, 99 percent of schools had held a sports day in the last year (marginally up from the already impressive 96 percent base figure).

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[18] The PESSCL and PESSYP surveys between these dates are not being explored due to the lengthy discussion such a task would entail (see DCMS and DfES, 2005; DCMS and DfES, 2006; Quick, 2007; Quick *et al.*, 2008; Quick *et al.*, 2009).

Table 1.1. Key PESSCL/PESSYP survey findings: 2003/04 – 2009/10

	2003/2004	2009/2010
Children receiving at least two hours PESS*	62%	90% (2007/08)
Average time spent in PESS	103 minutes	123 minutes
Children participating in *intra*-school competition	22%	78%
Children participating in *inter*-school competition	38%	49%
Number of sport/physical activities on offer**	14	19
Average number of club links schools have***	5	9
Children registered as Gifted and Talented in PESS (Y5-11)	3%	8%

* As a consequence of methodological amendments the most recent figure for children engaged in two hours PESS each week represents the 2007/08 figure. Due to the high proportion of children engaged in two hours PESS, the researchers changed the measure in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 surveys to assess the percentage of children engaged in *three* hours PESS (50 percent for 2008/09 and 55 percent 2009/10).

**2003/04 data is for number of activities on offer is the average number of sports offered by each SSP. The 2009/10 data represents the average number of activities on offer in each school. The increase is thus more significant than it appears.

*** 2003/04 data represents the average number of club links that SSPs had. 2009/10 data indicates the average number of club-links schools had. Again, the actual increase is more significant than it appears.

In the first survey children had the opportunity to participate in an average of 14 sports laid on by their SSP. In 2004/05 a different measure of the number of sports provided by each *school* was used. Fewer than 15 sports were provided by each school in 2004/05, compared with 19 in 2009/10; pupils in secondary schools are offered a wider range of activities than

those in primary. Over the sample period schools had increased the number of links to sports clubs that they have, from 5 to 9.

As this evidence testifies, SSPs have succeeded in the majority of their core goals. The amount of time children spend in PESS each week has increased significantly, especially for children in primary schools. As a direct result of SSPs children now have more opportunities to participate in an expanding range of sports and physical activities. The percentage of school children taking part in *intra*-school competitions has increased more than threefold, and whilst standing at just under half of all school children, the number competing against other schools has increased by 49.5 percent (if data for years 1-3 were collected in the first PESSCL survey, this increase – if only remotely in line with intra-school competition – would be significantly greater). Although improvements have been made throughout primary and secondary schools, the most significant impact (statistically) has been in primary schools.

Aside from the PESSCL and PESSYP surveys there have been several other nationwide evaluations. In September 2003 the Loughborough Partnership (LP) was asked to provide annual evaluations (between 2003–2009) of the SSP initiative.[19] Some of the central findings of the LP evaluations, along with those from a small series of Ofsted evaluations will now be succinctly explored, so as to further review the overall impact of SSPs. There is significant overlap between these two set of evaluations and the official PESSCL/PESSYP surveys. Therefore, the information concerning participation rates and other quantitative methods will not be explored, as this has been covered above. This analysis will explore the more qualitative findings of the LP and Ofsted evaluations.

In general, the findings of both Ofsted and the LP's evaluations are positive. An early Ofsted (2003: 3) evaluation reported that the initiative was already 'raising the profile of PE and school sport and an awareness of their value in schools.' As a result of the SSP's involvement, teaching staff noted improvements in children's behaviour (LP, 2005: 2), pupil motivation

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[19] Kirk (2010: 123) raises serious concerns over the evaluations conducted by the Loughborough Partnership. Because the evaluations were funded by 'government organisations' (the DfES, DCMS) and stakeholders (YST and Sport England) – the evaluations, Kirk appears to suggest, may ignore critical comments. Kirk argues that the 'politicians and policy makers' that fund the evaluation 'treat with disdain the dissenting voices of [those] who complain interminably […] about the reproduction of social inequalities.' The issue of the impartiality of evaluators will be addressed in greater depth in the Methods Chapter, however it is worth noting the concerns raised by Kirk at this early stage.

and attitudes towards school (LP, 2007: 3), slight improvements in attainment (LP, 2009: 5), and small increases in attendance figures (LP, 2009: 5). Ofsted evaluations also identified a 'positive effect' on 'reducing the incidences of misbehaviour' (Ofsted, 2003: 11) and improvements in attitudes, attendance and motivation (Ofsted, 2005: 5). The findings are based on the recollections of teachers, and many of the measures are not entirely conclusive. However, in general, teaching staff do believe that the impact of SSPs on pupils' wider education has been beneficial.

Teaching staff have benefitted from training opportunities granted them by the SSP. The training programmes for PLTs have had 'a substantial impact in increasing the confidence, knowledge and skills of primary school staff' (LP, 2005: 2). Indeed, whilst there have been training opportunities for secondary school teachers, the 'greatest improvement' has been in primary schools – with almost 75 percent of lessons being classed as 'good' (Ofsted, 2004: 4). A significant number of lessons have been identified as 'poor' or 'unsatisfactory,' however, and despite this, Ofsted (2003: 14) contends that 'the programme has improved teaching in a number of ways.' PLTs are provided with local and national training which has 'increased their opportunities for continuing professional development' (Ofsted, 2003: 4). The skills that PLTs develop at such events are then shared with the rest of the school's staff, so that all teachers benefit from the initial training (Ofsted, 2005: 7). Aside from the national and local training courses, a central method through which teachers have been up-skilled is by observing demonstration lessons taken by experts/sports coaches (Ofsted, 2005: 2).

In relation to improvements in the links schools have with one another (and between schools and clubs), the findings are, again, generally encouraging. Regarding the latter, SSPs have encouraged sports clubs to strengthen their youth divisions (LP, 2005: 2). In an early Ofsted (2003: 4) evaluation *all* Partnerships already had plans to improve the pathways into community clubs, and by 2005 many schools had developed 'strong links with local sports clubs and sports coaches in the community' (Ofsted, 2005: 3). The forging of these links has provided more opportunities for children to pursue sport outside of school. Links between schools also 'continue to improve' and, by 2004, they were 'good in over half of the primary schools and just over a quarter of secondary schools visited' (Ofsted, 2004: 4). The SSP has been identified as being directly responsible for the improvement in school-links, as the

programme facilitates regular meetings between teachers from different schools, which allows them the share 'resources and expertise' (Ofsted, 2005a: 14). It has been suggested that the improvement in links between primary and secondary schools has resulted in greater 'curriculum continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3' (Ofsted, 2003: 18), so that when children enter secondary school they can commence their PESS at an appropriate level.

The final, and perhaps most significant consideration, is that of the impact SSPs have had upon the provision of physical activities and sports in schools. All evaluations highlight an increase in the number and range of activities available to children following the introduction of the SSP. The increased opportunities are not just in curriculum time, but there are now more PESS-related activities available at lunch- and break-times (Ofsted, 2003: 11), and after school (Ofsted, 2005a: 8). 92 percent of PLTs suggested that the increased range of after-school activities had 'increased enthusiasm for PE and sport' amongst pupils (LP, 2006: 8). Specifically relating to the composition of the activities, there appears to have been 'a consolidation of the place of traditional sports in Partnership programmes' (LP, 2009: 22). Whilst more children are engaged as a result of the increase in activities, both the LP (2009: 22) and Ofsted (2005: 11) raise concerns over this dependency on 'traditional' sporting pastimes – football, cricket, netball, and hockey, for example.

A last point relating to provision concerns GT children. SSP provision for GT children began slowly, with 'only a small number of partnerships […] making progress' (Ofsted, 2003: 17). However by 2004, a report into GT provision found that 'systems for identifying talented pupils are good or better in just over half of schools' (Ofsted, 2004a: 6). In 2005, provision for GT children was considered satisfactory or better in 80 percent of schools (Ofsted, 2005a: 25). GT identification, however, was only good or better in 20 percent of schools (Ofsted, 2005a: 27). The findings from the report are inconclusive and often contradictory, for example; 'the provision for gifted and talented pupils was no better than satisfactory in almost a third of the lessons seen.' However, on the following page the report suggests that 'The quality and range of learning opportunities for talented pupils were good or better in over half of the schools visited' (Ofsted, 2005a: 19-20). The considerations of the various measures discussed in the preceding paragraphs demonstrate positive and explicit findings, the effect of SSPs on GT identification and provision is more ambiguous.

The evaluations suggest that those Partnerships that have the greatest impact tend to share some commonalities *vis-à-vis* their workforce attributes. Fundamentally, the success of a Partnership depends on 'there being qualified and enthusiastic personnel' (LP, 2005: 4). SSPs are more likely to be effective when their staff are 'enthusiastic, committed and knowledgeable' (LP, 2006: 5). Similarly, it is beneficial if PLTs are also committed, as this 'inspir[es] staff and pupils' within schools (Ofsted, 2005: 14). In primary schools, 'a clear link' has been identified between the success of SSPs and 'high-quality school management,' particularly the ongoing support of the head teacher (Ofsted, 2004: 7). Aside from the individual outlooks and expertise towards PESS, another attribute of successful partnership working is the interpersonal relations between the school and SSP staff. Regular contact (formal and informal) between staff is seen to be 'useful at all levels,' and the importance of strong relations is noted by most SSCos as important for effective working (LP, 2005: 5). In light of this, the findings of one LP evaluation (2006: 5) are encouraging; it was found that 'the overwhelming majority of Partnerships [have] regular, frequent and very supportive interaction between PDMs, Coordinators and Link Teachers.'

This section has demonstrated that the SSP initiative has been found to have 'made a positive difference to PE and sport' (Ofsted, 2005: 1). In the majority of schools the profile of PE has been raised and there is greater awareness of the subject's value (Ofsted, 2003: 3). LP and Ofsted surveys found that the majority of teachers believe that both standards of teaching (LP, 2005), and pupil's engagement in PE more broadly have improved. Combined with the PESSCL/PESSYP findings explored above, it can be argued that the SSP programme is largely a success. Whilst there are some limitations and areas for improvement, the overall impact on PESS in schools (particularly primaries) has been positive.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an historical framework that considers the development of PESS over the course of the twentieth century. The various 'shifts' that the subject has experienced in relation to its focus and purpose have been discussed. Although it would have been desirable to lend greater attention to some periods - particularly pre-1997 – space would not allow for greater elaboration. On reflection, it can be argued that the

subject is heavily influenced by the wider social order. In the first half of the century physical education was dominated by the Ling system. As people started drawing parallels between the militaristic style of the Ling system and the fascist youth movements across parts of Europe, the Ling system was gradually phased out. The gymnastics based approach that was favoured in the 1930s remained the dominant mode of physically educating children. Indeed, between 1945 and 1960 gymnastics was practically synonymous with PE (Kirk, 1992: 54). After the publication of the *Wolfenden Report* (CCPR, 1960), sport gradually replaced gymnastics as the primary method of teaching PE. The transition was such that by the 1990s *sport* had become synonymous with the subject.

The discussion went on to identify the main aims of Labour's investment in PESS. As such a wealth of policy relating to PESS exists, any analysis must be read with caution. Objectivity was paramount to the review and analysis, however, each individual would produce different interpretations. The selection of material was based on the perceived importance of the policy documents, and the amount of space within these documents given to the respective issues. The importance of the themes was also clarified in several interviews with senior members of the Youth Sport Trust and local government officials.

Physical education has a long, turbulent, and marginal history as a subject in English schools. The rationale behind PE, and the focus of the content of lessons, has changed significantly over the last century. This is seen to tie in with wider societal demands. In its current form, with an emphasis on the associated health benefits and an increasing reliance upon sport as a means of delivery, PE has firmly established itself in line with the wider political agenda. Due to the contemporary focus of the study, the content and rationale behind contemporary PESS demands further attention. After analysing the key policy documents of Labour, and determining the objectives that remained central to their PESS plans, the latter part of the chapter suggested that three main aims were at the centre of Labour's investment. These were to;

Increase time 5-16 year olds spend in PESS (reduce sedentary behaviour and obesity);
Identification and development of GT children (and increase international sporting success), and;
Develop a world class PESS infrastructure by 2012.

To achieve these goals the following prerequisites had first to be satisfied;

Improvements in facilities and human and material resources, and;

Maximizing partnership working between schools and other agencies.

In the following chapter the central goals of contemporary PESS, and the rationale underpinning these, will be explored in some depth.

Chapter 2

The rationale behind Labour's investment in physical education and school sport

The latter part of Chapter One highlighted the main aims of Labour's investment in PESS. This chapter will consider the rationale behind these goals, with specific attention being given to; increasing the amount of time for which children are physically active, gifted and talented identification and provision, and partnership working. In the latter part, attention will focus on the importance of place (this is necessary due to the overwhelming focus on partnership working). Conspicuous by their absence are discussions of the remaining goals; to develop a world-class PESS infrastructure, and to improve human and material resources. The absence of the former is because a 'world-class PE infrastructure' is eminently difficult to assess and, indeed, even if it can be measured it is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to do so. Also, according to official PESS rhetoric, the outcomes of a world-class system will be an improved PESS experiences for all children, with specific reference being given to improvements in reducing sedentary behaviour (and obesity) and GT identification and development – both of which *are* to be explored. In relation to improvements in human and material resources, again, it is beyond the scope of an in-depth study to assess such infrastructural targets. Also, much investment in human and material resources will not be observed by most teaching staff, and an investment locally may not necessarily impact upon the school.

Although elements of both of these issues will be considered in the chapter, a comprehensive discussion of these goals will not add significantly to the overall depth or quality of the evaluation. The aim of the following is not to provide a guide of best practice, nor even to identify where policies were well- or mis-informed. Rather, some important themes will be considered to provide the necessary background information for an effective evaluation of the impact SSPs have had in schools.

Part one: Increasing physical activity levels to remedy health problems

Sport is frequently associated with a range of potential health benefits. Coalter (2007: 19-20) summarizes the potential benefits as the following;

- improved physical health;

- improved mental health and psychological well-being, leading to the reduction of anxiety and stress;

- personality development via improved self-concept, physical and global self-esteem/confidence, self-confidence and increased locus of control;

- socio-psychological benefits such as empathy, integrity, tolerance, cooperation, trustworthiness and the development of social skills;

- broader sociological impacts such as increased community identity, social coherence and integration (collectively referred to as social capital).

As the physical and health benefits associated with sport are widely accepted, and most frequently cited in government policy, this section will consider the first of Coalter's observations. More specifically, the primary focus will be on one particular aspect of health; issues related to overweight and obesity. On a regular basis the British population is warned of dangerous increases in average body weight; individuals are often reminded that they are overweight, too fat, obese, and must lose weight (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 1). Due to the prevalence of such claims and the esoteric evidence endorsing the underlying arguments, rarely are the assertions disputed in policy, by the media, or the wider population. This discussion will examine the rationale behind such claims and consider the potential role PESS can play.

Overweight and Obesity: the problem and its remedies

It was around the year 2000[20] that western societies became regularly subjected to warnings over rising levels of body weight and obesity (Evans *et al*., 2008: 1). According to the WHO (2008) a third of the global population are now defined as overweight, and almost one in ten people are considered to be obese. This is all the more striking given that 1.2 billion people (approximately 20-25 percent of the global population) live in extreme poverty (WHO, 2011). In a United Nations report, Agarwal (2011: 1) argues that 'Of the several crises looming before us globally, perhaps the most significant, of the longest duration, and the most endemic, is the crises [*sic*] of food security and chronic world hunger.' When considering the rising significance of issues related to overweight and obesity, therefore, it should be stressed that such discussions largely refer to the Global North and/or developed nations.

In the UK just under a quarter of adults were defined as clinically obese in 2006 (Craig and Mindell, 2008: 4). Estimates suggested that 75 percent of the British population would be overweight by 2010 (Green, 2008: 98). Recent data indicates that the percentage of individuals in 2009 who were actually overweight was around 61 percent for adults (16+) and 28 percent for children (2-10). Additionally, 23 percent of adults and 14.4 percent of children were reported as being obese (DoH, 2011d).[21] Current Department of Health forecasts suggest that the severity of the situation is set to worsen; by 2050, '9 in 10 adults will be overweight or obese' (DOH, 2009a). Regardless of the discrepancies in the reported/forecast levels of overweight and obesity, and excluding methodological deficiencies in the respective analyses, the projections of these influential sources suggest that the issue is one of serious concern, which will likely increase in severity.

Increasing levels of physical activity an individual engages in, and reduced or improved consumption of food, are the primary means through which people are encouraged to guard themselves against becoming overweight (and obese). Common views towards exercise and physical activity take them to be inherently 'good' activities; if done regularly, exercise

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[20] Gard (2011: 1) suggests that the obesity epidemic was born around the year 2000.
[21] There is no available NHS data for the age group between 10-16, whether this be classed as childhood or adulthood.

(along with healthy eating) leads to a healthy lifestyle which will reduce the likelihood of becoming overweight or obese. It is also widely believed that lack of activity (sedentary lifestyles) will result in excess weight that may well lead to obesity. This, in turn, can lead to poor health and undesirable lifestyles. Therefore, the more physical activity one does, the lower the risk of becoming overweight and obese. Rarely outside of academia is this 'exercise=fitness=health' triplex contested (Gard and Wright, 2001: 536). For example, the risks of being underweight are infrequently discussed, and seldom are the risks associated to weight loss heard from politicians or in the media (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 52).

There is indeed a large body of evidence linking physical inactivity to many avoidable health risks (Hardman and Stensel, 2003). Specifically, physically inactive individuals face greater risks of contracting coronary heart disease (Blair and Brodney, 1999: S658 and Sesso *et al.*, 2000: 979), cardiovascular disease (CVD) (Twisk *et al.*, 2000: 1455), and diabetes (Blair and Brodney, 1999: S658-S659). Correlations, though not entirely conclusive, have also been drawn between inactivity and high blood pressure (Hardman and Stensel, 2003: 85) and an increased risk of becoming hypertensive or having a stroke (Hardman and Stensel, 2003: 74). Ultimately, inactive lifestyles can result in greater exposure to increased morbidity and mortality (Blair and Brodney, 1999: S659). Aside from the health enhancing capacities, physical activity has also been found to have therapeutic potential in the treatment of various conditions, with some evidence linking active lifestyles to 'reducing the risk, delaying or slowing down the progress of dementia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases' (Almond, 2010: 226-227).

Rissanen and Fogelholm (1999: S635, S640) found links between various cancers (endometrial and postmenopausal breast cancer) and obesity in women. Some evidence also links obesity to colon cancer (Rissanen and Fogelholm, p. S640), and prostate cancer (p. S461). Sinaiko *et al.* (1999) and Calle *et al.* (1999: 1101) demonstrate links between increased body weight and risk of cardiovascular disease, and Boreham and Riddoch (2003: 18) highlight the negative effects of obesity upon 'dyslipidaemia, poor cardio-respatory fitness, and atherosclerosis'. Due to these correlations, combined with evidence demonstrating increased mortality rates, overweight and obesity can increase rates of

premature mortality (Calle *et al.*, 1999: 1103 and Flegal *et al.*, 2005: 1866). For Hardman and Stensel;

> Obesity increases the risk of all-cause mortality by approximately 50%. It has a greater impact, however, on the risk of developing associated diseases [discussed above]. In the UK, it is estimated that obesity is responsible for 18 million sick days and 30,000 deaths per year. These deaths shorten life by 9 years on average and result in 40,000 lost years of working life

(2003: 119-120).

Concerning young people specifically (again, from developed nations), in general they are 'relatively free of disease and have extremely low mortality rates' (Riddoch, 1998: 17). Therefore, widespread attempts to improve child health in the *present* (i.e., not preventative strategies) are somewhat misguided. A more valid argument, and one frequently pursued by national governments, is that interventions in childhood may impact upon health in later life. Rowland (2007: 266) argues that childhood interventions are 'likely to retard the development of lifelong pathological processes […] and lessen the risk of their clinical expression in the adult years.' Amongst those individuals who *are* classed as obese in childhood, evidence demonstrates that a) there is greater likelihood of them becoming obese in adulthood, and b) obesity that was established during childhood may be more harmful than the development of obesity in adulthood (Vanhala *et al.*, 1998). Obesity in childhood also 'appears' to track into adulthood (Sinaiko *et al.*, 1999: 1471). Therefore, in the interest of reducing the prevalence of overweight and obese adults *in the future*, it is sensible to target interventions at children. With this said, it is unclear for what age group such interventions are most effective.

In light of the evidence demonstrating links between physical inactivity and overweight/ obesity, and studies suggesting a tracking of obesity from childhood into adulthood, there is a strong rationale for physical activity interventions at an early age. This has resulted in numerous attempts to use PE to promote lifelong physical activity (Wallhead and Buckworth, 2004: 292-296). The link between obesity and physical activity is, at the risk of over-simplification, well established and scientifically proven. However, linking back to the comments from the WHO of DoH that opened this section, whether a problem of 'global epidemic' proportions exists is more dubious (Gard and Wright, 2005).

Problems associated with measuring obesity

Body Mass Index (BMI) tests are the most widely used measure for obesity and overweight. BMI is calculated as 'weight in kilograms divided by height in metres squared (kg m^{-2})' (Hardman and Stensel, 2003: 115). The appeal of the test - and its widespread popularity amongst health care professionals and policy makers - lies in its simplicity and its language of scientific positivism which 'invoke an aura of truth, trustworthiness and transparency' (Halse, 2009: 47). However, BMI measures fail to account for age, gender or ethnicity, and they do not consider fitness, nor how much fat an individual is carrying. Additionally, the test 'is extremely problematic when used on children' (Evans, 2003: 89). So, although BMI is widely used, it is hugely inaccurate (Flegal, 1999: S511).

Oliver (2006: 21-28) provides a useful account of the limitations associated with BMI tests. Firstly, and the most frequently noted limitation, is that BMI is *not* a measure of body fat; it only measures body weight in relation to height. This results in many individuals – those of a muscular physique, for example – being labelled 'overweight,' when they actually have little excess body fat. In fact, individuals can weigh significantly above average for their height, but have little or no body fat. BMI also fails to account for fitness levels, heart rate, or the distribution of fat within the body. Another important factor is that BMI is a poor indicator of mortality; the association between BMI and mortality is a U shape – those at the high and low ends of the BMI spectrum have higher mortality rates than those in the middle. 'But,' argues Oliver (2006: 22) 'these issues pale in comparison to the biggest problem with BMI; we have no clear criteria of what points on the BMI scale should be classified as 'overweight' or 'obese.'' This means that the measures of 'overweight' and 'obese' are socially constructed and subject to amendment. In 1998, for example, the National Institute of Health in the United States reduced the BMI threshold for overweight and obesity by two points (from 27 to 25, and 32 to 30, respectively), thus meaning that 'overnight, more than 37 million Americans suddenly became 'overweight,' even though they had not gained an ounce' (Oliver, 2006: 22). Currently, for adults in the UK a BMI below 18.5 equates to 'underweight,' 18.5-24.9 is considered 'healthy,' a BMI of 25 or more is 'above the ideal range' (NHS, 2011), 30-39.9 is 'obese,' and 40+ is 'very obese' (NHS, 2011a). Thus, although

it is easy to see the appeal of the simple measure to define overweight and obesity, the classification system is, nonetheless, flawed in numerous respects.

Much empirical research into obesity is complex, highly esoteric and, importantly, not based on population-wide samples (Oliver, 2006: 23). In relation to the findings of obesity research, Campos (2004: 13) argues that in most 'large-scale epidemiological studies little or no correlation between weight and health can be found for a large majority of the population.' He goes on to claim that any correlations that do exist, tend to endorse an alternative thesis; 'that it is more dangerous to be just a few pounds "underweight" than dozens of pounds "overweight" (Campos, 2004: 13). At a more fundamental level, the idea that weight loss equals better health (and potentially longer life) is widely taken to be a truth, however, there is a dearth of research supporting such claims (Wicklegren, 1998). The scant evidence that does exist is drawn from 'observational epidemiologic studies, many of which have serious methodological flaws' (Kassirer and Angell, 1998). If it 'is more dangerous to be just a few pounds 'underweight' than dozens of pounds 'overweight,' as Campos (2004: 13) suggests, then not only is it misleading for 'experts' and policy makers to uncritically proclaim that weight loss is an intrinsic good, but it is also unethical. Society is rarely told of the risks of being underweight, and seldom are the risks associated to weight loss discussed in media and political debates (Evans *et al*., 2008: 52).[22]

When findings are disseminated through governmental and media outlets, they should be read with 'extreme caution […] as in almost every instance they are either erroneous, misleading, confused or wildly exaggerated when appraised against available primary research evidence' (Evans *et al*., 2008: 126). The comments made by Evans *et al*. are cause for concern. The contention is that much empirical research finds little in the way of conclusive results, and when correlations *are* identified they tend to support the claim of Campos; that being *under*weight is a greater health risk than being *over*weight. When results emerge that seem to contradict the wider political goals, they risk being grossly misrepresented in the process of dissemination. Ultimately, scientific knowledge is often

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[22] Interestingly, neither the WHO nor the DoH websites contain any information about anorexia nervosa (a dangerous illness linked to obsessive weight loss). The following section will explore some of the authoritative findings relating to physical activity and health. The literature concerning obesity is vast, so in order to avoid a lengthy exploration of epidemiological and sports science debates the discussion is purposefully selective.

under-developed and often misleadingly reported (Gard and Wright, 2005: 3). The *actual* extent that fatness, overweight, and obesity impacts upon health and mortality is 'indeterminable' (Monaghan, 2005: 304).

The role of physical education in the 'obesity epidemic'

The relationship between weight and health, morbidity and mortality is complex and differs widely between individuals, circumstance, society, and temporally (Monaghan, 2005: 308-309). However, health officials and politicians regularly adopt narrow definitions of health. These over-simplified conceptions often reduce health to body size and weight (Evans *et al*., 2008: 33). This is highly problematic as such reductionism produces a restricted discourse of health promotion, which, combined with the wider consumer culture, influences society's attitudes and understanding of health and bodies (Nettleton, 1995: 2). 'Health' is framed in a medicalised discourse that lends the proclamations of medical 'experts' a significant degree of authority. Sociologists argue that the 'natural' categories discussed in this medical discourse – such as health, bodies, disease, cure – are, in fact, 'the products of social activities and do not simply reflect invariant biological realities' (Nettleton, 1995: 15). This is not to deny the reality of pain and injury, for example, as indeed these are embodied experiences. Rather, the argument is that conceptions of, and views towards, health 'change with the times' (Parish, 1995: 13). As such, the concept of 'health' cannot be treated as a biological fact, and any discussion of health must take into account the view of the general population (Nettleton, 1995: 36-37).

In many developed nations, due to a wide range of factors – technological and medical advancements, improvements in living standards, reductions in absolute poverty, to name but a few - the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a widespread shift from 'predominantly acute, life-threatening infectious diseases to chronic non-life threatening conditions' (Nettleton, 1995: 11). The concern with 'disease prevention' has therefore gradually been replaced with a focus on 'health promotion' – a little-known term until the late 1970s (Parish, 1995: 13). Central to this transition is the increasing importance given to lifestyle, and lifestyle *choices*. If policy makers are able to encourage individuals to adopt

'healthy' lifestyles, thereby promoting 'good' health, then the *risk* of an individual contracting a disease is reduced. Risk is at the heart of the literature and thinking towards lifestyles and health. By making certain lifestyle choices, individuals can reduce their risk of contracting disease and illness. For example, restricting caloric and fatty food intake, alcohol consumption, tobacco and illegal drug usage, and increasing one's engagement in leisure and sporting activities and other aspects of body maintenance, are all associated with reducing the risk of the associated health problems (Nettleton, 1995: 37). Heightened sensitivity to the risks associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices leads individuals to invest time and money into making informed, healthy, lifestyle choices.

A key signifier of a healthy lifestyle is regularly reduced to body shape and size, however good health is more complex than this, and has mental and social dimensions that must also be taken into account (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 135). In Evans *et al.*'s research into obesity discourses in schools, the authors found that contemporary views towards health risks and the pursuit of healthy lifestyles, frequently equated to 'the pursuit of slender ideals' permeated school curricula and pedagogy (2008: 144). School children had 'become experts at managing risks' - frequently viewed by pupils as 'getting fat' – and had become adept at 'following the performative culture [promoted in school] to be measurably thin via managing food intake, taking exercise and achieving weight loss to the extreme' (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 144). The culture endorsed within schools often associates good health with an idealised body image and shape. The educational merit of such practices is dubious. The young respondents that Evans *et al.* (2008: 148) spoke with demonstrated 'feelings of powerlessness [and felt] alienated from their developing bodies.' The techniques adopted by the children to reduce the risk of poor health – becoming overweight or obese – saw some 'reaching towards starvation diets and obsessive exercise.'

Schools in England have been subjected to policy after policy targeted at halting rising weight levels and increasing rates of sedentary activity (Harwood, 2009: 24; Rich and Evans, 2009: 2). PE has been the curriculum subject most affected by the increased interest in bodies and weight management. Gradually the subject has assumed a public health role, aimed at preparing younger generations for a lifetime of physical activity. This can be seen in the wealth of policy aimed at tackling obesity over the last ten years or so, which has

resulted in schools being 'positioned as key institutions in the fight against obesity' (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 128). Evans *et al.* suggest that the adoption of an 'unreflective rhetoric of 'obesity discourse'' is likely to foster an environment in which teaching and learning is dominated not by 'knowledge and understanding,' but by 'body shape, size and weight' (2008: 130).

Much of the emphasis now put on improving 'health' through schooling is made explicit in policy documents, however, the actual focus on health may be significantly greater in a school's informal curriculum. A school's objectives are explicit in the formal curriculum and school charter. There are, though, additional goals that evade formalisation (these can be unacknowledged, practical considerations, or disguised, for example). 'The formal curriculum is usually available as a written document, while the hidden [...] curriculum must be identified through observation and interpretation' (Gore, 1990: 103). This hidden curriculum plays a significant part in the overall education children receive in schools, and it has long been argued that research into schooling cannot 'ignore the importance and significance of the hidden curriculum as a major dimension of the schooling process' (Giroux and Purpel, 1983: ix). Indeed, Giroux and Penna (1983: 100) argue that any belief equating education in schools purely to the official curriculum 'is a naïve one.' For these authors, the difference between the formal and informal curriculum is that the former is;

> the explicit cognitive and affective goals of formal instruction, and the "hidden curriculum" [consists of] the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life.

> (Giroux and Penna, 1983: 102).

The formal and hidden curricula filter down to individual subjects. PE, for example, has both a formal and hidden curriculum. On a national level, two central goals are to reduce the prevalence of obesity and identify and develop GT children (clearly demonstrated in Chapter One). However, the NCPE (DfEE, 1999b) is not explicit regarding these issues. On several occasions reference is made to 'positive attitudes towards active and healthy lifestyles' (p15) but no space is given to the 'exercise=fitness=health' triplex that dominates much policy. Additionally, no attention was paid to GT or elite sports development. So here is the formal curriculum, but the subsequent policy recommendations focus heavily on issues that are not

included in the curriculum. Therefore, it is likely that the hidden curriculum differs from the official, National Curriculum, as it will combine elements of the NCPE with the guidelines of subsequent publications *and* the subjective beliefs and opinions of teaching staff.

Summary

The above section demonstrates how a discourse has been built up around obesity. The links between overweight/obesity and many health problems are well established, with scientific proof validating the claims. Over the last 20 years or so a discourse has been built up around the adoption of healthy lifestyles to combat the health issues related to being overweight. Government has increasingly looked to promote healthy lifestyles in younger people, as it is believed that sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles begin when young. As a result of this, schools have been called upon – through a wealth of policy legislation – to play a pivotal role in the government's fight against obesity. This core aim of government policy appears to be philosophically at odds with another of the central goals. Whilst the policies attempting to improve health are largely focused at those children who are relatively inactive, the second aim appears to be focused at the opposite end of the activity spectrum; those who are likely to be most active; gifted and talented children.

Part two: The identification and development of Gifted and Talented children

Until the mid-1990s sport policy was largely directed at mass participation, or 'Sport for All' (Green, 2004: 365). Since the publication of *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage, 1995) there has been a sustained two-fold focus on a) promoting physically active lifestyles, and b) elite sport development. This agenda - on the one hand increasing the numbers of people engaged in sport and on the other promoting elite performance - is a common theme throughout western nations, and has largely replaced the 'Sport for All' agenda (Hoye *et al.*, 2010: 3). The previous section, with its focus on the relationship between health and physical activity, explored the first of these themes. In this section elite development will be considered in the school setting.

Green (2006: 226) suggests that a 'strong degree of policy continuity' exists between the Conservative paper *Sport: Raising the Game (*DNH, 1995) and Labour's *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000). Although both documents emphasise school sport and elite development, Labour sought to outshine the Conservatives in its commitment to competition and elite achievement (Houlihan, 2000: 175). Smith and Leech (2010: 329) concur, arguing that the 'alleged role' PESS was thought to play in fulfilling the youth sport objectives was strengthened under Labour. Aided by sympathetic politicians (including, importantly, John Major and Tony Blair) and increasing public support, between 1995 and 2000 the voice and influence of the 'elite sport policy community' had been growing (Oakley and Green, 2001: 89). Any doubts as to the role schools would play in elite development were put to rest with the introduction of Specialist Sports Colleges and a GT strand to PESSCL; both inextricably placing 'sport,' as opposed to physical activity, at the heart of the plans. There is a link between the increased focus on elite development and the level of interest in PESS in schools. The association is premised on the notion that schools can identify talent and provide 'a foundation and pathway for the development of sporting excellence' (Bergsgard *et al.*, 2007: 212).

In sport development circles this approach is similar to the pyramid model that was predominant in sports development for much of the twentieth century (Kirk and Gorely, 2000: 121). The pyramid model (see figure 2.1) was premised on Pierre de Coubertin's claim that every one thousand athletes produced one hundred exceptional talents, and from these one hundred only a single world class athlete would emerge (van Bottenburg and De Bosscher, 2011: 603). The theory is that a broad range of foundation skills are taught to all children in PE (the base). As the complexity of activities increases, so the number of children participating decreases. There are less people participating at the higher levels of performance. Although the model is intuitively appealing, it is flawed in several respects. Firstly, because there is mass participation does not necessarily mean there will be higher standards of achievement. Second, if teaching standards at the base are poor, all that may be produced are cohorts of poor performers. Thirdly;

> Built into the pyramid's design is the systematic exclusion of young people, no matter how good they are. Fewer and fewer individuals can participate at each level, and this begs the question: where does a young person go if they reach the top of one level; but are prevented from progressing to the next?

(Kirk and Gorely, 2000: 123).

Why is it, though, that government are interested in promoting GT development in PESS? The interest is closely linked to elite sports development. There are many reasons why governments place emphasis on elite development. Houlihan and Green (2008: 3) suggest that most governments recognise 'the value of sport as a high-visibility, low-cost and extremely malleable resource which can […] give the impression to the public/electorate of achieving a wide variety of domestic and international goals.' For Oakley and Green (2001: 89) there are three main factors that prompt national involvement in this 'global sporting arms race.' Firstly, developing nations use sporting success to establish a global identity. Second, in the global sports arena it is increasingly difficult for established nations, such as the UK, to maintain the levels of success that its economic and cultural status once allowed. Thirdly, the symbolic value of international sporting success is politically rewarding due to its widespread domestic popularity. In the UK specifically, improving a nation's international status is, for McDonald (2000: 84) at least, 'the main Government aspiration.' (Whilst accepting that international status may figure in the government's rationale, it is futile to

guess at the relative importance of the various goals.) Houlihan and Green (2008: 2-3) note that aside from the outward looking objective of 'international prestige and diplomatic recognition,' government subscribes to the 'feel good factor' (described in Chapter One) and temporary economic rewards domestically. On top of the potential political gains is the oft-cited view that international sporting success has a demonstrator effect that leads more people to take up sporting pursuits (Kirk and Gorely, 2000: 123). However, this 'deeply entrenched' sport 'storyline' is, as Houlihan *et al.* (2009: 5) suggest, 'not necessarily false, but [its] persistence and impact is not related to the quality or quantity [of] available [evidence].'

Figure 2.1. The early sport development pyramid model
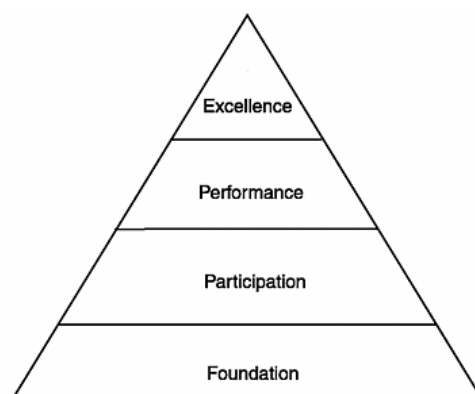
(Houlihan and White, 2002: 41).

There is little need for elaboration on the various reasons here, as they have been covered in some depth by the contributors mentioned above. Two things plague all reasons for government investment in elite development; firstly, proving relationships exist between international sporting success and *any* of the desired goals is difficult and open to criticism, and secondly, understanding how to develop large numbers of internationally competitive sportspersons to compete on the world stage is a complicated task with no proven method of ensuring success existing (De Bosscher *et al.*, 2006: 186). The reasons for national (governmental) investment in elite sport development have now been considered in sufficient depth. The remainder of this section will consider the ways in which schools are

used to help fulfil these wider political aspirations of international sporting success. Initially the concept of GT in schools will be introduced. It will then be argued that GT initiatives in PESS are tied up in the wider elite sport development agenda.

Who are the gifted and talented?

The Department for Children, Schools and Families defines gifted and talented learners 'as those who have one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities)' (DCSF, cited in Tunniclife, 2010: 18). A distinction that appears to have escaped PESS policy and much academic literature concerns the separation of 'gifted and talented' into the component terms. 'Gifted' is the DCSF's term for children 'who have the ability to excel academically in one or more subjects such as English, drama, technology,' whereas 'talented' describes 'learners who have the ability to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, artistic performance, or in an applied skill' (DfES, 2010). Theoretically therefore, children who demonstrate the potential to exceed the capabilities of their peers in PESS, at the primary school level, are 'talented.' To be gifted *and* talented requires excellence in 'academic' and 'practical' subjects.

GT is a phrase that is open to interpretation. [23] Indeed, even within the UK different names are used for this group of children; England and Northern Ireland use 'gifted and talented,' Scotland 'more able,' and in Wales the labels 'talented' and 'more able' are used (Bailey *et al.*, 2008: 3). In a systematic review of interventions aimed at this group of children, Bailey and colleagues (2008: 12) found 'not one single agreed definition as to what constituted being identified as 'gifted and talented.'' Whilst this allows for flexibility when identifying children it also means that being identified as GT is significantly affected by a child's peers, teachers, and school culture. Hany (1993: 196-197) found the decisions of teachers to be 'central to the procedure for selecting gifted pupils.' Not only do teachers' ideas of what constitutes GT vary, but also their philosophical outlooks as to the purpose and importance

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[23] In his presidential address to the National Association of Gifted Children, Del Siegle raises serious concerns over the use of the word 'gifted' (Siegle, 2008: 111). Due to the ambiguity currently attached to the label, Siegle suggests it is difficult to attract political support for interventions because it is hard to put precise estimates on the number of children who are gifted, and also when asked 'What children are gifted?' the response is too often, 'We do not know' (Siegle, 2008: 111). After identifying several problems with the definition of 'gifted' children, Siegle advises that the definition be periodically refined and updated.

of GT provision differ widely (Goodhew, 2009: 3). This has serious ramifications; for example, a child may demonstrate great potential in PESS but if s/he is a slower developer than the rest of the cohort, the class teacher lacks expertise in the child's forte (see Eyre, 1997: 130-131), or if there is a poor teacher-pupil relationship, the child is less likely to be identified as GT than would be the case in other circumstances.

When studying the broad policy literature surrounding GT identification and development in schools, there is a lack of explicit differentiation between GT in primary schools, and GT in secondary schools. An important DCSF (2009a: 4) publication encourages *all* schools 'to develop effective provision for gifted and talented pupils within the context of personalisation for all.' Although the document includes case studies from primary and secondary schools, there is minimal distinction between the two when guidance or standards are provided; the guidelines are largely generic and thus applicable to all Key Stages. Another document for GT identification, which is more specific, suggests that learners aged 4-19 'who are gifted and talented relative to their peers in their own year group and school' should be identified as GT (DCSF, 2008a: 1). However, for those of exceptional ability, who are amongst the top 5 percent of pupils nationally, they should only be identified as GT between the ages of 11-19 (DCSF, 2008a: 1). Thus, at primary school the distinction of GT is in comparison to one's immediate peers, whereas in secondary school there is an additional focus on the national scale.

In relation to PESS, the YST manages the GT stream of the government's PESSYP strategy. To assist schools with GT identification and provision in PESS, the YST has developed the Junior Athlete Education Framework (JAE). The Framework is designed 'to help schools build effective support programmes for young talented performers' (YST, 2011a). The YST provides a staggered approach to GT development; when children are young they should 'sample many different sports at Key Stages 1 and 2' in PE (YST, 2011b). As children get older they should begin to specialise in a chosen activity, ideally with specialist provision outside of school – 'therefore the physical and thinking abilities are developed primarily by their performance club coach, and less by the school' (YST, 2011b). The PESSYP survey highlights the YST and government's views towards the identification of GT children in PESS; the survey only requests that primary schools provide figures for the year 5 and 6 pupils who have been

identified as GT (in contrast, all year groups in secondary schools are accounted for). Common to each of the developmental stages is the focus on five key abilities; physical, thinking, social, personal, and creative.

> The JAE framework is geared to develop all 5 abilities of young performers as they grow. Providing a sliding interface between High Quality PE and High Quality coaching in performance based clubs. The JAE framework initially focuses more on physical and thinking abilities at the lower key stages (multi-skill and multi-sport), while targeting social, personal and creative abilities as the young performers develops

(YST, 2011b).

Labour radically reformed GT provision in English schools. After a 'long period of relative neglect' a number of schemes were launched to cater for pupils of all ages, and across the curriculum (Morley and Bailey, 2004: 41). [24] Through a sustained focus Labour have ensured GT provision is a component part of each school's curriculum. Why then, given the level of political support, has the government been so concerned with GT initiatives? It is to this question that attention now turns. Following a brief consideration of why GT provision has become a politically salient issue the concern will turn to GT provision specifically in PESS.

Providing for gifted and talented children

The term 'special educational needs' applies not only to those who struggle with compulsory education, but also to the most able students. That a child is gifted or talented does not necessarily mean they will excel, nor even be interested in the area in which they demonstrate (potential) excellence. Failure to meet the needs of the most able students will have a detrimental impact, leading to 'disenchantment and under-achievement' (Eyre, 1997: 12). To maintain focus and fulfil their potential GT children must be provided with challenging tasks that motivate and satisfy their ability. The possible benefits stemming from the development of GT children extend beyond the micro level to society writ large. Bailey *et al*. (2004: 133) argue that 'gifts and talents are among the most precious and valued resources that societies have at their disposal.' Systemic failure to tap into these resources will lead to 'losses for the children themselves, for science, and for society at large' (Koshy *et*

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[24] For example, Excellence in Cities, Excellence Clusters, Residential Summer Schools and World Class Tests.

al., 2006: 3). There is little doubt that school should provide relevant provision for the children identified as GT, however, exactly what constitutes effective GT provision is less than clear.

Bailey *et al*. (2008: 13) highlight the weaknesses of existing research into GT education and suggest that 'the quality of research design and reporting [must] be improved.' Existing scholarship suggests there are certain (broad) factors that can improve the experience GT children receive. The main theme to emerge from the literature is the facilitation of an appropriate working environment that allows children to reach their full potential. In keeping with the wider literature, the DCSF identify the 'classroom experience' as the most important aspect of provision. To improve the daily experience of GT children schools should add breadth, increase depth, accelerate the pace of learning, promote independent thought and increase expectation (DCSF, 2009: 1). If children are under-challenged they are likely to be bored and make poor progress (Koshy *et al*., 2006: 3-4). Thus, the DCSF's five education enhancing pointers are aimed at ensuring children are challenged and make appropriate progress.

Evidence indicates that selective provision for groups of GT children is no more effective than the standard classroom (Bailey *et al*., 2008: 13). This is not to suggest that out of school clubs have no place; on the contrary, additional activities are crucial for providing opportunities to better satisfy children's needs (Tunnicliffe, 2010: 31). Further, a key element to effective development lies largely beyond the school and child's influence. Freeman (2000) notes that *all* longitudinal studies on talent development point to the importance of family attitudes and support. All children are 'born with potential,' Freeman (2000) argues, but whatever it is that turns 'potential' into the 'actual' 'starts in the family.' Koshy *et* al. (2006: 19) and Tunnicliffe (2010: 103) concur with these sentiments; for good or bad, consciously or not, parents play a pivotal role in the identification and development of gifts and talents.

The intention of this brief discussion was not to provide a pedagogical analysis of GT identification and development, but to identify some important factors involved in the process. The importance of GT development has been highlighted, and some important

themes in the provision of an appropriate education have also been explored. Attention will now be given to issues related to GT children in PESS.

Gifted and talented in PESS

Earlier it was argued that the promotion of elite development in sport and athletics has come to be a core aim of much sport policy. The policy discourse surrounding PE since 1995 has been subject to a similar process, with a relentless shift towards sport (hence the adoption of the acronym PESS). The main vehicles for the delivery of PESS since 2002 have been the PESSCL strategy and its successor, PESSYP. In policy at least, this has led to a gradual replacement of 'physical education' with 'physical education *and* school sport.' This 'sportization' process (Green, 2008: 227) has taken place within the 'broader realignment of both PE and school sport with the imperatives of elite sporting success' (Hoye *et al*., 2010: 108). Further evidence of this process can be found in the 2005 introduction of the National Competition Framework (developed by the YST) and the resulting requirement that each SSP appoint a competition manager. Competition managers work closely with sports NGBs to 'raise the quality and quantity of competitive opportunities for all young people' (YST, 2011).[25]

In an illuminating article, Mick Green (2007) argues that sports NGBs have come under increasing pressure from their primary funders, the government, to improve international sporting success. Regardless of NGBs' guiding principles, they increasingly depend upon government funding, which dictates the direction of their organisation policies;

> Thus, even for those actors (and sports) that have embraced the government's drive for Olympic glory, the conditions within which NGBs operate are characterized by fragility and insecurity, typified by a resource-dependent relationship: a relationship that will only endure if the sport delivers on the Olympic [or international] stage
>
> (Green, 2007: 939).

Through interviews with senior officials at various sports NGBs Green provides a damming critique of the current system of sports development. The present system values, above all

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[25] By 2008, 83 percent of Partnerships had a Competition Manager in place (Loughborough Partnership, 2008a: 20).

else, not just international success, but success in only the most prestigious of international events (for example, the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup). This has led to the prioritisation of elite-level development and a supporting policy discourse (Green, 2007: 944) that filters down to schools.

In an earlier passage attention was given to the ambiguity in defining what exactly constitutes 'gifts' and 'talents' is unclear. Conceptions of GT children vary greatly between schools and over time. As with all social policy issues, at different points in time particular issues occupy positions of greater saliency than others (this will be discussed in greater depth in the Chapter Three). Currently, widespread conceptions of GT children in PESS are closely aligned to elite sports performance and its 'physical, observable characteristics' (Penney, 2000: 139). Bailey *et al.* (2004: 144) explored perceptions of talent in PE and found 'little mention of conceptions of 'potential', 'knowledge', 'understanding' and what might be broadly termed 'educational' outcomes.' The dominant focus was on 'performance in sport.' This focus on performance can be detected in the aims of the GT strand of PESSYP. These are;

> To improve the identification of, and the support and provision for gifted and talented pupils in Physical Education and Sport. There are three key areas of this work:
>
> A. High quality – raising the quality of PE for gifted and talented young people
> B. Support – ensuring appropriate personal development support for young talented performers in sport
> C. Raising the quality of coaching and competition for talented performers in sport.
>
> (YST, 2010c).

Points B and C are clearly concerned with the development of sportspersons. The use of language – 'sport,' 'performers,' 'coaching' and 'competition' – enforces a sport-based view of gifts and talents and what the objectives of GT work are. In Penney's (2000: 139-141) analysis of the 1999 NCPE, she also found that 'the key reference points for recognition and learning are visions of elite sport performance' (a view shared by Houlihan (2000: 173)). Penney contends that;

> The specific aim of developing skills, knowledge and understanding associated with improved performance in particular sports, and of developing what is recognised and celebrated as 'sporting

excellence', is openly privileged in these [government endorsed] visions and definitions of progression and excellence in learning in physical education

(2000: 141).

So whilst some suggest that in certain disciplines teachers 'have a one-sidedly academic concept of giftedness' (Hany, 1993: 197), it is argued here that in PE there is a largely sports-based conception of what talents are. Due to the performative focus of GT development, identifying GT children is commonly reduced to an assessment of current performance levels in sport. This has obvious limitations for those children with *ability*, but who have yet to develop their skills to the same level as their peers.

Bailey and colleagues have conducted most of the existing research into GT development in PE. Their search for existing literature yields zero non-government produced papers (Bailey *et al.*, 2004: 135-136). All other studies that had explored talent development in PESS focused exclusively on extra-curricular provision (Morely and Bailey, 2004: 141). Some findings from the existing research will be briefly considered before attention turns to the impacts of the current focus of GT development.

The primary goal of any GT programme in schools should be the fulfilment of children's educational needs. The concern must be physical *education*, not sports development. However, schools (and primaries in particular) increasingly rely on external sports clubs and agencies to deliver PE lessons and extracurricular activities. As primary teachers are often not experts in PE,[26] this is widely seen as advantageous and the most effective method available. However, if sports coaches are leading lessons and the majority of after school activities, there is a concern that the physical education element is being replaced by a sports development focus. As many sports coaches lack formal educational/pedagogical training, they may adopt a teaching style which relies upon their sports coaching background.

The person delivering lessons, be it teacher or coach, must have specialist skills in the topic in question. The capabilities of the teacher combined with the facilities and resources available 'makes a significant contribution to later performance in specific domains' (Bailey

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[26] Primary school teachers do not require specific excellence in each individual subject area. After covering a mandatory degree of exposure to each curriculum subject whilst studying for their PGCE, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are able to teach PE, or any other subject. The core curriculum subjects demand a certain level of coverage, but teacher trainees can decide on the other areas in which they specialise.

and Morely, 2006: 223). Without access to these resources it will be difficult for children to realise (in both senses of the word) their potential. To ensure that teachers deliver expert lessons and identify GT children they must a) receive sufficient initial (and ongoing) training, b) be aware of what constitutes GT in PESS, c) have formalised guidance on how to identify potential and existing talents, and d) know what actions to take when a child is identified as (currently or potentially) GT (Bailey *et al.*, 2004: 140, 145-146). The YST (2010d) argues that PE departments must 'gain a real sense of ownership over the process of talent development, from the initial design right through to its provision and refinement.' Teachers need to drive this process and be made fully aware of what the school policy is.

In PESS the role of non-school staff is arguably more important for GT development than in any other subject. Often a gift or talent is identified by parents or coaches in an after school clubs. Caution must be taken in relying too heavily on this approach as not all children have the same opportunities or recognition; only schools occupy the 'unique position of having *all* pupils available' (Williams, 2008: 20). Yang *et al.* (1996) conducted research into the impact of parents on children's physical activity. Their findings demonstrate that a child's 'participation in, or dropping out of sport is associated with parental attitudes and behaviour in regard to sport and physical activity' (p. 285-286). Similarly, Kay's (2000: 151) study of the impact of families on sporting excellence led her to argue that children 'are simply much more likely to achieve success in sport if they come from a certain type of family.' Whilst specifically concerned with sport development, many of these findings transfer, with equal relevance, to GT development in PESS. Families of those most likely to succeed tend to have the following attributes; easy access to private transport, significant investment of parents' time and finance, emotional support, and access to high quality local facilities (Kay, 2000: 153-157). Those children who are identified as GT will at some point at least, require expert assistance and a greater commitment (financial and time) to capitalise on their potential. Thus, to satisfy a child's potential a family must be willing to invest significantly in the child.

This discussion has highlighted some of the key issues in GT identification and provision in PE. Attention will now turn to a consideration of the impact that teaching methods have upon the attitudes of children. All PE lessons will be delivered in unique styles, with some focusing on competition, excellence and victory more than others. The delivery and goals of a lesson

have a significant impact upon the way in which children approach the activity; each method results in different outcomes.

The impacts of lesson delivery on pupil motivation

This section will focus on the impact that the method of teaching, and the climate this fosters, has upon the views and behaviour and motivation of children. The way in which PESS is delivered has 'a considerable impact upon the motivational orientation of the pupils' (Salvara *et al*, 2006: 66). A motivational climate can be described as the impact that a lesson (delivery, content, focus, teaching style, facilities, etc.) has upon the attitude of a child. Just as football managers are credited with creating environments that are associated with success or failure, so too are teachers of PESS responsible for facilitating positive or negative learning environments (Ntoumanis and Biddle, 1999: 643). Whilst football managers are expected to instigate a competitive motivational climate, however, such an approach may not be appropriate in PESS. The motivational climate of PESS classes affects children's 'effort, persistence, cognitions, emotions and behavior' (Ntoumanis and Biddle, 1999: 644). Studies have found that self-esteem is influenced by a child's conception of their ability to achieve in their PESS lessons (Bailey, 2009: 32). Therefore, the environment in which PESS is delivered directly reflects upon the manner in which children approach physical activity. Broadly speaking, within PESS motivational climates fall into either *ego-* or *task*-involved classifications (Ames, 1992).

In *ego*-involved climates success is assessed in relation to peers; the emphasis is on comparisons with *others*, and not so much to do with personal achievements. Students and teachers attribute success to *ability* rather than effort (Solomon, 1996: 731-732). In an ego-involved climate*,* individuals aim to outperform their peers 'by surpassing normative based standards, or by achieving success with little effort' (Ames, 1992: 261). The aim of an athletics lesson might be, for example, to beat a classmate in a race or throw a javelin the furthest distance. Children rate their performance against others, and there are clear 'winners' and 'losers.' In such environments pupils are concerned with performance and outcome, rather than technique and effort. When the opportunity arises, children may opt for tactics that are deceptive (foul play, cheating, exhibitionism), and 'effort' may be

replaced with knowing how best to impress the teacher (Treasure and Roberts, 2001: 172). As a result, students may avoid activities that require exertion and mastery, favouring activities in which excellence can be achieved with relative ease (Treasure and Roberts, 2001: 172).

On the other hand, success in *task*-involved environments is determined by 'a self-referenced criterion' (Solomon, 1996: 731). Effort, personal development, and mastery of tasks form the evaluation criteria (Treasure and Roberts, 2001). The outcomes of a child's performance are not compared with others in order to determine their success, but rather the focus is on perseverance, improvement, and effort. In this environment, challenging and difficult tasks are welcomed by students and tend to be met with increased effort and focus (Solomon, 1996: 731). When students perceive their learning environment to be *task*-focused, they will have higher levels of interest and more positive attitudes toward PE. Ntoumanis and Biddle (1999: 662) found that students taught in task-involved climates 'exhibit adaptive cognitive, affective and behavioral patterns. In contrast, these patterns are more likely to be maladaptive when ego-involving instructions are given.' For physical educationalists, therefore, schools should aim to provide a task oriented motivational climate, which facilitates the development of physical literacy. However, recent trends in government policy and subject content seem to indicate that the subject is focusing too much on activities and outcomes that promote *ego*-involved motivational climates. As mentioned above, Lockwood (2000: 123) suggests that the NCPE confirmed the importance of the final outcome (performance), above the 'process' of learning.

In relation to contemporary PESS, there has been a gradual withdrawal of the emphasis on 'physical education' from official rhetoric concerning the subject. PE is being steadily replaced by the catch-all phrases of 'sport,' or 'physical education and school sport.' Hence the adoption of the acronym PESS, as opposed to just PE. On the surface this appears to be a pedantic concern with semantics, but the consequences of this transition are problematic. The impact this shift in emphasis may have upon the motivational climates fostered within lessons is significant. Flintoff (2008: 401) found that a competitive delivery environment of after-school activities has an exclusionary effect on young children and girls. The involvement of external coaches, attempting to encourage children to join sports clubs,

meant that the focus of activities was competitive sport for year 5 and 6 children. Also, although female students were not 'formally excluded from attending sessions,' the gendered nature of the competitive team games is likely to have 'dissuaded' female pupils from participating (Flintoff, 2008: 401).

Capel (2000: 137) suggests that the simplest explanation for the differences between PE and sport is that '*physical education is essentially an educational process whereas the focus in sport is on the activity*.' Sport focuses on the activity – making a pass, scoring a point, catching a ball – whereas PE is concerned with the 'intentional physical human movement and the mastery of that movement' (Wright, 2004: 152). The former, with its emphasis on *outcomes* fosters an *ego*-involved motivational climate, whereas the focus on technique that is endorsed by the latter fits more comfortably with a *task*-involved motivational climate. Sport education may teach a child how to score a goal, but physical education will teach the importance of the body, the precise movements, control and balance that are necessary for successful execution of the task. Sport *should* have a place in all schools, however, the way in which PE currently incorporates sport arguably fails both educationally, and also in fulfilling many sport development goals (Kirk, 2004: 189). PE should aim to provide a task-oriented motivational climate for children, an environment in which success is determined by self-referenced criterion. However, sport is assessed in relation to ability rather than effort, with a central focus on outperforming one's peers (Ames, 1992: 261). For many children the ethos of sport is rewarding, and for such children, sport may be the ideal means through which they receive their PE. But for other children, and possibly many more, sporting activities will not be desirable. In such instances, PE lessons that pivot around sport may be counterproductive and actually deter some children from participation.

Summary

This lengthy section has examined issues concerned with the identification and development of GT children. In PESS, GT identification and development has increased in prominence over recent years. This is largely the result of the wider GT agenda in schools, but the increasing prominence has also been aided by a sustained focus on elite sport development. Whilst GT children should receive an education that allows them to maximise their potential, a number

of concerns have been raised in relation to the dominance of sport in PE and teachers' conceptions of gifts and talents related to the subject. The latter section considered the motivational climate that certain PE lessons are likely to promote. Lessons that use competitive sport as the primary means by which activities are taught risk promoting *ego-involved* motivational climates. Although such climates may be beneficial to some, they may equally deter other children from participating. In the following section attention will turn to a consideration of partnership working to help fulfil the goals described in the first two sections.

Part three: the importance and potential for partnership working

The following two sections differ somewhat to the previous two. The focus so far has been on behavioural issues – PESS being used as a means through which to promote certain forms of behaviour. The latter half of the chapter will explore issues that are concerned with organisational and infrastructural concerns. All discussions are considered pivotal to framing the evaluation of SSPs. In this section of the chapter, the concept of 'partnership' will be scrutinised. Partnerships are the driving force behind many social policies, and are (as the name suggests) central to the School Sport Partnership initiative. The political salience of partnerships is not confined to the UK alone, but can be detected at the European (Mayo, 1997: 7) and global level (Miller and Ahmad, 2000: 1). Writing prior to Labour's incumbency, Mackintosh (1992: 210) was already hailing 'partnership' as 'one of the code words of our times in the field of public policy.' Since 1997, partnerships 'have come to be seen as the most efficient way of delivering high quality services and ensuring their effectiveness in being responsive to service user needs' (Miller and Ahmad, 2000: 1). Partnerships are, now, central to policy making in a wide range of areas.[27] In a recent article on sports development, for example, Lindsey (2011: 517) argues that 'Partnership working has become ubiquitous as a *modus operandi* across all sports development sectors.'

So what is a partnership, and why do they bestrew much of the contemporary social policy landscape? Glendinning (2002: 117) argues that the lack of definitional specificity around the term 'partnership' may be 'exactly what makes 'partnership' a form of organisational governance whose flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability is ideally suited to the demands of contemporary society.' The term must be seen as not only 'theoretically' ambiguous, but also 'practically' so. As Cardini (2006: 394) notes; *practically*, partnerships differ widely in their structural composition – 'the number, sector and type of partners

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[27] A few examples of major education partnerships include 'Education Action Zones' (see Teachernet, 2010), 'Early Years and Development and Childcare Partnerships' (DfEE, 1999a), 'Education Improvement Partnerships' (DfES, 2005), and 'Sure Start' (see DCSF, 2010).

involved, their scale and their objectives.'[28] *Theoretically*, 'partnership' is difficult to differentiate from terms such as 'networks, cooperation, coordination and trust' (Cardini, 2006: 394).[29] For example, it is difficult to highlight differences between schools working 'collaboratively' or in 'partnership.' As a rudimentary definition, partnerships can be understood to denote;

> a particular type of relationship in which one or more common goals, interests and/or dependencies
>
> are identified, acknowledged and acted upon [by multiple agencies], but in which the autonomy and
>
> separate accountabilities of the partner organisations can remain largely untouched

(Glendinning, 2002: 117-188).

It would be futile to build on such vague definitions or construct any ideal type partnership model, as each has its unique composition and organisational remit. Common to most partnerships, however, are the perceived benefits that will stem from their formulation. A partnership's inception will inevitably be premised on the hypothesis that bringing together the various individuals or agencies will fulfil the organisational objectives more efficiently than could be anticipated if each partner were operating independently. The very essence of partnerships lies in this conviction, that *'something [will be] achieved which could not have been achieved without the collaboration'* (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 293).

Partner agencies will ideally represent a range of local interests,[30] thus being able to combine specialised knowledge of the local demographic to maximise the breadth and depth of services provided. This, argue proponents of partnership working, yields 'benefits exceeding those accruing from otherwise under or uncoordinated efforts' (Hughes and Carmichael, 1998: 209). To best serve target audiences it helps if partnerships are

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[28] Consider the varying levels of complexity, structure, and number/range of partners involved in the following sports-based partnerships; a) a school works with a local sports club to increase sporting opportunities for children, b) a sporting NGB works with the YST to identify GT children in primary schools, on a national level, and c) a local charity - funded by the National Lottery and Sport England - sets up a scheme, with the support of schools and crime reduction agencies, which is based in a local leisure centre, aimed at engaging delinquent youths in sport.

[29] Lowndes *et al.* (1997: 336-339) provide a useful discussion of the theoretical and practical differences between partnerships and networks.

[30] The interpretation of 'local' will differ for each partnership, depending upon the partners involved. 'Local' for a community partnership may refer to issues occurring within a 500 meter radius, but for an EU-level partnership 'local' issues may stretch from Belfast to Nicosia, Lisbon to Helsinki.

democratically established. When this is the case, principles will usually feed through to the operating mechanisms. If imparity does exist, certain agendas will be pushed to the fore. Brinkerhoff (2002: 216) is clear on the need for equality amongst partners;

> Partnership is a dynamic relationship among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labour based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability, and transparency.

Successful intra-partnership relations will, ideally, lead to improved information sharing and general communication (avoidance of repetition and inefficiencies), a better understanding of what each of the partners can offer and, consequently, more effective distribution of resources and expertise (Miller and Ahmad, 2000: 12). Partnerships failing to function in such a manner will likely be destructive for the 'weaker' partners, and potentially the partnership in its entirety (Mayo, 1997: 4).

Concerns with partnerships in policy

Due to their centrality in many recent policy initiatives, justifying partnerships is often seen as unnecessary in policy documents. The notion of partnership working has an inherently positive moral feel about it and it has become 'almost heretical to question its integrity' (McLaughlin, 2004: 113). The popularity of the concept has rendered partnerships inevitable in many circumstances. However, the rhetoric behind partnerships may be only a smoke screen through which government can 'obscure the fact that current policy agendas are centrally defined and controlled,' and present 'them instead as a compromise established between different local organisations and agents' (Cardini, 2006: 408).

At the delivery end of the policy cycle, partnerships are often promoted as bringing together *local* agents to tackle *local* issues (Seddon *et al.*, 2005: 567). Although appearing to empower local communities, in reality this may not be the case. When central government funds initiatives, it is they who decide on the objectives and performance indicators. Perhaps of greater political significance is that, if government can devolve accountability to 'local' partnerships then they can also 'shift the blame' to these partners (Cardini, 2006: 411). In

relation to SSPs, local partnerships (between SSCs, secondary and primary schools, and local sports clubs) are created under guidelines from central government; each partnership follows a particular organisational structure, with a specific amount of funding to hire premises, staff (with predefined roles), and provide transport to some of the events it organises. Irrespective of location, partnerships must also meet certain performance indicators (number of children in two or five hours of physical activity, increased range of activities on offer, amount of extra-curricular and competitive opportunities on offer, etc.). Thus, whilst such partnerships operate at the local level they are significantly restricted by central government. If SSPs are successful;

> central government can politically benefit from that success as they present themselves as the drivers of such policies. If, on the contrary, the outcomes are not as expected, the blame can be easily shifted to [individual SSPs] that did not take advantage of the decision-making power and economic resources that have been devolved to them

(Cardini, 2006: 411).

Framed purely in a public relations perspective, it is not difficult to understand why neo-liberal governments promote partnership working in the delivery of social policies.

The preceding discussion embodies an implicit assumption that all partners *want* to be involved in partnerships. For some though, there is little or no desire to forge partnerships. Left to their own devices, many agencies would produce superior outcomes to those possible via partnership working. Indeed, partnership can actually be *damaging* in some instances. Despite an individual partner's reticence, many are unable to withstand the lure of joining partnerships because 'collaboration [is often] made a requirement of government funding' (Miller and Ahmad, 2000: 14). In such instances it is likely that the limitations of partnership working will be amplified, due to the lack of support (input and communication) from partners. This point is further developed in the following discussion.

Conditions for effective partnership working

Numerous attempts to theorise 'successful' partnership operation have been made (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 306). Three such typologies (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 306; Whipple and Frankel, 2000: 23-27; Tett *et al*., 2001: 12) have been analysed to form the following short list of characteristics linked to successful partnership operation. There is significant overlap (and frequent anomalies) between the three papers, however, the most frequently occurring attributes include;

1. sharing of *complementary purposes*;
2. *clarity* of individual partner roles, and *clear partnership goals*;
3. *trust* between partners (leading to, or stemming from, good *interpersonal relations*);
4. the ability to work under similar, or complementary conditions (*compatibility*);
5. *senior management support*.

The first criterion (complementary purposes) is perhaps the most contentious. Examples that appear to counter such a prerequisite are widely available; take Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the FIFA World Cup; the official partners of the London 2012 Olympic Games, Coca-Cola and McDonald's; or the numerous examples of tobacco companies that have in the past sponsored Formula One racing teams. In these examples the partners appear to pursue different organisational goals (promotion of sporting and physical excellence on the one hand, and maximum sales of soft drinks and fast food on the other), yet work in partnership. These particular examples echo the earlier sentiments regarding 'partnership for finances' – in that, financial considerations removed, the forging of partnerships would be unlikely. Rather than suggesting organisation-wide endorsement of the partnership, it might be more appropriate and accurate to suggest that '*aspects* of partner organisations' operations must share, or have, complementary purposes.'

Clarity in partnership aims (and individual role definitions therein) is necessary to ensure minimal waste in human and financial resources. This also eases intra-partnership tensions. There are many 'different ways in which partners can work together,' and as a result, 'there are also many different roles that can be adopted by them' (Lacey, 2001: 13). If individuals (or agencies) are unsure of what their role entails, tasks may be replicated or altogether

omitted. Aside from this, ambiguities in role allocation are likely to cause friction between agencies, as individuals may clash over what is/is not expected of them. More fundamentally, and often taken for granted, there must be unanimity amongst partners as to the overall objectives, and how these will be met. Reflecting on the entirety of their past research into partnerships, Huxham and Vangen (2000: 295) state the most frequently cited concerns of practitioners as the 'agreement of collaborative aims.'

For effective partnerships 'it is essential that the parties involved have a trusting relationship with each other' (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 298). Trust facilitates good inter-personal relationships and allows partners to contribute to the underlying goals, whilst content that fellow partners are fulfilling their duties. Central to trust are good interpersonal relationships; although partners need not share everything with one another, they must be open, listen to the concerns and opinions of others, and purposefully communicate with one another (Brinkerhoff, 2002: 225). Indeed, Clegg and McNulty (2002: 591) found that 'in those instances where partnership is deemed successful, partners tend to attribute success in terms of their partners' interpersonal skills.' Similarly, if communication is poor and trust is lacking, interpersonal relations can begin to 'characterise and dominate the entire working of a partnership' (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 297). For such reasons, sufficient time needs to be invested in building trusting relations between partners.

Compatibility is closely linked to trust and interpersonal relations. However, more than this, partners will ideally 'plan and work together in a productive, solution-oriented manner' (Whipple and Frankel, 2000: 27). A balance needs to be met between individual organisational (non-partnership) goals, whilst simultaneously working in collaboration to a set of 'partnership objectives.' At the same time as adapting to the partnership goals, organisations must manage 'pressures to become more *like* the other partner' (Mackintosh, 1992: 21). Thus, agencies need to carefully negotiate their independence and unique organisational goals and, on the other hand, adapt to the other organisations' philosophies to work effectively towards a partnership goal.

 Support of senior management is important for any organisation entering into partnership. Without senior management support an organisation cannot be fully committed, and may therefore be restricted by withdrawals of funding, time, and human and/or material

resources. An organisation's long-term commitment to a partnership can only be sustained if support comes from the most senior level (Hudson and Harvey, 2002: 56). In relation to schools, Lacey (2001: 87) found that it was 'very difficult' for collaborative or partnership work to be successful without the specific support of the senior management. When senior management is supportive, any change in managerial personnel may seriously affect the established commitment and working relationships (Whipple and Frankel, 2000: 25).

Summary

As this discussion only begins to suggest, there are myriad factors that influence successful partnership working. Combined with the methodological framework to be laid out in Chapter Four, determining what works for whom, and in what circumstances becomes the crux of determining what makes a partnership work. Each partnership has different characteristics, and therefore no two will operate identically - there is no universally applicable check list for implementing successful partnerships. The above conditions are to be treated as ideal types that have been identified in past research as being important to successful partnership working.

The above discussion has introduced the concept of 'partnership' in relation to its recent usage in social policy. The pre-eminence of partnerships as a tool for successive governments to tackle social problems has been made apparent. The concept, ambiguous as it may be, is premised on the notion that 'the sum is greater than the parts' (McQuaid, 2000: 11). The lure of partnership working is clear to see, however, in reality such a complex and ill-defined concept (both organisationally and structurally) is difficult to implement, and has many potentially damaging capacities. This examination of partnerships has been necessary due to the centrality of the concept to the SSP initiative.

Part four: the impacts of location on physical activity and sports opportunities

In this final section of the chapter the importance of household location will be considered. Compared with the wealth of research into sport and physical activity in urban areas, the attention given to rural areas is relatively scarce (Collins, 2009: 91). The inclusion of this section is premised on the largely common-sense hypothesis that children living in isolated rural areas will have fewer opportunities to participate in organised physical activity and sport compared with those residing in areas with a high population density. Leisure facilities (swimming pools, athletics clubs, sports halls, flood lit pitches, etc.) and coaching expertise are likely to be in greater abundance in areas with a high population density so as to ensure financial viability and maximal usage. Also, as fewer people live in rural areas there will be a limited number of peers (of similar ability) for children to play with, particularly in relation to team games. In what follows, some of the key issues concerning children's physical activity and sports opportunities in rural areas will be considered. For present purposes there is little need to conduct a significant review of literature. Much of the important early work done by rural geographers and sociologists (see Hillyard, 2007: Chapter 2) will be bypassed. Only work that is considered to be of immediate relevance to the thesis will be considered.

'Rural' is a difficult concept to define. With a plurality of meanings, implying different things from place to place, Pratt (1996: 71) suggests there are many different 'rurals.' Numerous attempts have been made to define 'rural' areas (Dunn *et al*., 1998: 33-45). Definitions based on single categories (e.g., postcode, land usage, population density) tend to be inflexible and therefore inadequate (PSI, 1998: 16, 17). On the other hand, methodologically complex measures that triangulate various data sources are difficult to operationalise due to their inherent complexity (PSI, 1998: 18-19). For present purposes, a strict definition of what constitutes rural settings is not required; when using the term 'rural,' reference is being made to areas with low population densities that are located a sufficient distance away from the nearest town/city so as to render access problematic without transportation. According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), 19.3 percent of the

population lives in the 86 percent of England's rural landmass (settlements with less than 10,000 residents) (Defra, 2011). With almost one in five people living in such areas, it is important that academic attention is given to the consequences of their living situation in relation to physical activity and sport opportunities.

The English rural 'myth'

English rural areas are often associated with a mythical (idyllic) image characterised by 'tranquillity, communion with nature and 'authentic' community life' (Tucker and Matthews, 2001: 161-162). The notion of 'community' is central to many interpretations of rural life (Matthews *et al*., 2000: 149). Indeed, in Tönnies' (2001) [1887] seminal contribution *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (loosely defined as pre-industrial, rural society) and *Gesellschaft* (post-industrial, urban society) is premised to a significant extent on an eradication of community life in the transition from the former to the latter. This rural-urban dichotomy extends to the *imagery* associated with rural and urban settings (Laing, 1992: 139-144). Although many people find rural areas to have greater aesthetic appeal than towns and cities, many would argue to the contrary. The picturesque, peaceful, largely self-sufficient yet tight-knit communities often likened to rural areas, can equally be depicted as desolate, under-developed, lacking opportunity and conservative. Dominant views of rural England – largely stemming from the 'interpretations of interpretations' found in popular media and tourist literature (Short, 1992: 8) – tend to conform to the former, mythical imagery (Matthews *et al*., 2000: 141-142). On a national-level this can be seen in the burgeoning market whereby national tourist boards use idyllic rural images as the crux of their advertising campaigns (Visit Scotland, 2011 and Visit Wales, 2011).

This commodified view of rural areas avoids mention of any disadvantage (Hillyard, 2007: 60). On the whole, evidence suggests that rural residents *are* more satisfied with their local area than those living in suburban and urban locations (77 percent of rural respondents were very satisfied, compared with 55 and 35 percent of suburban and urban residents,

respectively) (Todorovic and Wellington, 2000: 5).[31] In those instances where rural residents are not necessarily isolated from the local town/city by distance (i.e., those living less than 10 miles away), people often find themselves detached due to poor transport infrastructure (Lee and Macdonald, 2009: 363). For such residents, access to employment, social services, education, leisure facilities, and increasingly shops, restaurants, pubs and post offices is dependent upon direct access to a car. In these circumstances owning a car can be 'as fundamental as paying the mortgage' (Gray *et al*., 2001: 119). It is widely acknowledged that access (physical, not necessarily financial) to services and facilities is more constrained for rural residents than for their urban counterparts (Payne, 2000: 6). This is seen in Brown's (1999: 1) work on social care. Brown found that geographical isolation presents service users with 'considerable difficulties' when attempting to access social services. There were difficulties not only for service users trying to access services, but also for providers delivering their services. The problems were largely due to the expense of service delivery in isolated areas and the difficulties associated with accessing such locations (p. 6). The findings of Todorovic and Wellington (2000: 8) corroborate Brown's conclusions; rural residents were less satisfied with public transport provision and leisure facilities than urban and suburban dwellers. Indeed, they found that poor public transport and the restrictions this places on opportunities for young people were considered to be the worst aspect of rural life (p. 3).

An integral part of the rural idyll is the rural childhood 'myth' (Tucker and Matthews, 2001: 162). Children living in rural areas are thought to have good access to nature; being able to roam the vast expanses of land and water, free from the congestion and fear of crime that urban children endure. Empirical research suggests, though, that this idyllic vision of growing up in rural areas is far from reality (Matthews *et al*., 2000: 144). Valentine (1996, 1997) argues that parents increasingly view their children as 'vulnerable' and too 'incompetent' to safely play out alone. Fear of strangers and road safety concerns are cited as significant barriers to allowing children to engage in unsupervised activity outdoors (Macdonald *et al*., 2004: 318). As a result, parents confine their children to privatised settings - home, leisure centre, school - 'for their own protection' (Valentine, 1996: 212). This anxiety places both

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[31] Although over ten years old, research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998) found that proportionately fewer rural residents receive low incomes, and the duration for which people are on low incomes is less than in urban areas. There are also 'significantly less' rural residents who are 'persistently poor' (p. 2).

spatial *and* temporal restrictions on children's leisure activities (Jones, 2000: 37). Therefore, a significant reason for any increased exposure children have to television, video games and the internet is not simply a predilection towards sedentary activity but, amongst other things, because parents encourage children to spend more time at home (Valentine, 1997: 72-73). It should be noted that children in urban areas face potentially greater levels of leisure time confinement, for in densely populated areas there is often a heightened fear of road traffic accidents (Roberts *et al*., 1995: 2-3) and crime victimization (Warrington, 2005: 812), both of which prompt spatial and temporal restrictions.

'No trespassing' and 'No Ball Games' signs, common to both rural and urban areas, restrict children's play to adult approved settings. These settings are not the farmers' fields, the streams and woodland that constitute the rural idyll, but more formalised sites such as play parks and back gardens (Smith and Barker, 1999: 35). Similarly, a rise in the number of after school clubs, adult run sports clubs and various other institutionalised leisure activities further enforces the changing nature of children's leisure time experiences. In an interesting article on out of school care, Smith and Barker (2000: 246) claim that out of school clubs have a 'profound impact on the social and cultural landscape of childhood.' They see the sustained investment in out of school care (*within* school premises) since the early 1990s as an important vehicle in the institutionalisation of childhood. Such clubs represent 'another place in the social and cultural landscape of childhood where adults try to shape children's use of space and time' (Smith and Barker, 2000: 246). This suggests that a primary reason for children's increasingly sedentary lifestyles is, in large part, the result of the growing concerns of guardians.

This section has suggested that the idyllic vision of rural England (and rural childhood) is largely mythical. In both rural and urban settings children are perceived to be at risk of numerous threats. Parents take precautionary measures to reduce the likely manifestation of such risks by managing their children's leisure time. The influence parents have over their offspring's physical activity and sports participation extends beyond this, however, in more unavoidable ways. Certain aspects of social exclusion significantly impact upon children's leisure opportunities. It is to these issues that the discussion will now explore.

Exclusion from sport and physical activity in rural areas

Social exclusion is a broad and dynamic term, 'determining the lives of individuals and collectivities' in various ways at different points throughout their life course (Byrne, 2005: 2). In an important contribution to social exclusion and sport, Collins (2003: 24) argues that regardless of one's personal situation, 'virtually everyone is constrained in some way relative to the ideal lifestyle of their dreams.' Building on earlier work, three broad groups of constraints on physical activity and sports participation are identified;

> *Structural/environmental factors* – the nexus of economical, physical and social factors;
>
> *Psychological factors* – feelings of powerlessness, being unfit, and having a lack of money, skills, education and/or social capital;
>
> *Gatekeepers* – facility managers, coaches, fitness instructors, sport development officers, etc., who select who is 'in' and who is 'out' of groups

(Collins, 2003: 25).

The most significant issues excluding children from sport and leisure activities are 'poor transport,' 'fears over safety' and 'powerlessness' (Collins, 2003: 26).[32] This section will focus on one broad aspect of social exclusion (falling under Collins' first category, 'structural and environmental factors'); the impact of household location. This will be explored specifically in relation to the implications faced by people living in rural areas.

Rossi and Wright's (2002) research on children's physical activity in rural Queensland suggests that rural children have far fewer structured opportunities for physical activity than urban children. In order to access expertise and facilities, stories of children being driven significant distances (up to 400 kilometre round-trips) were not uncommon (Rossi and Wright, 2002: 6). The 'great divide in the sporting opportunities' afforded to children in urban and isolated rural areas was only bypassed through parental investments of time and money (p. 6). In England, where rural areas are less isolated than in Queensland, a 400

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[32] It is worth noting that these constraints are faced by *all* groups in Collins' analysis (youth, poor/unemployed, women, older people, ethnic minority, and persons with disabilities/learning difficulties). The only exception is that ethnic minorities are not so impeded by poor transport. Poverty 'adds an extra intensity to each of the other factors' (Collins, 2003: 27).

kilometre roundtrip for physical activity/sport purposes is unlikely (although this may be the case for elite child athletes). For financially secure rural families with access to at least two cars and relevant facilities in a (relatively) nearby town/city, financial and travel restrictions associated with their child's leisure activities are likely to be minimal. For poorer families with access to only one vehicle (which will be required to fulfil all of a family's transportation needs (Matthews *et al*., 2000: 149)) or none at all, the constraints *will* restrict the opportunities children have (see Payne, 2000: 8). If parents cannot or do not oblige, their child's opportunities are further restricted. A Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR, 2000) report identified further problems children face when they are entrusted to use public transport independently of adult supervision. Amongst the numerous problems identified by children were a dislike of busses, the unreliability and expense of bus travel, bus routes not going near to leisure facilities, and children felt threatened by some peers, disliked by bus drivers and under scrutiny from adults (DETR, 2000: 48-49). This will have a significant impact upon basic participation rates, but for youngsters demonstrating levels of sporting excellence, their prospects of future sports success will be severely curtailed. For children requiring regular access to top class facilities and coaching expertise, geographical isolation may ruin their future prospects.

Whilst aware of the issues faced by poorer families *vis-à-vis* transport, Ball et al. (1995) raise further concerns regarding a more complex issue; a cultural resistance to travel. Although over 15 years old, the findings of this research helps to develop our understanding of physical activity and sporting opportunities. Ball and colleagues (1995: 57) found that the school parents select for their children is dependent on the parents' cultural capital. Working class families value different things to middle class families when selecting a school. The researchers found that transport deprivation, most frequently found in working class families, leads to social isolation and segregation. When this occurs, affected groups form social enclaves (p. 59). The attachment that people have with such enclaves is central to Ball *et al*.'s analysis. When selecting a school, they found middle class parents go to 'considerable lengths to make distance possible and safe for their children' (p. 63). Therefore, the school's educational and cultural attributes were valued above journey time and location. For working class families, attachment to a social enclave 'reinforce[d] the importance of *the local*' (p. 59). The result being that many working class parents value a

school's locality above all else, whereas for middle class families the proximity of home to school is of minor importance. This attitudinal disparity can have further implications that impinge upon children's physical activity and sports opportunities.

Not only did the school choice of many working class families depend on location, but so too did thoughts of what is, or is not, accessible (decisions as to 'potential' options were severely constrained by a strong attachment to the locale). Working class families saw as accessible only opportunities entailing minimal investments of time and travel. The importance of the locale, combined with these space and time constraints, results in 'differences both in the ability (or willingness) to overcome 'the friction of distance' and perceptual differences in spatial horizons' (Ball *et al.*, 1995: 62). This contention is of great consequence for physical activity and sporting opportunities. If social class – or, more specifically, 'attachment to locale' - restricts the degree to which people are willing to travel to access resources, then some children will have more opportunities than others. The children of parents who are willing and able to travel may have more opportunities to access a wider range of activities delivered in better facilities and provided by more able coaches. For rural children, in particular, the necessity of travel to access facilities and expertise cannot be overlooked. The consequences of this will impinge upon both general participation (sport for all) and the development of elite performers.

Not only do children from rural areas face greater challenges in the manner noted above. But rural schools (and therefore, rural school pupils) are also confronted by several limiting factors. Rural primary schools tend to have fewer pupils and teaching staff than schools in densely populated areas. This is because of the low density populations of surrounding areas, and that fewer children can access rural schools than is the case in urban areas. Teachers in smaller schools must deliver the same curriculum content as larger schools, but with fewer staff members. Therefore, multiple year groups may be combined to form one class. The outcome is that teachers have greater challenges to confront than teachers in larger institutions (Ribchester and Edwards, 1999: 51). (In other respects, it should be noted that teachers in small schools do avoid some problems faced in larger schools.) Added to this, the amount of free time a teacher has significantly impacts upon their ability to provide extra-curricular activities. In smaller schools, where staff teach multiple classes and are

responsible for several aspects of the school curriculum, they are likely to have little free time. As relatively few teachers are expert PE teachers, it is unlikely that small schools will have access to one or more PE experts. Bass and Cale (1999: 52) found that whilst the ratio of PE-staff-to-pupil varied little between schools, smaller schools felt that they were disadvantaged when it came to providing extra-curricular activities associated with the subject. When taking into account the more limited interests and abilities of a smaller workforce, it is more difficult for small schools to provide extra-curricular activities (Bass and Cale, 1999: 55). Even when schools do have a thriving schedule of extra-curricular activities, the activities tend to be popular sports, with a dominance of competitive single sex team games (Cale, 2000: 164 and Green, 2000: 179-180). The implication of this for small schools is that it becomes difficult to provide after school activities that are purposeful (inclusive yet challenging), due to the small number of potential participants; extra-curricular activities involving teams will have to draw from multiple year groups to attract a critical mass. In such situations there will be a mismatch in ability, which is likely to negatively impact upon the activities and motivation of pupils (both GT children, and those with lower abilities).

Although large urban schools often struggle to meet transportation and facility hire costs, the implications for small rural schools are thought to be more burdensome (Bass and Cale, 1999: 56). In relation to transport costs, the most obvious issue is that rural schools are, by definition, more isolated than urban schools. In order to access facilities that are not available in the surrounding area (swimming pool, sports hall, athletics track, etc.), schools must provide transport to the closest venue. Also, if rural schools enter teams into inter-school sports competitions they are, once again, likely to be faced with a journey to the nearest large town/city where numerous schools are located (it would be difficult logistically, but possibly more economically efficient, to have numerous urban schools make the reverse journey). Ribchester and Edwards (1999: 56) suggest that 'clustering' has great potential for smaller schools. This would entail neighbouring schools liaising with one another so as to provide children with more opportunities, and at a cheaper cost. If there is an inter-school competition in the nearest city, for example, several small schools located close to one another could enter a joint team and/or share transport costs.

Summary

This section is not intended as a discussion of rural and urban life, nor of poverty and deprivation. The discussion covers a broad purview, building on various studies from within these fields to develop an argument highlighting some barriers to physical activity and sports participation faced by certain children. Important issues, such as gender, ethnicity and disability, for example, have been completely bypassed. This is not because they are not relevant for present purposes, but because the inclusion of such themes would entail lengthy discussion for which space will not allow. The overwhelming focus on rural areas has been because of the relative lack of research into physical activity and sports participation in such circumstances. The argument put forward here suggests that rural areas are not as idyllic as often perceived. In relation to physical activity and sport opportunities, rural children have significant barriers restricting their access. For children who wish to participate at the basic, non-competitive level, or those wanting to compete at an elite level, opportunities for participation are restricted if the child lives in an isolated rural area. When parents are unable or unwilling to assist their child, partnership working between schools and local clubs become vital if the child is to access the opportunities s/he desires.

Chapter summary

This chapter has considered three core aspects of Labour policy for PESS. The first three sections explored the concepts Labour built upon to justify the focus and goals of PESS. The latter discussion of rural issues was necessary due to the centrality of partnership working between schools, which is at the heart of the SSP initiative. The aim was to provide information that will be used to inform the evaluation and analysis of the impact SSPs are having in schools. The discussions presented in this chapter are central to much of the legislation introduced between 1997-2010.

The chapter began with a discussion of the health-related benefits associated to active lifestyles. It was argued that physical activity is an effective measure in reducing the likelihood of developing many diseases in later life. As a result of this, great emphasis has

been placed on using PESS to help reduce levels of illness, most explicitly weight-related health problems.

The second section explored GT provision in PESS. The focus on GT development was located firmly in the wider discourse of elite sport development. It was argued that schools must provide learning environments in which children can realise their potential, and fundamentally GT identification and development in PESS is seen as an important educational goal. Concerns were raised over the current dominance of sports performance in identifying GT children. The motivational climate fostered by sports-based PE lessons may well provide opportunities for GT children to flourish, however it can be detrimental to many of the children that are being targeted by the health lifestyles agenda discussed in the first part.

The penultimate section explored partnership working in social policy. Partnerships have been central to Labour's PESS policy. The concept of partnership working has been the driving force behind most of the other objectives for PESS. This section raised some concerns over the prevalence of partnerships in policy and discussed many issues that are important for effective partnership operation.

Finally, the latter part of the chapter was included due to the importance given to partnership working in the SSP initiative. Particular attention was given to rural areas as common sense would suggest that schools (and pupils) located in isolated areas may be adversely affected by an increased focus on partnership working with other schools and clubs. This section argued that children in rural areas suffer from a form of social exclusion related to the leisure opportunities available to them. Schools suffer similarly. When expected to work in partnership with 'neighbouring' schools, those that are located in rurally isolated areas are at a notable disadvantage compared to schools clustered closely around one another.

Chapter 3

Theoretical considerations

Chapter One explored the policy context in which SSPs have been introduced. The rationale behind the government's investment in PESS was explored in an historical context, and the objectives of Labour's unprecedented investment were discussed. Chapter Two took three of the core objectives underlying the investment (increasing physical activity levels, GT development, and partnership working) and considered their purpose and potential. The final part of the chapter discussed the importance of place and space, and how this impacts upon the attainment of the three goals. This chapter is more theoretically orientated. The work of Michel Foucault, and those who have developed his influential ideas, will form the chapter's core. The purpose is to provide a theoretical background that deepens the understanding of Labour's unprecedented investment in PESS and why they pursued the specific aims and objectives outlined in Chapters One and Two.

The present chapter will begin by examining Foucault's theoretical notion of *governmentality*. This neologism, combining the concept of government with that of rationality, has spurred widespread debate and been used to address a wide range of phenomena. The discussion will argue that governmentality is an important tool in the neoliberal mode of government. Attention will then consider technologies of government; 'risk' as a governmental technology will receive specific attention. In the final part of the chapter Foucault's notion of discourse will be introduced. In light of this discussion, the chapter will go on to consider the discourse that has emerged around the idea of an obesity epidemic.

Government of others and self

Foucault understood government in two senses; both as an *art* and a *practice*. The former mode concerns macro phenomena, whereas the latter is a subjective activity. In its wider sense, an art (or rationality) of government is a system of understanding the practice of

government (*who* governs *whom* and *how*?) (Gordon, 1991: 3). In a narrow sense government concerns the 'conduct of conduct.' Here, government is the attempt to shape behaviour according to a set of guiding principles, norms or objectives. In this interpretation, government concerns relations with the self, interpersonal relations entailing degrees of control or guidance, relations with the wider community or social institutions, and top-down relations with the exercise of political sovereignty (Gordon, 1991: 2-3). In both senses government is a process conducted by a plurality of sources (Foucault, 1982: 345), not simply the incumbent political party commonly referred to as '*the* government.'

Historically government has covered a broad semantic purview; only in the sixteenth century did the term acquire the specific political meaning to which it is now associated (Foucault, 2007: 122). In an important contribution to the governmentality literature, Dean defines government as:

> *any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes*

(Dean, 2010: 18 *italics in original*).

The identification of government as a process that shapes individual conduct by working through subjective thoughts and beliefs (the conduct of conduct), helps deepen the understanding of the art of government. 'Conduct' is used both as a verb and a noun; as a verb, conduct 'is the activity of conducting (*conduire*).' As a noun it is 'the way in which one conducts oneself (*se conduit*)' (Foucault, 2007: 193). The exercise of power is therefore the 'conduct of conducts' (Foucault, 1982: 341), the process of conducting (verb) the conduct (noun) of a target group. Power over others is not as direct or confrontational as such a definition implies, however; it does not necessarily subordinate individuals, rather, power allows and desires for individuals to be 'identified and constituted as something individual' (Foucault, 2003: 29-30). This is achieved by structuring the potential fields of action a population has, not by overtly guiding and restricting behaviour.

Fundamental to such a conception of government is the view that human conduct is open to manipulation, regulation and control (Dean, 2010: 18). Under this definition not only will the

incumbent political party govern, but so too will school teachers, sports coaches, clergy members, and many others who are in a position of relative power (to the governed subject). As these examples testament, forms of government are multiple. For Foucault, though, the interest is less with diagnosing and analysing the 'extension of the realm of government' than with identifying the rationalities deployed by government in pursuit of its goals (Bröckling *et al*., 2011: 4). In order to help identify and examine the technologies of government, Foucault coined the term governmentality. Studies in governmentality focus on the rationalities or mentalities of government as they function in particular domains of social life (Petersen, 2003: 191). The concept acts as a mediating tool between power and subjectivity, thus making it possible to explore how governmental rationalities impact upon technologies of the self. Also, by examining the practices of individuals (technologies of self) researchers can begin to understand what forms of knowledge are being promoted through government – this is possible due to the close relationship between techniques of power and forms of knowledge (Bröckling, 2011: 2).

Liberal and neoliberal government

In relation to modern government, liberalism and neoliberalism must be understood as arts of government, not economic theories or political ideologies; each is a particular "way of doing things" (Foucault, 2008: 318). What distinguishes liberal from other forms of government is the way in which the capacity of individuals is utilized. At the heart of the liberal project is the principle, "One always governs too much" (Foucault, 2008: 319). Nineteenth-century liberalism introduced limits to the level of political authority over work, freedom of speech and thought (Rose, 1996: 39). A new ideology emerged that saw the process of government as most effective when not identified by the governed. This, in part at least, is due an increasingly 'social' form of rule which aimed to govern the undesirable aspects of industrial life in the name of society. Rose (1996: 40) argues that 'expert' knowledge was used to 're-establish the integration of individuals in a social form.' This was not achieved by direct intervention but, as Rose (1996: 40) goes on to explain, through;

> the invention of various "rules for rule" that sought to transform the State *into* a centre that *could* programme – shape, guide, channel, direct, control – events and persons distant from it. Persons and

activities were to be governed *through society*, that is to say, through acting upon them in relation to a *social* norm, and constituting their experiences and evaluations in a *social* form

Whilst *presenting* itself as a limited form of government, liberalism set in motion 'the most fundamental […] extension of the powers of the government […] so far witnessed' (Dean, 2007: 100). This prima facie contradiction was achieved by locating freedom at the heart of government. Individuals are free to 'choose' (health care, education, political affiliation, religion, etc.), but only from the range of options permitted through government. As Cruikshank argues (1993: 340), 'Citizens obey the call of society at large […] without chains, without force, they quietly place themselves in the hands of society and mobilize themselves in society's interest.'

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century levels of state provision were gradually withdrawn in many western nations. States began contracting out service provision to private firms; there was a de-governmentalization of the state and a de-statization of the practices of government (Rose, 1996: 41). This *neoliberal* form of government was exemplified by Margaret Thatcher's widespread privatisation of state utilities. The increasing number of private firms involved in service provision can be seen to offer more freedom and greater choice to individuals, but at the same time adds this complexity to the process of, and number of agents involved in, government. Practices of government were relocated; from the incumbent political party to a plethora of 'experts' working for corporations within largely deregulated markets governed by competition and consumer demand. So, by the turn of the twenty-first century a multitude of organisations and individuals were involved in the process of government.

By organising the conditions in which individuals can realise and assert their freedom, liberal and, even more so, neoliberal government is not opposed to freedom but *dependent* upon it. The power used to effectively govern is systematic and calculated, yet at the same time largely unnoticed by its subjects. Rarely do individuals in democratic nations feel directly restrained by those exercising power (in comparison to previous generations), for control is maintained by indirect interventions that structure the field of possibilities. To function in

such a way, government must be epistemologically relevant (Rose and Miller, 1992: 179).[33] Governmental rationalities thus require monitoring and regular adjustment. Understanding the importance of freedom is vital to comprehending the potential for governmentality studies. Rather than a process of micro management, self-government facilitates a subconscious adherence to political rationalities. This allows for the effective government of populations without governing authorities directly managing to a great extent.

Neoliberal government entails the normalization of particular forms of life. In so doing an implicit decision is made regarding what falls outside of the socially constructed 'norm.' To demonstrate what is meant here, the concept of 'lifestyle' will be used as an example. People *know* that a 'good' lifestyle is an active lifestyle, made up of healthy decisions ('healthy' eating, low alcohol consumption, not smoking, regular physical activity). This is known because such messages abound contemporary society. Although it is debateable as to whether such lifestyles are 'normal,' they are constructed as the norm. Our conformity (if not corporeally, then at least theoretically) to this ideal is maintained through minimal use of government intervention and an overwhelming sense of individual freedom. However, transgression of the 'norm' equates with failure to exercise one's freedom responsibly. The end goal of government in this case is for citizens to aspire to a particular lifestyle; the method of thinking underlying such projects – one that renders reality 'manageable' and ultimately subject to 'calculation and transformation' – is a governmental *rationality*.

Government helps construct the *telos* which, due to historical processes of normalization, is widely, often unknowingly adhered to by the population. Individuals reflect the *telos* of the established political rationality and subscribe to the means by which it can be achieved (Lemke, 2000: 5). At its most effective it establishes a regime in which individuals govern *themselves*. Adherence to the rationalities of government is ensured via the threat of penalties for 'error or failure to comply' (Petersen, 2003: 195). In the lifestyle example, potential penalties include the stigma associated with sedentary lifestyles, excess body fat, and unhealthy alcohol and tobacco consumption. All of these, taken independently of the

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[33] Epistemological relevance and the subtlety with which a governing body introduces economy would not, necessarily, be so relevant in tyrannical societies. When ruling out of self-interest, often remaining incumbent due to the production of fear and threat of violence, the technologies of government used by tyrants can be more explicit and overt due to a reduced likelihood of political reprisals.

scientifically proven health detriments of such behaviours, are socially constructed and reinforced through political *technologies*.

Technologies of government

Technologies of government are the instruments used to disseminate political rationalities to populations at large. Borrowing the definition adopted by O'Malley (1996: 205), a 'technology' refers 'to any set of social practices that is aimed at manipulating the social or physical world according to identifiable routines.' The technological aspects of government include a diverse range of concepts and strategies (Miller and Rose, 1990: 12). Although they are of potentially infinite availability, it is in the interest of authorities to exercise frugality when deploying technologies - invasive levels of governmental intervention will lead to an increasing awareness of the technologies of government. At their most effective, technologies are adopted and incorporated into behaviour without the reflexive acknowledgment of the behavioural change; obvious examples include dental and personal hygiene – without enforcement most individuals brush their teeth and wash twice daily. In these instances technologies of government become ingrained in personal routine.

A technology used to promote the rationality of healthy lifestyles in England is the NHS's '5 A Day' campaign. The '5 A Day' campaign is a recommendation -complimented by a supporting rationale and guidance notes - that individuals consume five portions of fruit and vegetables each day to reduce the risk of serious illness (Department of Health, 2009).[34] The NHS's website provides readers with detailed guidance on how best to consume the 5 x 80 gram fruit and vegetables recommendation per day. For those unsure about how to meet the target, guidance is broken down for different groups of people.[35] This rather innocuous

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[34] A campaign of the same name has been promoted by the US administration. The scheme was recently replaced by the *Fruits and Veggies Matter* campaign (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). The values of both are closely aligned with the UK initiative.

[35] For example, hard workers eating 'on the run' are advised to 'add some vegetable [to] the side' of their ready meal (NHS, 2011b). School children aged 4-6 should opt for their free portion of fruit entitlement – itself part of the same underlying rationality – rather than unhealthy snacking at break-times (NHS, 2011c). Special consideration is also paid to those operating on a financial budget (NHS, 2011d). It is interesting to note that of the nine core issues addressed by the NHS *Live Well* strategy (NHS, 2011e), eight concern lifestyle choices (five being explicitly concerned with body weight); *Alcohol, Couch to 5k, Fitness, 5 a Day, Food and Diet, Lose Weight, Sexual Health, Stop Smoking*. The remaining issue is *Colds and Flu*.

initiative is in the public's interest and has few infringements on individuals. Because of the beneficial possibilities of the wider lifestyle rationality, it is usually uncritically accepted. Whether it is due to such campaigns, the traffic light labeling system now on most food and beverage packaging, drink more water campaigns, or other similar approaches, many if not most individuals are now more discerning consumers than in the past. This can be taken as evidence of the effective deployment of governmental rationalities (healthy lifestyle) via political technologies (*5 A Day* guidelines and the associated material).

Linking back to the earlier point on epistemological relevance, the example of healthy lifestyle campaigns will be more or less relevant (and therefore effective) depending on where and when it is introduced. Absent of a prevailing discourse promoting the 'body beautiful,' combined with the necessary economic and agricultural/infrastructural resources to facilitate the consumption of such foods, the rationality would be misplaced. To govern without knowledge of the governed - or in ignorance of such knowledge - is to govern out of context. As a final point, it should be noted that liberal government is essentially a project aimed at improving the condition of the population, its wealth, health and longevity (Foucault, 2007: 105). It is not government for government's own sake (Foucault, 2008: 318). Therefore, although processes of government may be all-encompassing yet unnoticed, they are not necessarily negative forces levelled upon individuals.

The importance of risk to the conduct of conduct

An important part of neoliberal government is risk. By heightening general sensitivity and awareness of risks, the conduct of conduct becomes more effective. If every action has an element of risk attached to it, individuals will be more cautious in their behavior. The risk attached to certain actions is obvious and require minimal elaboration (skydiving, gambling, Russian roulette). Other risks are less explicit and their very existence often requires specialist knowledge (financial, scientific, medical). It is this second group of risks that will be discussed here.

Neoliberal citizens find themselves almost constantly at risk. As phenomena, risks are both individualized (investing in the stock exchange, working with radioactive substances, drug taking) and collectivized (financial crisis, nuclear disaster, health epidemic). Whilst the

outcome of a risky decision can be confined to an individual, Ewald (1991: 202-203) claims that 'there is no such thing as individual risk.' What is implied here is that a risk to one is a risk to all; no matter how cautious or wise an individual is, how rich or poor, the risk of a fatal accident or bankruptcy is a *risk* to all (although the actual likelihood of a risk materializing differs for each individual, as will be discussed below). It is most common for risk to be associated with the negative potentialities of a given situation; 'there is a *risk* I will lose all of my money betting on a horse' whereas 'there is a *chance* I may double my money.' In common parlance, risk relates to threats, hazards, dangers and harms.

Although individuals face many of the same risks (*all*, if we follow Ewald's lead), different risks are of greater or lesser concern for particular groups. To understand why certain phenomena are considered high risk to some yet not to others, risk must be located in its cultural context. Building on the work of anthropologist, Mary Douglas, Boyne (2003: 76) provides a convincing argument that positions risk 'deep into our culture.' Some risks are of greater significance for particular groups; prostitutes, for example, are at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) than the majority of the population. Those who smoke 20 cigarettes a day are at greater risk of lung cancer than most. The same risks which are normalized and routine for those regularly engaging in risk inducing activities may not be contemplated by others in the same society (Boyne, 2003: 53). In contradistinction to these examples, a celibate individual is unlikely to worry about the risk of contracting STIs, and the non-smoker will perceive their risk of lung cancer as low. Not only do perceptions of potential risks vary between cultures (and subcultures), but how phenomena come to be considered a risk at all is inextricably linked to the cultural context (Boyne, 2003: 106).

Certain risks will be elevated to states of near moral panic in some societies at specific moments (for example, Garland, 2008: 11-12). Other risks, on the contrary, will be depressed to a level of insignificance (Boyne, 2003: 47-48). The actual likelihood of certain risks does not necessarily mirror the perceived fear of their emergence, and vice versa; the fruition of a risk may have a low probability yet be of serious concern to individuals. Alternatively, the likely emergence of a risk may be acute but exist in ignorance of a population. In the former case, Stan Cohen's (1972) seminal work on mods and rockers can be seen as a culturally specific example of how the risk of violence was elevated. An instance

in which the fear of risk is depressed can be seen in the first decade of the twenty first century where the risks attached to sub-prime lending and relaxed credit conditions were largely ignored, to great consequence.

In a consideration of Douglas's *Risk and Culture*, Boyne (2003: 53-54) tells of how contemporary societies can, more or less, be seen to consist of four different structural types; hierarchies, markets, sectarian clusters and individuals. Applying this four-fold classification to the predetermined possibilities *vis-à-vis* subjective risk, individuals can loosely fall into; the 'central community,' 'the entrepreneurial frontier,' a 'dissident enclave' or 'isolates' (Boyne, 2003: 53-54). The central community rejects the values of the 'recalcitrant and rebellious minorities' who make up the dissenting enclaves (Boyne, 2003: 54). Because of the typical conformity of the central community, the dissenting enclave rebels against the centre's principals. The entrepreneurial individualist is nomadic, committing to either the centre or the enclave when either is deemed useful. And the final type, the isolate, is estranged from the centre and the enclave through no choice of their own (Boyne, 2003: 54). In this quadrilateral risk culture each of the four groups embodies different cultures of risk. Returning to the lifestyle theme will help elaborate here; the central conformists maintain a 'healthy' lifestyle by striving to meet the health care professional's recommendations. Members of the dissident enclave ignore the risks associated with 'unhealthy' lifestyle choices and indulge in alcohol, extreme sports, illegal drugs, etc. Whilst conforming to aspects of the lifestyle 'expert's' advice, entrepreneurial individuals may binge drink on weekends or use drugs recreationally. Isolates are the fatalists, the heroin addicts, sex workers, morbidly obese; the source of the centre's paranoia and fear (Boyne, 2003: 54).

Adversity to risk, as the above discussion documents, varies (sub-)culturally, temporally, and will fluctuate at the behest of the central community's 'expert' knowledge. The preceding discussion suggests that risk is not a natural state. In an important consideration of insurance and risk, Ewald (1991: 199) corroborates this point, declaring that 'Nothing is a risk in itself.' In neoliberal societies, therefore, risks must be viewed as technologies of government. There is no intrinsic realism in risks, they are each a particular way through which problems are viewed and dealt with (O'Malley, 2008: 57). Risk is a technique of

rendering reality 'into a calculable form' so as to make social life governable (Dean, 1999: 131). The task of the researcher is not to evaluate the fairness or accuracy of risk or risk-based procedures but, rather, 'to analyse what are the specific characteristics of this way of governing uncertain[ty]' (O'Malley, 2008: 57-58).

In the following discussion an attempt will be made to analyse the way in which risk has been used as a technology of government in relation to obesity (itself part of a wider, healthy lifestyle, rationality). Attention will then turn more specifically to how PESS is used as a site in which technologies of government are filtered through to children. As will be seen, much of the risk discourse associated with PE is closely linked to the issue of lifestyle and weight management. Before the analysis, however, it is important to explain what exactly is being analysed. In order to do this, another of Foucault's theoretical concepts will be briefly discussed; that of discourse.

Discourses

Discourses are central to how individuals view the world. For Foucault (1989: 41);

> Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functioning's, transformations), we will say […] that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*.

Discourses are made up of a range of ideas, attitudes, beliefs and statements that functions to construct the social world. The discursive formation directly impinges upon all aspects of an individual's social world. Discourses do two main things; firstly, they create the conceivable world; the meaningful understanding produced within a discourse forges our experience of the world. Knowledge and language therefore derive from discursive formations; social phenomena cannot exist outside of the discourse to which they emerged. Secondly, because knowledge is constructed from within discourses, the discourse can be seen to generate 'truth.' Consisting of utterances (*énoncés*) contained within a range of knowledge, texts, images and practices, discourses provide the information from which knowledge is derived (Foucault, 1991: 63). As such, the discourse restricts and facilitates certain forms of knowledge that is invested with a particular 'truth.'

Foucault uses the example of books to make his point. No book can exist by itself, it is always produced and read in relation to other books; 'it is a point in a network' (Foucault, 1994: 304). Beyond the front and back covers, the ideas, structure, language, and so forth are all part of a system that refers to other texts (Foucault, 1989: 25-26). As new utterances are added, however insignificant they may appear (a new idea, word, or technological advancement, for example), the discourse undergoes a change. A text, such as Gard and Wright's *The Obesity Epidemic*, may prompt a distinct shift in the obesity discourse, whilst others may introduce minor stylistic, linguistic, or thematic advancements. Some books will offer little to the discourse, but will be dependent on, and bound within the wider formation. The changes may be sudden or gradual, but they will be regular and unavoidable (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 49).

When analysing discourses, Foucault (1991: 60) warns against searching for any 'silently intended meanings.' The central theme of the analysis should be, rather, the spoken or written statement (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 45). The analysis of statements is an historical analysis that should avoid 'all interpretation: it does not question things said as to what they are hiding, what they were 'really' saying' (Foucault, 1989: 123). This is not because of a naïve belief that the truth is always spoken, but because any hidden meaning does not affect the content of the statement as it is historically recorded. The analysis is concerned with what it means for specific statements 'to have appeared when and where they did' (Foucault, 1989: 109). Thus there is no space for meanings that failed to materialize in statements. Discourse analysis requires neutrality in relation to both the truth claims (whether or not a statement is true) and the meaning claims (whether the truth claims even makes sense).

The most important entities to explore when analysing discourses are those that appear to be most natural, the statements that are rarely questioned (Foucault, 1989: 24-25). This ties in with the above discussion on governmental technologies; those truth claims that are naturally accepted are often most effective for guiding behaviour. It is pertinent, therefore, that such statements are examined. There is little need to prolong this discussion of discourse, as its purpose has been only to provide a description of what is meant by the term. As the discussion below progresses, the focal point will be the discourse of PESS; the policy,

truth claims, official declarations, and academic literature that surround the subject within a given period of time (2000-2010).

Taken as a whole, chapters one and two discuss at length the discourse surrounding PESS. In Chapter One, the twentieth-century history of PESS was documented; the discussion explored the various ends to which PESS has been used as a technology of government. The latter part of the chapter focused on the reasons behind Labour's heavy investment in the subject. A breakdown of the many aims and objectives (statements made in policy documents) was given, and attention was given to the reasoning underlying the thinking. In Chapter Two some of the core goals were assessed in greater depth. Particular attention was given to the governmental desire to improve health and increase levels of international sporting success. The discussion focused largely on the scientific evidence underpinning the claims made to increase physical activity levels, and the justification behind attempts to increase the number of GT children in the hope of improving international sporting success. The remainder of this chapter will consider the critical discourse that questions the claims behind the lifestyle and obesity arguments. As this can be seen as the central goal of contemporary PESS policy, and is at the heart of many other political objectives, the discussion will focus exclusively on this topic.

The obesity discourse

A healthy and hygienic population is an aspiration of much neoliberal social policy. Due to successful governmental technologies targeted towards such goals, since the late twentieth century there has been little need for overt state inspection and/or direct intervention. Individuals are aware of their 'responsibility' for making healthy lifestyle choices; 'experts'[36] are employed by the state (and other health-promoting agencies) to identify, explain, and reinforce the importance of potential health risks to the wider population. The 'expert' scientific knowledge is broken down into comprehendible guidance on how best individuals can achieve optimal health (as seen in the *5 A Day* campaign). Responsible citizens can then

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[36] Experts are referred to throughout in inverted commas. This is because political parties tend to select from an array of 'expert' advice, and decide which of this advice they are to endorse. As Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982: 48) argue, 'Any speech act can be serious if one sets up the necessary validation procedures, community of experts, and so on.' Therefore, advice is taken from an 'expert' and might not necessarily be considered as expert advice by others.

reflect on the consequences of their lifestyle (past, present, or future) and adapt their conduct accordingly (Nettleton, 1997: 208). It is only through an endless process of 'self-examination, self-care and self-development' that one can hope to achieve a health-optimizing lifestyle (Petersen, 1997: 194). The results of such governmental technologies are apparent in contemporary society; in a constant state of potential illness - as opposed to 'wellness' – discerning consumers buy vitamins, dietary supplements, gym membership, etc., to help align their lifestyle with the 'expert' advice. Facilitating such behavior has been a paradoxical transition in reflexive views towards health; citizens of neoliberal states can expect to live longer than any previous generation (National Statistics, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009: 202). However the state of good health that is associated with such expectancy is seen as elusive. Many individuals now enjoy better health than at any historical period (Gard, 2011: 70), yet their knowledge and fear of poor health (often relatively minor ailments compared to those faced by previous generations) is pronounced.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, overweight and obesity are seen as major health problems in neoliberal nations. As such, both of these non-communicative conditions figure prominently in 'expert' lifestyle advice (for example, NHS, 2011e). Reducing the prevalence of excess body weight is also central to much post-2000 PESS policy. A significant reason for the increased attention given to the conditions is the financial costs that are associated with them. It is worth making a brief digression to consider the economic impact of high levels of overweight/obesity. Withrow and Alter's (2011: 138) review of the economic burden of obesity found that, on average, between 0.7 and 2.8 percent of a country's total healthcare expenditure is dedicated to reducing the prevalence of obesity. Due to the different measurements and methodologies, the figures relating to the economic costs of obesity vary widely. The NAO (2001: 16) estimated that obesity-related illnesses cost the NHS £0.5 billion in 1998, with indirect costs (lost output in the economy due to sickness and absence from work) put at around £2 billion. Allender and Rayner's (2007: 471) forecasts suggests that by 2002 this figure had risen to £3.23 billion (5 percent of NHS expenditure). A Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills report (Foresight, 2010: 40) argues that in 2007 obesity-related illnesses cost the NHS £4.2 billion. The same report projects that the financial burden of obesity on the NHS will rise to £8.3 billion by 2025, reaching £9.7 billion in 2050.

There has been an increase in the perceived risk of becoming overweight. This is apparent, at the individual level, in the increased expenditure on the treatment of obesity-related diseases and on preventative measures and lifestyle consumption. Although there are no official figures for net expenditure on dietary products and the 'weight-loss industry' more broadly, estimates suggest that in the USA alone, $40-$100 billion is spent on such industries (Cummings, 2003). According to a report by global market research company, *Markets and Markets*, the global value of weight loss products and service is set to reach $586.3 billion by 2014 (Market Research News, 2010).[37] A group of stakeholders that are set to benefit from the 'obesity epidemic' are pharmaceutical companies and other medical professionals working in the weight loss industries. At the macro level, governments are increasingly spending more on weight-loss and lifestyle interventions (as discussed earlier in the chapter).

It is important to note that both terms, 'overweight' and 'obesity,' are social constructions (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 41). Whilst 'fat' is a visceral condition, overweight is not. The prefix 'over' suggests there is an optimum or ideal weight, and to be above this is in some way to transgress the norm. Obesity, similarly, is a phenomenological category (reflecting visible bodily size); it is not a medical disease (Gilman, 2008: 18). Etymologically, the word 'obese' comes from the Latin *obedere*, which translates to, 'to eat up, to devour.' Thus, identifying someone as obese 'is judging their behaviour as well as their apparent physical state' (Gard and Wright, 2005: 92). In the UK, the NHS identifies 'normal' weight as a BMI score between 18.5 and 25 (NHS, 2011f). An individual is overweight if their BMI is between 25-30, and obese with a BMI level of 30+ (NHS, 2011g). The BMI measurement, as discussed in Chapter Two, is highly problematic. It is mentioned here only because it is the measure used in official discourse.

Warnings about the consequences of being overweight are presented alongside messages suggesting that weight loss and thinness are good things (Rich and Evans, 2005: 346). Discursive images depicting slender fat-free bodies as desirable have led to the normalization of such corporeal ideals, especially for females and increasingly amongst

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[37] It should be noted that the original report was unavailable for examination due to its significant cost. Therefore, the methodological rigour underpinning the research cannot be verified.

males (Evans *et al.*, 2004: 125). [38] For both men and women, being overweight can be seen to contradict idealized gendered norms. Those who exceed the corporeal norms - regardless of their *natural* body shape and size - are often represented as embodying an inner 'laziness' or 'moral inferiority' (Thorpe, 2003: 135; Evans *et al.*, 2002: 55, 61). The language of obesity risk discourses, combined with the political technologies promoting slenderness and corporeal restraint thus work to 'pathologize those whose bodies fall outside of the norm by reducing bodily difference to a matter of personal responsibility and choice about lifestyle' (Rich and Evans, 2005: 351). To avoid becoming overweight and the risk of the associated diseases (discussed in Chapter Two), individuals adapt their behavior and lifestyle. Risk-avoiding behaviours - dieting, exercise regimes, weight-loss drugs, adapted lifestyles, etc. - become normalized and intricately bound up within 'healthy' lifestyles (Fries, 2008: 354).

A problem of 'epidemic' proportion?

The term 'epidemic' is typically used to refer to a rapid spread of serious infections, with many casualties and the chance of a significant death toll. In the latter half of the twentieth-century the term 'epidemic' appears to have undertaken an etymological transformation.[39] Increasingly, non-infectious entities – such as smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity, violence - came to be seen as problems of 'epidemic' proportions (Boero, 2007: 42). Over the first decade of the twenty-first century much attention has been given to what has been coined the 'obesity epidemic.' This 'global epidemic of overweight and obesity' has recently been called "globesity" by the WHO (2011a). There is little point in providing specific examples of media coverage of the obesity epidemic as such a plethora of examples exists. Indeed, adopting a loose definition of the term, Oliver (2006: 38) ironically suggests that the only epidemic relating to obesity has been in the scale of 'media stories proclaiming obesity to be an epidemic disease.'

Given the myriad stakeholders whose interests lie in raising awareness of the 'obesity epidemic,' it is not surprising that the 'expert' knowledge on which the obesity discourse

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[38] Although the idealization of thinness has been part of western culture since the early twentieth century, it is since the 1960s that dieting and thinness have become a 'mass cultural obsession' (Gordon, 2000: 120).

[39] Boero (2007: 42) refers to the 'obesity epidemic' as a ''post-modern epidemic" whereby an issue lacking a clear pathological basis gets cast in the language and moral panic of more "traditional" epidemics.

draws so heavily, is either written or endorsed by themselves and the organizations they represent. The earlier discussion on risk can provide a useful explanation for the emergence of the 'obesity epidemic.' In a polemical debate in the *British Medical Journal*, Basham and Luik (2008: 244) contend that it is often in the interest of health practitioners and 'experts' to raise awareness of particular medical concerns. They suggest that;

> Some in the public health community believe that deliberate exaggeration or, indeed, misrepresentation of the risks of diseases or certain behaviours or our capacity to prevent or treat them on a population wide basis is justified, if not demanded, in the interests of health. Since many of the exaggerations come from people who understand the scientific uncertainties around overweight and obesity, it seems that these individuals have adopted such an approach to the obesity epidemic

(Basham and Luik, 2008: 244).

The suggestion here is that a problem of 'epidemic' proportions has been constructed by 'experts' in the interest of improving health. To demonstrate how a risk discourse has been created around lifestyle-related diseases, three policy documents will be considered to determine how severe the problem is suggested to be. The same papers will then be explored in relation to the role that schools are expected to play in helping alleviate the issue. The Home Secretary's Foreword in *Choosing Health?* opens with the following statement;

> We are seeing a huge upsurge of interest in improving people's health and wellbeing. It dominates pages in the press every day […] This is all to the good. So to [*sic*] is the recognition that each of us has a responsibility for our own health. There is a growing recognition that the health and well being of communities and society as a whole is not just a matter for central Government, the NHS and other public services.

(DoH and NHS, 2004: iv).

Former Health Secretary, John Reid's, statement clearly builds upon the media representation of poor health alluded in Basham and Luik's (2008: 244) earlier comments. This is seen by Reid as a 'good' thing. This statement is a clear example of a neoliberal response to the perceived problem. The risk of lifestyle-related disease is firmly placed in the hands of the individual who is, in turn, called upon to take responsibility for their own health and well-being. The report goes on to stress that preemptive action and behavior can go a

long way to reducing the risk of illness and disease; 'We all know that there are some simple things that we can do to improve our own health, like eating a healthy diet, stopping smoking and being more physically active' (DoH and NHS, 2004: 1). The consultation goes on to argue for a national response to improve people's health. Building on existing work attempting to 'improve diet and health' in a range of venues, including schools, children are encouraged to think about 'What you eat and how you spend your time in […] school' (p. 11), and calls upon schools to promote healthy lifestyle choices (p. 14).

In the more comprehensive follow-up report, *Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier* (DoH and NHS, 2004a) the arguments of the preliminary consultation are developed. Again, the Foreword provides interesting reading; Tony Blair reiterates the importance 'of our own and our family's health' and stresses that 'the responsibility that we each take for our own health, should be the basis for improving the health of everyone' (DoH and NHS, 2004a: 3). This statement seems to differ slightly from John Reid's in that it calls upon the self-government of the family unit, as opposed to just the individualised conduct of conduct. The responsibility is, here, not just to the self, but to partners and children also. The neoliberal argument is repeated later in Blair's foreword, when he argues that 'changes need to be made on choices, not direction […] Government cannot – and should not – pretend it can 'make' the population healthy' (DoH and NHS, 2004a: 3).

The report comments on the 'big improvements in health and life expectancy over the last century' but also discusses some new health challenges (DoH and NHS, 2004a: 9). Cancer, coronary heart disease (CHD) and strokes are singled out as being of particular concern. Whilst obesity – or, more specifically, the relationship obesity has with these diseases - is not initially discussed, graphs are included that document the projected health costs of increased levels of obesity.[40] In order to promote health, it is proposed that health be promoted 'on the principles that commercial markets use – making it something people aspire to and making healthy choices enjoyable and convenient – will create a stronger demand for health' (p. 20). Making 'health' aspirational, desirable, and enjoyable can be

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[40] It is estimated that increased levels of obesity will, by 2023, cause increases in strokes (5 percent), angina (12 percent), heart attack (18 percent), hypertension (28 percent), and type 2 diabetes (54 percent). It is also estimated that, if current trends continue, the average life expectancy at birth will decrease by five years for males, by 2051 (DoH and NHS, 2004: 10).

seen as an attempt to conduct individual conduct in an implicit way. This, as discussed above, is when government functions most effectively. The policy is littered with obesity-related discussions, warnings, and projections. Childhood obesity, too, is identified as a significant problem. To address this issue a number of proposals are made.

A key component of the strategy's approach to childhood obesity is to capitalize on the potential that schools provide; '*The components of good health* [are] *a core part of children's experience in schools*' (p. 41, *italics in original*). As part of the plans, schools are encouraged to provide after school opportunities to children and parents, 'to practice healthy lifestyles through opportunities for physical activity and classes, for example on cooking, outside school hours (p. 47). Advertising and the availability of 'unhealthy' food and soft drinks was to be heavily regulated in schools, to ensure only 'healthy options' were available (p. 36). Thus allowing children to choose from a predetermined array of choice. In short, the report identified school as a place in which children spend 25 percent of their time. As such, the environment and staff will have a 'major influence on the development of their [children's] knowledge and understanding of health' (p. 55). By promoting a healthy school-wide ethos, the attitudes and behaviour of children can be directed towards a healthy lifestyle.

As a final case, from amongst many potential examples, *Tackling Child Obesity* (NAO, 2006: 9) identifies childhood obesity as 'a growing threat to children's health as well as a current and future drain on [NHS] resources.' Aside from the health risks, the report identifies the potential monetary risks that obesity poses to the nation; the current cost of obesity-related ailments is put at £1 billion per year for the NHS, costing a further £2.3-2.6 billion in indirect costs. Indirect costs were predicted to increase to £3.6 billion by 2010 (p. 9). The report proposes that obesity is tackled 'through a range of approaches.' Foremost upon which is through 'encouraging and supporting healthy eating and physical activity, particularly in schools' (NAO, 2006: 9).[41] The centrality of schools to the report's analysis and suggestions is indisputable. A multiagency approach is promoted that places schools at the heart of local and national interventions. The governmental departments responsible for child obesity are

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[41] Three of the five 'key programmes' already targeting child obesity are based within schools. *School Meals*, *School Sport Strategy*, and the *Healthy Schools Programme* are based in schools, and the remaining two are *Play*, and *Obesity Campaign* (NAO, 2006: 10).

told that for 5-10 year olds, interventions should be aimed at increasing 'children's physical activity levels in schools and [by improving] the quality of the food they eat while at school' (NAO, 2006: 11). Although this is a core aim, the report acknowledges that there is 'no evidence whether this range of programmes […] will encourage obese children or children at risk of obesity to eat more healthily or to exercise more' (p. 11).

The report can be seen to add to the healthy lifestyle discourse that was identified in the *Choosing Health* consultation and report. The multi agency approach adds some complexity to the mode of government promoted, and recommends devolution of government to local agencies. Whilst arguing that children should be responsible for their lifestyle choices, the report encourages other agencies (government department, advertising regulators, and confectioners) to conduct their work in a manner that compliments the governmental rationality. An argument is made for further restrictions on the advertising of 'unhealthy foods' to children (p. 17), better promotion of 'active travel and the opportunities parents have to buy affordable healthy foods' (p. 22), and for 'clearer guidance and support' to be given to schools in order to allow teachers to more effectively tackle overweight and obesity (p. 16).

In a wealth of discursive statements produced or commissioned by Labour, lifestyle is regularly problematized and schools are invariably called upon to help counter the risks children face *vis-à-vis* lifestyle-related diseases. The three examples provided demonstrate how such statements are made, the truth claims they build upon, and how risk is used as a governmental technology to promote the conduct of conduct.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a theoretical background to the core arguments of the thesis. In the first section the concept of government was explored. Neoliberal modes of government were considered in relation to how they utilize the 'conduct of conduct' as an effective mode of guiding the behavior and aspirations of citizens. Attention was then given to the importance risk plays in the neoliberal project. By identifying and publicizing potential risks, governments can encourage individuals to pursue particular governmental rationalities with minimal exertion of force. The first part of the chapter argued that, at its most effective, the

process of government goes undetected to the governed subjects.

The second section focused on how lifestyle has been used as a political technology aimed at shaping the behavior and conduct of individuals. In contemporary society excess body weight has been problematized by 'experts' using scientific knowledge, and subsequently it has come to be viewed as a risk to individuals. Myriad technologies of government have been introduced in the process of guiding individuals' behavior, some of which have been explored above. The material covered in the chapter will be used in the final analytical section of the thesis. It is hoped that such an examination will deepen the understanding of the impacts, and allow for an exploration of whether the stated goals of Labour have been implemented in the manner in which they were formulated. Alternatively, if there are inconsistencies between what is being implemented on the grass roots level and the official discourse, this should also become apparent.

The thesis will now move on to consider the methodological underpinnings before attention turns to a consideration of the empirical data collection phase.

Chapter 4

Methodology

The previous chapters provide detailed explorations of literature related to what this thesis will explore in the empirical stages. In the first chapter there was a discussion of how PE had developed as a subject in English schools over the last century or so. It was argued that the focus and content of the subject has been intertwined with the wider needs and rationalities of the incumbent government. Then, in Chapter Two, the rationale behind the contemporary focus of PE was explored. The main goals of Labour's investment in PESS were critically explored, so as to provide an overview – when taken alongside the latter half of Chapter One – of contemporary PESS. In Chapter Three the influential work of Michel Foucault was discussed, with particular attention being given to his notion of governmentality. The second part of the chapter went on to consider obesity as an example, and how it has been *constructed* as a disease of epidemic proportions. Similar to the conclusions of the first chapter, we saw how PE can be seen as a vehicle of governmental ideology.

The current chapter provides the reader with an understanding of what the research aims to achieve. To begin, the notion of the 'policy cycle' will be introduced; the reader will be alerted to the advantages of such an approach to the analysis of social policy. In the second section attention will turn to the process of policy implementation, which is what the empirical research is interested in evaluating. Following this the philosophical underpinnings of the research will be discussed. To draw the chapter to its closure the first two sections will be synthesised to develop the critical realist method of evaluation.

The stages model of the policy cycle

Analysis of social policy, or of particular stages of a policy's 'lifecycle,' must build pragmatically on existing research and gain as thorough an empirical appreciation of the particular policy area under scrutiny as possible. The most influential framework for the analysis of the policy process, the stages heuristic model, was originally outlined by David Easton (1953) (see Sabatier, 2007: 6). This model divides the policy process into a series of comprehendible *stages* through which social policy passes. Myriad models of the policy cycle have since been developed (Hill, 2005: 19). Since the mid-1980s, however, the stages-heuristic model has been subject to 'devastating criticism' (Sabatier, 2007: 7). Thus, it may appear unfruitful to lend attention to an outdated and questionable framework. Yet, because this research is primarily concerned with two stages of the policy cycle – implementation and evaluation - and because the stages model is still widely used, a discussion of the model is important.

The stages heuristic model is a useful way of breaking down the complexity of the policy process into a series of iterative stages. Stages models of the policy cycle divide the policy process into a number of separate stages, each representing different parts of the policy 'life-cycle.' An oversimplified example would be that (1) a social problem is identified, (2) a solution is formulated, (3) the solution is implemented as a social policy, and (4) the impact of the policy is evaluated. The representation of stages models implies that policy should traverse its life cycle in a linear form (i.e., (1)→(2)→(3)→(4)). However, the stages must be seen as *ideal types*; they are not 'insulated from each other and there may be a succession of feedback loops between them' (Hill, 2005: 21). It may help to consider an influential contribution from the social policy literature.

Hogwood and Gunn (1984: 4) suggest that the stages through which policy issues are likely to pass include;

1. Deciding to decide (searching for 'issues' or agenda setting)

2. Deciding how to decide (or issue filtration)

3. Issues definition

4. Forecasting

5. Setting objectives and priorities

6. Options analysis

7. Policy implementation, monitoring and control

8. Evaluation and review

9. Policy maintenance, succession or termination. [42]

The authors concede that the;

> list is not intended as a straightforward description of what actually happens to every issue; rather, it is a framework for organizing our understanding of what happens […] The dividing line between the various activities are artificial and policy-makers are unlikely to perform them consciously or in the implied 'logical' order

(Hogwood and Gunn, 1984: 4).

Thus, far from being linear, the stages in the cycle will be readdressed, merged into one another, further divided into new stages, given more or less attention than others, and often certain stages will be excluded altogether. Further, a stages model does not suggest that all policy goes through the same processes, nor that individual policies are rolled out in an identical manner on a local, national or international scale; models are guides. In certain instances, such as an unanticipated military invasion or tuberculosis pandemic, stages 1 and 2 may be irrelevant and necessarily bypassed in haste. Decisions may, on other occasions, be made without even cursory attention being paid to stages 4 – 9.

There are many different interpretations of the actual processes policy passes through (for example; Jenkins, 1978: 17; Edwards, 2001: 4), all of which vary in relation to the number and content of stages, and the terminology used. Of vital importance for present purposes are the stages of the policy cycle concerned with the *implementation* and, to a greater extent, *evaluation* of social policy. Of the three stages models referred to above (Jenkins, 1978; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984 and Edwards, 2001) the only stages to be present in all three models are that of 'Implementation' (or 'Implement') and 'Evaluation' ('Evaluate') –

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[42] See Hogwood and Gunn (1984: 7-10) for a more lengthy consideration of the processes involved in each stage of their model.

the other stages differ not only semantically, but also in content. Attention will now move on to consider the importance and dynamics of both policy implementation and evaluation in greater detail. However, first some limitations associated with stages models of representing social policy will be considered.

Limitations within the stages model of social policy

Some argue that the stages model has 'outlived its usefulness and needs to be replaced' (Sabatier, 2007: 7). The four main criticisms levelled at the stages heuristic model are; a) it is not a causal theory as no causal drivers governing the policy process are identified, b) the proposed stages are descriptively inaccurate, c) it is a top-down approach, paying little attention to the implementation and evaluation stages, and d) there is an oversimplification of the usual multiple, interacting cycles (Sabatier, 2007: 7). The criticisms appear to be somewhat harsh. Researchers using such models are usually reflexive on the limitations of their analytic tool, and aware of the inherent simplification and distortions such models produce (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984: 4). The four main concerns raised with the model presume that it will be used in a positivistic, mechanistic manner. Yet, as will now be briefly explored, the criticisms are contestable.

As for the first criticism (not a causal theory), there is no intention for the model to search for causal theories, however, the analysis that is facilitated by the use of the stages model may be built upon to help construct causal theories. For the second concern (descriptive inaccuracy), the defined stages aid creation, description and analysis but, alone, cannot provide this. The third concern (top-down model) is dependent on whether the researcher is inflexible and reliant upon a single model alone. If a researcher is persuaded by a top-down approach then, whatever way reality is modelled, s/he will endeavour to focus on the same processes. Stages models allow for the incorporation of implementation and evaluation stages (bottom-up analysis), and they are, in fact, common to most stages models. Finally, as for the oversimplification of the dynamic processes occurring across multiple cycles, the model does fall short. It would perhaps be useful to have sub- or parallel-stages to highlight the interactivity of multiple cycles (see Edwards, 2001: 4 for an underdeveloped example).

However, as the central appeal of the model is its simplicity, this form of complex analysis should be questioned when presenting basic models.

This discussion has introduced the concept of the stages model of the policy process. This method of explaining social policy is a relatively straightforward way of presenting a complex social system. The model has been hugely influential, but has notable inadequacies. The purpose of this discussion has been to demonstrate the type of processes social policy passes through in its life cycle. In Chapter One, in the historical discussion of PE, it can now be seen how stages 1 and 2 of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984: 4) model – deciding to decide and deciding how to decide - are largely dependent upon the prevailing political *Zeitgeist*. Those issues identified as problems, and the anticipation of social problems, are partly dependent on the incumbent government. In PE, for example, the Conservative and Labour government's decisions to invest in the subject have varied widely over time. It was argued that both the status and content of PE fluctuates in accordance with the wider political rationalities, e.g. military drill, gymnastics, and sport.

Chapters One and Two also highlight the interdependency and blurred boundaries between certain stages of the model. In PE, defining the issue (stage 3), predicting the outcome of policy interventions (stage 4) and setting explicit objectives (stage 5) are, to an extent, inter-dependent. Chapter Two discussed how the problematization of obesity and the ensuing moral panic over weight- and physical activity-related illnesses is being used (along with the 'decline' in international sporting success) to legitimise the contemporary focus of PE. The *issues* are inactivity, healthy lifestyles and increased international sporting success. The predicted, or desired, *outcomes* of recent policy interventions have been to reduce sedentary lifestyles, promote lifelong activity (DCMS, 2000: 19), and 'raise the standards of physical education and sport in all schools' (DCMS, 2000: 7). We can see that these three stages are interdependent, and that change in any will necessarily result in changes to the others.

Implementation: top-down and bottom-up approaches

Implementation is the stage of the policy cycle where the service (product) is delivered to the customer/client. The process is a 'series of events 'triggered off' by a policy decision, involving the translation of policy into operational tasks to be carried out by a variety of actors and agencies' (Barrett and Fudge, 1981: 17). This section will consider the emergence of the implementation sub discipline. The discussion will consider two of the most influential publications in the field of implementation studies (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973 and Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977), and the contrasting arguments underpinning these texts. Although these important texts are some three decades old, the central arguments have retained their significance.

The final moment in the actualisation of social policy is the implementation of the documentation, regulation, guidance and advice that precedes the policy; the process reaches its climax when 'the service is delivered to customers or clients' (Hudson and Lowe, 2004: 203). The seminal work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) was of great importance to the study of policy. Hitherto, political science paid scant attention to that which occurs between the completion of policy formulation and the evaluation of its impact(s). Policy implementation had 'suffered for a long time from a 'black box' approach in that it was assumed that policy decisions were automatically carried through the implementation system as intended and with the desired end results (Younis and Davidson, 1990: 3). Throughout their book, Pressman and Wildavsky consider the process of policy implementation, and argue for a *top-down* approach to policy analysis. They believe that policy is most effectively implemented when what happens 'on the ground' mirrors the ideas of policy makers. The more efficiently recommendations are delegated, the better the implementation process will be; 'the more directly the policy aims at its targets, the fewer the decisions involved in its ultimate realization and the greater the likelihood it will be implemented' (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973: 147). The focus is clearly upon those at the 'top' of the policy making chain, and little attention (or importance) is given to those implementing policy. Although Pressman and Wildavsky's contribution can be considered

seminal, it soon faced severe criticism for its neglect of the people implementing the policy on the ground (Parsons, 1995: 467).

The 'top-down' approach has parallels with some of the major criticisms levelled at the stages-heuristic model of policy analysis. It views policy as a linear process that, when adhered to rigorously, will in reality be operationalised as the *direct* product of the policy makers. Top-down analysis, through its 'emphasis on lines of hierarchical control, suffers from the serious disadvantage of omitting the reality of policy modification or distortion at the hands of policy implementers' (Younis and Davidson, 1990: 12). This neglect of 'significant others' in the implementation process has been the defining criticism of the top-down approach (Parsons, 1995: 467).

On the other side of the implementation debate were Weatherley and Lipsky (1977), who were the first to seriously consider the implementation of policy as largely the result of (or significantly impacted by) those implementing the recommendations. The 'bottom-up' approach contends that those implementing policies must be flexible and adaptive to local needs if policy is to be implemented effectively;

> street-level bureaucrats must find ways to accommodate the demands placed upon them and confront the reality of resource limitation. They typically do this by routinizing procedures, modifying goals, rationing services, asserting priorities, and limiting or controlling clientele. In other words, they develop practices that permit them in some way to process the work they are required to do

> (Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977: 172).

This view clearly stands in contradistinction to top-down studies. Where 'top-downers' overlook the 'local,' bottom-up analysts focus overwhelmingly on the implementation site. Bottom-up approaches recognise the importance of policy *makers*, but equally accept that a great deal of adaptation occurs when policy is introduced at the 'street level.' A central argument pivots around the schism between objectives and reality. For 'what happens on the ground often falls […] short of the original aspirations' (Barrett and Fudge, 1981: 3). Bottom-uppers claim that this is the result of the different environments and individuals that are host to the new policies. The content of policy and the impact it has, is often

'substantially modified, elaborated or even negated during the implementation stages' (Hill and Hupe, 2005: 7).

For Weatherley and Lipsky (1977: 172), then, the 'street-level bureaucrats *are the policymakers* in their respective work arenas.' It is the individuals who are turning policy into practice that determines how a policy is implemented and whether or not it achieves the intended goals (Hudson and Lowe, 2004: 208). The implication of Weatherley and Lipsky's contentions are two-fold. Firstly, for those involved in the policy making process, there was one message;

> control over people was not the way forward to effective implementation. Instead of regarding human beings as chains in a line of command, policy-makers should realize that policy is best implemented by [...] a 'backward mapping' of problems and policy

> (Parsons, 1995: 468).

Second, and for policy analysts, the work demonstrates that in order to understand 'policy' and to begin to comprehend the complexities of why *X* policy works in *Y* location but not *Z*, significant scrutiny of the implementation, at the level of the 'street bureaucrats,' must occupy a position of central importance in any analysis.

As can be seen from the above, strict adherence to the top-down method evades consideration of local level adaptation. Similarly, as Younis and Davidson (1990: 12) argue, the bottom-up approach 'does not, on its own, provide a satisfactory resolution to the problems of public policy, since one would question whether its complete rejection of the authority of policymakers [...] is desirable.' Peck and 6 (2006: 10) suggest that it has become rare for policy analysts to adhere exclusively to either the top-down or bottom-up model. Analysts must, rather, build upon both conceptions if they are to provide 'a thoughtful appreciation of implementation' (Peck and 6, 2006: 12). In line with this advice the present research is neither exclusively top-down, nor bottom-up. Some elements of the top-down approach have already been considered, and will be further developed in the following chapters. However, the central focus of the research is with the process of policy implementation at the local level, and as a result a more significant emphasis is on the bottom-up approach.

Theory based evaluation

Evaluation is the penultimate stage of Hogwood and Gunn's policy cycle (1984: 4). For many policy analysts, however, evaluation begins at an earlier stage of the policy cycle. Whilst there may be ambiguity concerning *when* evaluation should commence, few would deny its importance within the overall cycle. As noted in Chapter One, Labour invested unprecedented amounts in large social programmes (Coote *et al*, 2004: 1). Increasingly, and particularly since 1997, politicians proclaim that 'what matters is what works' (Sanderson, 2002: 3). As a result of this '*what works?*' mantra, evidence has come to the fore in policy making. In this evaluative climate, SSPs have not evaded state funded evaluations. In September 2003 the Loughborough Partnership (LP) was selected to provide yearly evaluations (2003 – 2009) of the SSP initiative; the evaluations have been co-funded by the DES and DCMS (the findings of which have been discussed in Chapter One). Due to the vested interests of both governmental departments funding the evaluations, there has been the potential, at least, that the evaluations have not been conducted 'without fear or favour' (Simons, 2006: 246). This is not to question the neutrality or selectivity of these evaluations, but to suggest that the funders may have requested that certain elements be analysed and others not. If the evaluation's funder has a vested interest in highlighting the successes of an initiative it is important that independent evaluations are also considered. The research proposed here aims to provide an independent evaluation of SSPs, with every effort being made to provide as unbiased an account as possible. All contentions made will be firmly grounded in the data adduced. In the following discussion, the *type* of evaluation that will be conducted will be outlined.

Evaluation is taken here to be an applied form of social research, aimed at making social programmes accountable (Kazi, 2003: 2). Evaluators should have, as a fundamental concern, the intent to inform policy and resource allocation decisions (Tilley, 2000: 97). By providing policy makers with 'the facts' – or, more accurately, *an* account of the initiative's impact - evaluators can assist decision makers in making informed choices and decisions (Weiss, 1993: 94). Evaluators should elicit the fundamental impacts of the concerned policy and make rigorously informed judgements as to the merit or worth of the programme on the intended audience (Simons, 2006: 245-246). Worthwhile evaluations of interventions are not simply

'tick box' exercises consisting of single sentence conclusions. Indeed, the aim of evaluation involves far more than examining goal attainment (Patton, 1997: 23).

'Realist' evaluation is a 'theory based evaluation' (TBE). TBEs have developed in response to the 'black box' problem of method-based (experimental) evaluations. Method-based approaches to evaluation, following a successionist view of causality,[43] are reproached for being 'unable and unwilling to open up 'the black box'' (Pedersen and Rieper, 2008: 271). The 'black box' is considered the 'space between the actual input and expected output of a programme' (Stame, 2004: 58). The basic logic of an experimental design is to take two, roughly similar groups, and provide one with the intervention but not the other. The evaluator measures the relevant properties of both groups before and after the intervention. Any changes that have occurred are then compared and the resulting difference is the measure of the intervention's impact (Pawson and Tilley, 1994: 293). However, this tells policy makers little about what it is to do with the programme that brought about the impact, and how.

TBE, on the other hand, is premised on a generative view of causality that 'explains transformation by reference to an external event on the one hand, but also refers to some internal feature of that which is changed' (Pedersen and Rieper, 2008: 272). The method-based approach may be able to identify whether a programme has achieved the desired outputs, but it cannot 'explain what factors were responsible for the [programme's] success – or failure' (Weiss, 1997: 502). For example, a method-based evaluation may inform us that the SSP initiative has increased the range of physical activities on offer and raised the average length of time children are physically active for. However, the space between the input (introduction of SSPs) and output (increased diversity of, and time spent in, physical activity) – 'the black box' – remains unexplained. To aid future decisions, evaluators and policy makers must identify not only *if* an initiative has fulfilled its intended outcomes, but also *how* the intervention has succeeded or failed. Underlying TBE is the idea that inter-ventions can be summarised in a 'phased sequence of cause and effect' (Weiss, 1997: 501).

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[43] Successionists believe in the Humean view that 'causation is unobservable and that one can only make such inferences on the basis of observational data' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 32). Causation, for successionists, is established via a 'controlled sequence of observations,' which ipso facto, take observation from the level of the presumed (or likely) to the *causal*.

To understand the centrality of theory to both programmes and evaluations the concept of 'programme theory' needs to be explored. Behind all social programmes is a programme theory. This is fundamental to any programme as it is, in essence, a belief that the intervention will result in specific, desired, outcomes. Programme theories are not adopted solely because of scientific proof or social research findings (Stame, 2004: 59). Rather, the programme theory will be tied to a host of other issues. For eminent Harvard evaluation theorist Carol Weiss (1997: 503), programmes are;

> usually designed on the basis of experience, practice knowledge, and intuition, and practitioners go about their work without articulating the conceptual foundations of what they do. Theories do not have to be right and they do not have to be uniformly accepted. They are the hypotheses on which people, consciously or unconsciously, build their program plans and actions.

Without repeating the examination of post-1997 policy in Chapters One and Two, it is important to understand that the rationale behind Labour's overall investment in PESS combine to create the programme theory behind the investment. In PESS there has been a strong belief in the power of partnership working to assist in realising the underlying goals, however there is little discussion (in the PESS policy discourse) of *why* partnership working would be the most effective way to fulfil the objectives. As Weiss (1997: 503) notes, the decision was more than likely based on past experience and intuition (a theme common to much partnership justification), but rarely was the programme theory discussed in more than a sentence or two.

Realist evaluation: Context, Mechanism, Outcome (CMO)

Realist evaluation has its roots in Pawson and Tilley's (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*. The approach is firmly grounded in the realist philosophy of social science. Although realism has a long history in the philosophy of science and social science (Robson, 2005: 29),[44] it is the 'critical realism' most frequently associated with Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1979, 1989) that provides the philosophical underpinnings of Pawson and Tilley's evaluation method. Realist evaluation functions at the middle range, steering a path between centralised policy making and the implementation process (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 17). A core part of the method is an aim to compare the 'official' policy directives with what is actually implemented at the grass roots level (Pawson, 2006: 106). An important point to note is that the subject matter of the realist evaluator – the social programmes - are unequivocally social systems, comprising 'the interplays of individuals and institutions, of agency and structure, and of micro and macro social processes' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 63). [45]

The basic concern is the *outcome* of social policy.[46] But, what exactly causes the outcomes is, firstly, the mechanisms, and secondly the context in which social policy is introduced. 'This

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[44] See Putnam's (1987: Chapter One) discussion on the 'many faces' of scientific realism.

[45] Although social interventions do not exist in the same sense as, say, a magnetic field, they *do* exist. Without concepts such as 'social programme' or 'social structure' we could not make sense of individuals - as all individuals are intrinsically social (Manicas, 1998: 317). For critical realists there is a two-way relationship between structure and agency. Firstly, the form society takes is the product of human agency (past and present), and secondly, the human *umwelt* – 'that region of the world which is available to a species by virtue of their capacities to register and explore it' (Harré, 1992: 154) – is the result of social structures. As social interventions are forms of social structure, they too impinge upon the *umwelt*, as do human beings axiomatically influence social programmes.

[46] Programme designers are restricted in the capacity they have to formulate initiatives. The preceding government, current political agenda, public opinion, financial constraints, religious and cultural sensitivities, etc., constrain the formulation and implementation of policy. Thus, whilst acknowledging the capacity policy makers have when designing interventions, one must be sensitive to the pre-existing conditions inhibiting their actions. It is important to note that individuals do not create society, or the phenomena therein. For critical realists, society is a continually transforming product of human agency. Social structures *and* relations 'pre-exist the individuals who enter in to them' (Bhaskar, 1989: 4).

proposition – *causal outcomes follow from mechanisms acting in contexts* – is the axiomatic base upon which all realist explanation builds' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 58). CMO configurations – (*C*) Context, (*M*) Mechanism, (*O*) Outcome (see figure 4.1) – must be considered when addressing the question of 'what works for whom in what circumstances?' (Pawson, 2006: 25). The following discussion will consider mechanisms, contexts, and outcomes before attention turns to a hypothetical example of Pawson and Tilley's CMO configuration in action. In order to maintain a focused discussion of the evaluation methodology, the philosophical discussion of critical realism will be kept to the footnotes.

Mechanisms (M)

For Pawson and Tilly (1997: 65), explanatory mechanisms are the 'most characteristic tool of a realist explanation.' A central belief of critical realism is that social phenomena can rarely, if ever, be explained by empirical observation alone (Sayer, 2000: 14). To provide a detailed explanation of how social phenomena work, researchers must go *beyond* the surface.[47]

However, individuals *do* reproduce and transform the existing social structures in their everyday lives. For Bhaskar (1979: 35) 'society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity. But it is not the product of it.' Consciously or not, individuals reproduce and transform the social structures governing their substantive activities - examples include marriage and employment. People rarely marry in order to reproduce the nuclear family, neither do individuals enter paid employment to sustain the capitalist economy, however, 'it is nevertheless the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is also a necessary condition for, their activity' (Bhaskar, 1979: 35).

[47] A defining feature of critical realist ontology is that reality is *stratified* (Bhaskar, 1989: 2). We cannot directly observe society, we can only witness its activities and products; social structures are not observable (Manicas, 1998: 318). For critical realists there is more to the world than observable outcomes. Reality has ontological depth, for 'events arise from the workings of mechanisms which derive from the structures of objects' (Sayer, 2000: 15). Reality is stratified, and the observable is but one domain of this complex reality. The task of the social scientist is to describe what processes are occurring, behind the scenes if you like, for a social phenomenon to be made possible (Bhaskar, 1989: 4). The emphasis on the stratification of reality means that any explanation must be considered in a wider context than is initially thought to affect the observable phenomenon (Outhwaite, 1998: 293).

Critical realists identify three domains of reality: the *real*, *actual*, and *empirical* (Bhaskar, 1975: 56). The *real* is the fundamental level where mechanisms are to be found, independent of human identification. Mechanisms exist regardless of their operationalisation (Bhaskar, 1979: 11). 'Whether they be physical, like minerals, or social, like bureaucracies, they have certain structures and causal powers, that is, capacities to behave in particular ways' (Sayer, 2000: 11). Whereas the *real* relates to the structures and powers behind objects, the *actual* concerns what happens when these structures or powers are activated. The actual can be thought of as

Examination of the underlying mechanisms takes evaluators away from questions such as 'does the programme work?' to questions like '*how* does the programme work?' and '*what* is it about the programme that makes it work?' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 66). Whether or not an initiative operates as intended is dependent upon the mechanisms; it is the mechanisms that 'explains what it is about the system that makes things happen' (Pawson, 2006: 23).[48] Pawson and Tilley claim that;

> we would expect 'program mechanisms' (i) to reflect the embeddedness of the program within the stratified nature of social reality; (ii) to take the form of propositions which will provide an account of how both macro and micro processes constitute the program; (iii) to demonstrate how program outputs follow from the stakeholders' choices (reasoning) and their capacity (resources) to put these into practice
>
> (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 66).

Sayer (1992: 107) argues that 'although causal powers exist necessarily by virtue of the nature of the objects which possess them, it is contingent whether they are ever activated or exercised.' Social policies address instances in which mechanisms are expected to operate, yet are not *necessarily* triggered. For example, prior to SSPs being introduced, most schools had the *potential* (the underlying mechanisms were in place) to extend the range of activities on offer, to form partnerships with other schools, and to develop pathways to clubs for GT children.[49] The mechanisms were often in place, but for various reasons they frequently remained dormant. The introduction of SSPs, testament to the findings of past

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the manifestation of the real. The 'actual' occurs regardless of its being witnessed by a human being (Danermark *et al.*, 2002: 199). When actual events *are* experienced by an individual it becomes an empirical fact; the 'empirical' being the domain of experience (Sayer, 2000: 12). In social science the domains of reality are most often unravelled in the following order; (1) empirical → (2) actual → (3) real. As one moves from level 1→2→3, the level of understanding is deepened.

[48] In line with the realist aspirations to ontological depth, the assessment of causality requires more than empirical observation of recurring events (Sayer, 2000: 14). Critical realists maintain that scientific investigation *does* involve empirical observation but, due to the deep domains of reality, an event cannot be reduced to empirical observation. To understand a given phenomenon, 'it is essential that we know the mechanisms that produce the empirical events, and these are seldom directly visible' (Danermark *et al.*, 2002: 22). A realist explanation thus includes reference to the mechanisms that provide the necessary conditions for the actualisation of the empirical. That is, it examines the conditions that must be in place for an event to occur (Sayer, 1992: 122).

[49] For example, many schools already had adequate facilities and equipment, proactive teachers, informal networks between schools, and links to local clubs and organisations.

evaluations (see, LP, 2005: 2-4; 2007: 1-4) has, in many cases, triggered these underlying mechanisms and brought about the desired outcomes. LP evaluations suggest that certain characteristics tend to allow for optimal functioning of SSPs. Attributes that have tended to increase effectiveness include 'qualified and enthusiastic personnel, efficient local organisation and transparent and effective channels of communication,' 'regular formal and informal contact between PDMs, SSCos and PLTs' (2005: 4) and operating 'within a supportive organisational and political environment' (2007: 5).

Figure 4.1. CMO diagram
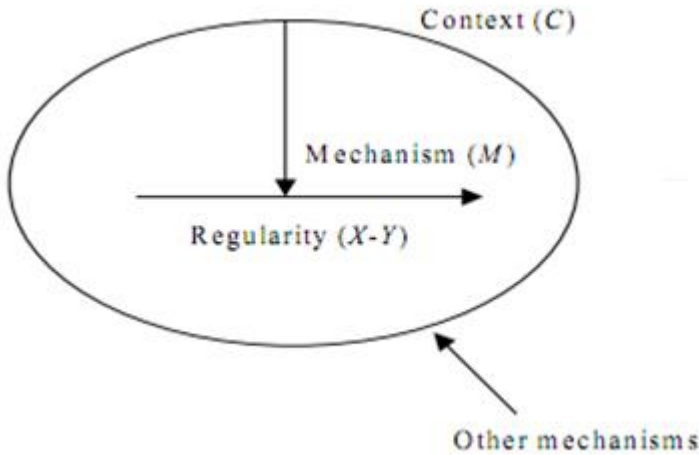
(Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 60).

As a detailed account of the macro and micro processes constituting the SSP programme is developed, the depth of the analysis shifts from the observable outputs to a more thorough understanding of *how* a given Partnership works. [50] The level of analysis deepens to reveal 'the embeddedness of the program within the stratified nature of social reality' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 66). As was discussed in Chapter One, the DCSF claimed that in 2008, 90 percent

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[50] Evaluation of social programmes should consider both the individual reasoning and the structural resources on offer (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 66). At the individual level of reasoning, for example, what is the desirability of the activities offered by the School Sport Partnership? What benefits will children get from attending after school clubs? And why should head teachers and/or parents encourage their children to be physically active? On a macro level, we might ask if a programme provides the means to promote lifestyle change? Whether there is credible evidence provided in support of the aims of the programme? Or, if there is the sufficient infrastructure to support programme objectives?

of pupils participated in at least two hours of 'high quality' PE per week (DCSF, 2008: 2). This outcome indicates that the programme has surpassed one of its central aims – to ensure 85 percent of children participate in two hours 'high quality' PE by 2008 (Sport England, 2003) – but provides no evidence of how such results were produced. It is only by looking at the underlying mechanisms of the 'school-Partnership' relationship that one can explain how the results were achieved.[51] This process of examining what mechanisms bring about particular outcomes is central to the empirical research.

Contexts (C)

Context is the partner of mechanism in the realist understanding of causation. The relationship between mechanisms and the effects they have is *contingent* upon the context(s) (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 69).[52] All SSPs have the causal mechanisms that allow them to work, but whether and indeed how they work is contingent on the *context*; for all social interventions are introduced in to pre-existing contexts. As contexts differ on numerous fronts, examination of the prevailing conditions is essential when evaluating social

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[51] As will be explored in the Methods Chapter, it is worth noting that a major concern with the collection and presentation of the outcomes of the SSP initiative is that the data collection process is not reliable. Because the PESSCL/PESSYP surveys are self-completion, schools can misrepresent – intentionally, or not – the percentage of children engaged in two hours of physical activity (see Chapter One).

[52] To aid the understanding of 'context,' it is important to clarify the critical realist position *vis-à-vis* social structures. The greatest epistemological difference between the natural and social sciences is that, for natural scientists the object of study can often be examined in a closed system (laboratory experiment, for example). Social phenomena only occur in open systems. In closed systems 'a constant conjunction of events occurs' (Bhaskar, 1975: 14), which ensures no qualitative variation in objects *if* the causal mechanisms operate consistently (Sayer, 1992: 122). Social scientific inquiry only occurs in open systems where 'invariant empirical regularities do not obtain' (Bhaskar, 1979: 45). Because social systems are intrinsically dependent on human agency and, as individuals are 'living' and 'continually changing' (Manicas, 1998: 319), social systems cannot be treated as closed systems.

It is possible for natural scientists to create settings that isolate chemical structures. It is impossible, however, to explore social settings where one can be certain of the presence or absence of other mechanisms (Danermark *et al.*, 2002: 43). The consequences of the open nature of social systems are most marked in the attribution of causality. For realists, causation is not simply the identification of a regular succession of events or repeated occurrences. Causation depends, as we have seen, 'on identifying causal mechanisms and how they work, and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions' (Sayer, 2000: 14). In artificially created closed systems (made possible in natural science), where one can eliminate extrinsic influences (oxygen, water, light, etc.), assigning causality to underlying mechanisms - although a time consuming and meticulous endeavour (Danermark *et al.*, 2002: 185) – is eminently more comprehendible.

programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 70). It should be stressed that 'context,' in realist parlance, does not refer exclusively to locality. There are *at least* four 'contextual layers' to realist evaluation:

- The *individual* capacities of key actors;

- The *interpersonal* relationships supporting the intervention;

- The *institutional* setting, and;

- The wider *infra-structural* system

(Pawson, 2006: 31).

What is contextually distinctive for each implementation site is not only location, but also the make-up of personnel, employee relations (and relations between programme staff and host community/organisations), dynamics and intricacies of organisations, and the social, geographical, and political context in which the programme operates. The personal and technical characteristics of SSP staff, for example, may influence the relations forged with schools and the quality of events and training offered. Also, geographical attributes of schools and SSPs can, more practically, limit the interaction due to inaccessibility or time/ travel considerations. For Pawson (2006: 24), 'a mass of different contextual constraints lurks in wait for every program,' and the successes and failures of social policies are 'limited to [these] contextual constraints.' It is the 'contextual conditioning' of the various objectives of social programmes 'which turns (or fails to turn) causal potential into a causal outcome' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 69). Each school, when introduced to their SSP, had its own established characteristics that meant some were able to better manage the programme's implementation than others (see discussion on partnership working in Chapter Two). Pawson (2006: 25) suggests;

> there is always choice but it is never a matter of free will. Programmes are met with constrained choices, located in pre-existing conditions, and these, as well as the processes internal to the intervention, determine the balance of winners and losers.

It is imperative, therefore, that the evaluator investigates the extent to which these pre-existing structures either enable or restrict the projected aims of the social programme under scrutiny (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 70).

The suggestion that the impacts of policy differ between sites is not a new observation. In relation to SSPs, it may be because a Partnership's core staff are particularly experienced, highly skilled or notably cohesive, that the policy succeeds. Other Partnerships may benefit from a rich natural environment; they may be located within close proximity to green space, rivers or lakes. Another Partnership, having an exceptionally supportive LEA and the full backing of local community organisations, may provide an abundance of opportunities, facilitated by energetic individuals at minimal cost. The examples are numerous. A realist evaluation of the impact SSPs have in schools will demonstrate, in-depth, the contexts in which Partnerships *may*[53] operate most (in-)effectively, and what contextual conditions facilitate the attainment of the desired and undesired outcomes.

Outcomes (O)

Outcomes are the result of particular mechanisms working in specific contexts (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 59). The goal of realist explanation is to explain these outcomes (*C+M=O*). The aim of many evaluations, as previously discussed, is to merely identify the outcomes. Realist evaluators must demonstrate what it is about a programme (*M*) that works (or fails to work) for whom, and in what conditions (*C*). SSPs may operate successfully in certain areas, but ineffectively in another; on the surface (the empirical) the areas may appear similar, but the outcomes may differ hugely. The realist seeks to understand circumstances where the programme has been both effective *and* ineffective. A thorough understanding of how mechanisms work, and an understanding of the contexts in which they operate, allows us to develop a theoretical understanding of;

> what is going on which can then be used to optimize the effects of the innovation by appropriate contextual changes, or by finding alternative ways of countering blocking mechanisms, or even by changing the innovation itself so that it is more in tune with some of the contexts where positive change has not been achieved

> (Robson, 2002: 39).

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[53] With scientific generalisations 'there are no exceptions.' However with built-in uncertainty – the *may* – 'the likelihood of there being exceptions is clearly recognized and this seems an appropriate concept for research in areas like education where human complexity is paramount' (Bassey, 1999: 52). The issue of generalisation will be explored in greater depth in the methods chapter.

Policy makers tend to be concerned, 'often besotted and sometimes bewildered by performance measures' (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 9). There is, therefore, a common preference for outcomes to be presented as succinctly as possible. Realist evaluation is concerned less with what the actual outcome is, than with the manner in which it was produced. It may be clear that subsequent to the introduction of a SSP in a particular school, the number of physical activities on offer increased, or that the amount of time children spent physically active doubled, but this says little about *how* the outcomes were produced. Reproduction of the successes of SSPs 'is not achieved by the simple repetition of a winning formula' (Pawson, 2006: 22). To improve the likelihood of repeating successful outcomes, researchers must understand what it is that produces the outcomes.

CMO configurations: an example

The CMO proposition has now been discussed in sufficient depth. In order to demonstrate how the *C+M=O* formula operates in reality a hypothetical example will now be considered. The following SSP-related case builds on and adapts the examples given by Pawson and Tilley (Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 72-82, 2004: 6-10). As Pawson and Tilley (1998: 83) contend, 'the very nature of the [programme] would be contradicted were we to be able to spell out in advance what is actually to be delivered.' Hence, the following posits no claims to truth, and is purely for explanatory purposes. As there are numerous programme theories built into the SSP initiative, the following example will be restricted to just one of these.[54] The CMO configuration that will be considered is the component intervention aimed at increasing the range of sporting activities offered to children (DCMS, 2000: 8).

School A is a large primary school, located in a relatively affluent area of a mid-size city. The school recently received an outstanding Ofsted inspection report, which highlighted the school's excellent quality of teaching and effective management. The school was also commended for the personal development of individual learners. When the local SSP was introduced to the school, numerous mechanisms were triggered. The encouragement of SSP

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[54] It is important not to confuse mechanisms with component interventions. The SSP initiative has numerous component interventions, including; increasing the number of sporting activities available, ensuring all children are physically active, providing opportunities for gifted and talented children, etc. The term 'mechanism' is not used to refer to these components, but rather 'the ways in which any one of the components or any set of them, or any step or series of steps brings about change' (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 7).

staff to increase the range of activities on offer resulted in the school working in partnership with local primary and secondary schools (M1), which led to greater involvement from local sporting clubs (M2). The newfound involvement of external organisations increased access to a number of facilities (M3), and coaches with expertise in different sports (M4). This led more children to pursue sporting activities outside of school hours (M5), and thus develop their sporting prowess (M6). County coaches were alerted to the work of the school and numerous children were identified as GT (M7). Of course, the impacts were not all positive, and some children from less affluent families were unable to participate in many activities outside of school (M8). This led to increased cases of bullying and playground disturbances (M9).

The school has been fortunate in that the contexts in which it finds itself is largely supportive of the SSP initiative. The Partnership is located in the Specialist Sport College just around the corner from the school (C1), which means that the SSCo visits the school at least once a week (C2). The SSCo has developed good relations with teaching staff and pupils alike (C3), and has thus been able to assist with both talent identification (C4) and teacher training (C5). Due to the close proximity of local schools and leisure facilities, the SSCo has set up numerous inter-school leagues (C6), which engage many local children. The huge interest spurred by one of the events, an inter-school golf tournament, led a golf club in the neighbouring town to establish a junior section, offering children discounted rates (C7). Many children now attend the golf lessons on weekday nights (C8).

The outcomes of the Partnership's introduction have been both intended and unintended. For example, the range of sporting activities available for children have increased substantially (O1), as too has the quality of provision (O2) and time spent in physical activity (O3). Teachers have reported improvements in concentration levels (O4) and a decline in the number of absences (O5). However, a number of teachers have voiced concerns over dwindling attendance rates for the after school cookery and language classes (O6). It has been difficult to prove any direct link, but local councillors have suggested that, since the introduction of the SSP, truancy rates have declined (O7) and the number of complaints lodged against unsociable children have also fallen (O8).

This fictional case study demonstrates how the outcomes of the SSP initiative are the direct result of mechanisms working in particular contexts. The example also highlights how new contexts and mechanisms emerge during implementation.

Chapter summary

This chapter has covered a wide range of issues. Initially the 'policy cycle' was discussed. The importance of 'implementation' and 'evaluation' were highlighted and then explored in relation to the thesis. In an attempt to bridge the 'bottom-up – top-down dichotomy' that is familiar to many implementation studies, this research is largely a bottom-up study, but also incorporates elements of top-down analyses. The section on evaluation demonstrated the importance of the research and considered the superiority of theory-based approaches. The crux of the chapter was a consideration of the critical realist method of evaluation, with a complimentary exploration of critical realist philosophy (which specifically highlighted the ontological depth of reality). To understand the outcomes of social policies it is crucial to examine the CMO configurations in which the initiative is introduced. In drawing the chapter to its close, a hypothetical CMO analysis was offered. This was not intended as an accurate reflection of the implementation of SSPs, but merely as a simplistic breakdown to highlight (basically) the explanatory potential of realist evaluation. Now the philosophical aspects of the research have been explored, the following chapter will outline the methods that will be deployed for the empirical research.

Chapter 5

Methods (Part A)

In the previous chapter the philosophical underpinning of the thesis were laid out. The realist method of evaluation was discussed and developed in relation to the present objectives. In this chapter attention will turn to the actual methods of investigation to be used. The discussion of research methods will be split into two main parts. First, the course of the research will be outlined; consideration will be given to a host of issues related to the research sites and data collection methods. In the second, smaller section, a more reflective approach will be adopted, consisting of a narrative exploration documenting the research process as it unfolded. Wellington (2000: 51) claims that, like most qualitative research, 'educational research is a messy business and it would be wrong to pretend otherwise.' He goes on to note that, amongst 'the most common activities in real research is *compromise.*' The latter part of the chapter will highlight the pragmatic nature of educational research and discuss the compromises made during the planning and empirical stages.

The previous chapter clarified that the concern of this evaluation is not, '*does* the SSP initiative work?' but rather '*what works for whom in what circumstances?*' To demonstrate how mechanisms and contexts work to produce certain outcomes, a multi-case analysis is likely to prove most insightful. If the study was restricted to a single school, and the relationship it shares with a SSP, only an in-depth understanding of the contexts and mechanisms in that specific school could be explored. By focusing on a small number of schools, the analysis will have different CMO configurations to consider. Documenting each case will highlight the individual CMO configurations in each school. This information, although insightful alone, will then be used in a comparative manner to:

- Develop an in-depth explanation of the impacts SSPs have in primary schools.

- Identify contexts and mechanisms that allow for the effective (or ineffective) attainment of the YST's/government's desired outcomes.

- Develop a theoretical understanding behind the aims of the SSP initiative as it is laid out at the grass roots level.

The research methods are qualitative, consisting primarily of interviews, but also including some document analysis and observation of PE lessons. As past evaluations – including the PESSCL and PESSYP surveys - have been largely quantitative in nature (see Smith and Leech (2010: 337) for practitioner views on the positivistic nature of the PESSCL/PESSYP surveys), a primary goal here is to provide a qualitative investigation. In order to conduct this most effectively, a case-based approach will be adopted.

Case-based research

Case study research is an ambiguous description used for numerous forms of social research. There are many different interpretations of what is meant by case-based research (Gerring, 2007: 17). In this thesis, when speaking of cases, reference is being made to the following definition; 'A case may be created out of any phenomenon so long as it has identifiable boundaries and comprises the primary object of an inference' (Gerring, 2007: 19). It is just as reasonable, for example, to refer to neo-liberalism as a case, as it is a Local Educational Authority, a school, or class of children. Importantly, the cases which are of central concern in the thesis are the *primary schools*, not the SSPs. (For studies that examines the initiative from the point of view of SSP staff (including PDMs, SSCos and PLTs) see Flintoff (2003, 2008), Griggs and Ward (2010) and Smith and Leech (2010)).

Bryman (2001: 48) suggests that the basic case study is a 'detailed and intensive analysis of a single case.' Similarly, Robson (2002: 89) claims that case studies involve the 'development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case', or of a small number of related cases.' Yin, author of the highly successful *Case Study Research*, provides a more technical description;

1.A case is an empirical inquiry that

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when

- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident

2.The case study inquiry

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis

(Yin, 2009: 18).

An important amendment that can be made to Yin's definition is that the study need not be contemporary. Theoretically, it would be as feasible to study the state of PE prior to the introduction of SSPs, as it would be contemporarily. Although it may be methodologically problematic, provoking inaccurate notions of the past, the point is that a case is a 'spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time' (Gerring, 2007: 19).

In-depth research focusing on a single school-Partnership relationship would be informative. The present research, however, is concerned with how *different* mechanisms and contexts combine to produce outcomes. Thus, it is more desirable to consider multiple cases. To adequately consider the CMO configurations, the evaluation must incorporate sufficient depth to enable a degree of analysis that exposes their underlying structures. Therefore, a trade-off has to be made regarding the depth of analysis and breadth of CMO configurations.[55] As Gerring (2007: 19) suggests, whilst case studies 'may incorporate several cases […] at a certain point it will no longer be possible to investigate those cases intensively.' For present purposes it was important to consider the inexperience of the researcher and constraints; on time for data collection, transcription and analysis.[56]

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[55] A research project could explore many cases superficially *and* a smaller amount in greater depth (Gerring, 2007: 1). Given the time, financial capacity, and personnel, such a project would be a welcome edition to the literature.

[56] Although there were three years in which to conduct the research, due to there being a sole-researcher, and the imperative to conduct the empirical, analytical, and write-up stages of the thesis with as much rigour as possible, the time-frame prohibited in-depth analysis of additional schools.

In the following section additional issues related to the sample size will be addressed. The section will also act as a critique of two influential contributions to case-based sampling.

Conceptualising case-based research (Stake and Yin)

Two widely discussed approaches to case study research are provided by Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) (see Baxter and Jack, 2008).[57] Both authors suggest different motivations for using case based methods. Stake (1995: 3-4) distinguishes between the *intrinsic*, *instrumental*, and *collective* case study. The intrinsic case is used 'because we need to learn about that particular case' (Stake, 1995: 3). Instrumental cases are used when there is 'a need for general understanding' - when, in other words, there is a desire 'to understand something else' (p. 3). More recently, Stake has suggested that instrumental cases are 'examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest' (Stake, 2008: 123). When researchers choose multiple cases, each of which is instrumental, they are conducting a collective case study (Stake, 1995: 3-4).

Yin (2009: 47-49) argues that single-case studies are appropriate in several circumstances, noting five possible motives; 1) the case is *critical* in testing a well-formulated theory, 2) it is an *extreme* or *unique* example, 3) it is *representative* or *typical* of others, 4) the case is *revelatory*, offering a unique opportunity to explore previously inaccessible phenomenon, or 5) the case is studied for *longitudinal* purposes. Yin (p. 50) goes on to suggest that single-case studies can be divided into subunits. For example, a school may be the case, but the researcher can examine subunits within the school; such as special needs provision, reception classes, break- and lunchtimes, etc. Cases with subunits are *embedded*, and those that are studied in their entirety are *holistic*. Like Stake, Yin (p. 53) clearly distinguishes between single- and multiple-case designs. For Yin, researchers choose multiple-case designs for purposes of replication; 'so that [each case] either (a) predicts similar results (a *literal replication*) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a *theoretical replication*)' (p. 54). Again, multiple-case studies can be *holistic* or *embedded*.

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[57] Baxter and Jack (2008) refer to the third edition of Yin's *Case Study Research*, published in 2003.

Whilst both authors help focus the ideas of case researchers, Stake's contribution is considered to be of greater value. Yin proposes a detailed categorisation of case studies, allowing for little flexibility. Stake, in contrast, offers a broad distinction and acknowledges the futility of sorting 'case studies into these categories (often we cannot).' Rather, he argues, 'the methods we will use will be different, depending on intrinsic and instrumental interests' (Stake, 1995: 4). No such declaration is voiced by Yin. It is difficult to locate the present research in Yin's categorisation as the research is unequivocally a multi-case design, but the logic of replication is not a primary motivation. Rather than selecting cases based on their capacity to predict or contradict established findings – the *sole* rationale Yin identifies for multiple-case designs (p. 54-59) – the process was more complex.[58]

Additionally, Yin fails to address the decisions for selecting individual cases *within* a multi-case study, for any reasons other than that of the logic of replication. Single and multiple case based methods are treated separately. Also, the processes involved in selecting a case for a single case study, and selecting one to form part of a multi case study, are fundamentally different. The selection of single cases (Yin, 2009: 47-49) is, through the absence of discussion, seen as irrelevant when selecting the individual cases within the multiple case study. This research favoured an approach that selected multiple cases, but based the selection on the methods Yin reserves for single case study. The selection of cases was, *inter alia*, based on identifying schools that would test 'a well-formulated theory' (for Yin, a *critical case*). Yin fails to acknowledge that *all* potential cases may be appropriate for 'testing a well-formulated theory';

> the theory has specified a clear set of propositions as well as the circumstances within which the propositions are believed to be true. A single case, meeting all of the conditions for testing the theory, can confirm, challenge, or extend the theory
>
> (Yin, 2009: 47).

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[58] It is important to note that the discussion of the sample selection is confined to a very narrow consideration of Yin and Stake's contribution. This is because they focus specifically on selecting samples for case based research. In broader debates, the sampling technique could be defined as purposeful; in that '*information-rich cases*' were chosen 'for study in depth' (Patton, 1987: 169). Bryman (2001: 333) notes that this method of sampling is endorsed by most qualitative researchers.

In relation to the methodological ideas discussed in Chapter Four, all schools (cases) are identified as sites in which the theoretical propositions are, initially at least, believed to be true. Therefore, *all* schools can be defined, according to Yin's classification, as *critical cases*.

The uniqueness and/or typicality (rationales two and three respectively) desired from the cases, again demonstrate ambiguity in the categorisation. This is best explained by commenting thus; the case selection sought typical cases with elements of uniqueness. Selecting schools that are directly representative of the wider sample population would be a highly contestable selection process and, as George and Bennett (2005: 30) argue, one to which case researchers rarely aspire. Though at the same time, the research did not seek extreme cases on the premise that they would produce 'contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons' (Yin, 2009: 54). After reviewing existing literature, and through conversations with county council staff (to be explored in the findings chapter), certain contexts emerged as potentially significant apropos the impact of SSPs in primary schools. The size of schools, their location (rural or urban), the distance (and ease of access) between schools and SSPs, and the general affluence/deprivation of the locality, were all identified as potentially significant. These contextual differences hardly warrant the attribution of 'extreme' or 'unique' cases; indeed, all schools will vary in relation to these characteristics. Nor, however, do they qualify as *theoretical replications* in the strict sense implied by Yin (2009: 54) and Thomas (2007: 316-317).

This critique of Yin's categorisation demonstrates that the selection of cases was complex and the result of numerous considerations. Many case-based samples do not fit neatly into such predetermined typologies. In light of the flexibility inherent in Stake's notions of *instrumental* and *collective* case studies, this research can be located as a collective case - where the case studies are instrumental to understanding the CMO configurations influencing the impact of SSPs in schools; the understanding of the school itself is of secondary importance. However, to widen the potential scope and significance of the findings, and to learn more of CMO configurations, multiple cases were selected.

Case selection

The purpose of qualitative case study research is to develop an in-depth understanding of the cases. [59] Through qualitative research with the 'major actors' investigators attempt to build a 'coherent explanation, or story' (Thomas, 2007: 319). Advocates of qualitative case studies argue that the rich contextual knowledge they can generate is more helpful in explaining the phenomena being investigated than the 'fleeting knowledge' gained from larger, quantitative studies (Gerring, 2007: 1). As with most social phenomena, researchers come to better understand the object under investigation when extensively examining how they operate (Stake, 2008: 120), and by spending time in situ are in a position to defend their findings against charges of 'anecdotalism' (Silverman, 2005: 211). Whilst a national survey of schools (large-N study) provides data concerning the number of children that participate in after school hours physical activities, for example, only in-depth research can help explain why certain schools have different participation rates, or why some schools offer more, or less, PE-related opportunities. [60]

As the number of cases involved in a study increases, there is a concomitant decline in the depth of analysis (presuming the number of researchers and time allowance remains

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[59] In many case-based methods texts, qualitative research is referred to as 'small-n' research (where 'n'=number of cases). Quantitative studies are often called 'large-N' studies.

[60] There are many benefits of conducting large-N studies. Ragin (1994: chapters 5 and 6) forwards a case for using comparative and quantitative case-based methods. Comparative methods deal with cases amounting to anywhere between a handful and fifty. The aims fit somewhere between those of qualitative and quantitative designs (p. 105). A primary aim is to 'explain the diversity within a particular set of cases' (p. 105). A comparative analysis of the impacts of SSPs in primary schools would perhaps look at the PESSCL/PESSYP survey results and categorise Partnerships according to how they performed against certain outputs. To explain the diversity in outcomes, the comparative researcher would examine the categories 'for patterns of similarities and differences' (Ragin, 1994: 106). For example, SSPs may be categorised according to the number of activities children in their cluster participate in; this could be divided into poor, adequate, good. Next, the researcher would look for similarities and differences within these categories; such as whether the SSP has a full time SSCo, the host population size, proportion of children having free school meals, etc. 'This search for systematic differences would continue until the researcher could account for the diverse responses' (Ragin, 1994: 106).

Quantitative case studies begin with the premise that 'the best route to understanding basic patterns and relationships is to examine phenomena across many cases. Focusing on single cases or a small number of cases might give a very distorted picture' (Ragin, 1994: 131). Quantitative methods are well documented, and there is little need for further elaboration here. The purpose of this brief digression has been to consider the arguments for comparative and quantitative case research. It can be concluded that they are not powerful enough to invalidate qualitative case-based study, and that quantitative case-bsed study has a set of weaknesses that are addressed by the qaulitative approach.

unchanged). A significant trade-off is made between the number of cases and the different features of those cases that can be studied. Ragin (1994: 78) argues that typically;

> only a relatively small number of features across many cases can be incorporated into a representation. Thus, studies that examine many cases tend to focus on select aspects of cases [...] Studies that focus on a small number of cases tend to examine many features of those cases.

After considering the above points, it was decided that the research would consist of in-depth exploration of three mainstream primary schools. Three cases will allow for in-depth research of the individual cases, but will also provide data that can be compiled and explored comparatively.

Prior to the empirical research, two pilot studies were conducted. The selection of pilot cases was based on ease of access – both schools were accessed via the recommendations of staff within the university. One school allowed me to interview teaching staff, and the other allowed observation of PE lessons. The purpose of the pilot studies was to refine the data collection methods and develop relevant lines of questioning for interviews (Yin, 2009: 92).

Research methods: interviews

Over thirty years ago Denzin (1978: 295) paid significant attention to the concept of triangulation. Four types of triangulation were identified; 1) data triangulation, 2) investigator triangulation, 3) theory triangulation and, 4) methodological triangulation. Triangulation is a method that will, Denzin (p. 294) claimed, 'raise sociologists above the personalistic biases that stem from single methodologies. By combining methods [...] observers can partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one [...] method.' This research will employ data triangulation,[61] by combining two research methods: interviews and observations. It was also hoped that a focus group could be conducted with each school. The focus groups were to consist of school and SSP staff and coaches from sports clubs.

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[61] Investigator triangulation (using multiple investigators) is not feasible due to the nature of PhD research and financial constraints. As the DCSF/DCMS already conduct large quantitative analyses of SSPs, methodological triangulation is not seen as necessary; also, in this small-n study, it is not desirable. And theory triangulation is not discussed because the use of multiple theories, to help interpret the findings, is considered as a prerequisite to the study.

However, after conducting some interviews it became clear that this would be logistically difficult. Also, as teachers have mixed views towards the respective SSPs, a focus group discussion may actually harm the relations between the various stakeholders.

By adopting a single research method, whether quantitative or qualitative, researchers are led to 'lines of action different from those they would have pursued had they employed another method' (Denzin, 1978: 292). Observing the interaction between SSP and school staff would produce different findings to interviewing both groups of staff regarding the same topic. By incorporating both observation and interviews, the validity of the findings will hopefully be increased (Robson, 2002: 175). As Denzin (1978: 302) claims, 'the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another; by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies.' Attention will now turn to a consideration of each of the methods; firstly interviews, and then a short discussion on observational techniques.

Interviews are the primary data collection method. Interviews are often considered to be the most widely used qualitative method in sociology (Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 123).[62] The popularity of the method is largely due to their flexibility (Bryman, 2001: 319), and the capacity for allowing researchers to 'get large amounts of data quickly' (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 108). As small-n studies rely largely upon subjective data (Stake, 2005: 454), interviews are often the method of choice. Broadly speaking, there are three types of interview; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. It is helpful to think of the approaches on a continuum, with structured at one extreme and unstructured at the other; semi-structured fit somewhere in between. The *structured* interview is used largely by quantitative researchers for conducting surveys. The questions are highly structured to

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[62] Silverman (2005: 239) found that amongst a random sample of qualitative papers in the journal *Sociology*, 55 percent of researchers used interviews as the primary research method. It is interesting to note that, writing as recently as the late 1980s, Bryman (1988: 46) suggested 'observation is probably the method of data collection with which qualitative research is most closely associated.' He went on to claim that, although unstructured interviews are also 'a favoured technique,' their main usage is by participant observers - to add to their primary observational data source. By 2001, in his widely read *Social Research Methods*, Bryman (2001: 319) opens his discussion of interviews with the comment; 'The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research.' Now, one would suggest, in light of Bryman, Fielding and Thomas, and Silverman's remarks, that interviews are *the* method that is most associated with qualitative research. Observation, whilst still a 'favoured technique,' is often used alongside the primary research method, interviews. This is certainly the case in this research. Whilst beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to explore the reasons that have prompted such a shift.

maximize reliability, validity, and relevance (de Vaus, 2002: 96-97). de Vaus (2002: 100) favours highly structured forced-choice questions, as they are quick to answer and easy to code. Although this form of questioning allows for easier comparability between responses and, in most cases, larger response rates (May, 1993: 92), it is inappropriate for the present research because of its rigidity.

Researchers conducting *semi-structured* interviews usually have a list of questions/themes that they wish to cover, but allow for flexibility in the order of questions, offering leeway in the responses sought (Bryman, 2001: 321). The questions tend to be pre-specified, but the interviewee is given freedom when responding and the interviewer can adapt the structure of the interview as it develops (May, 1993: 93). Another element of the semi-structured interview is that researchers can probe for further depth or clarity (see Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 128 on probing). Interviewers favouring an *unstructured* method use, at most, an *aide memoire* as a brief list of prompts (Bryman, 2001: 320). When interviewers seek the knowledge, understandings, values and interpretations of respondents, unstructured interviews are most appropriate (May, 1993: 93-94). By their very nature, unstructured interviews are open-ended, and the direction of the interview depends largely on what is 'sensible at the time' (Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 124). This approach requires good subject knowledge and a well-developed interviewing technique. Although unstructured interviews can be adopted by novice researchers, it is most appropriate for those with experience.

In order to gather data that accurately reflects the opinions of respondents and thus provide a valid description of the CMO configurations, this research favours a semi-structured technique. Due to the inexperience I have in conducting interviews (less than ten, prior to commencement), unstructured interviews would be a risky strategy, as they are 'not an easy option for the novice' (Robson, 2002: 278). The aim was to conduct approximately five to seven semi-structured interviews with teaching staff (including head teachers) in each school. This would allow the development of an account of the contexts and mechanisms the school operates. It was hoped that I could conduct two interviews with each respondent (at different points within a twelve month period). Thus, a total of 10-15 interviews in each school – whilst it would be desirable to conduct more, one must be mindful of the small work force most primary schools have.

The first and second interviews with respondents had a distinct focus; the first developing background information regarding the school (the contexts and mechanisms), and considering the impact of the SSP on the school. In the second interviews, interesting issues that emerged in the first were followed up on. More attention was also given to the aims and purpose of PE in the school; this helped inform the theoretical discussions laid out in the earlier chapters. Further particulars on the actual content and process of conducting the interviews will be considered in the second part of this chapter.

Preliminary notes on interview content

Gaining the views of as many teaching staff as possible – who know the practices and philosophy of the school – was seen as the best way to develop an overall view of the school. Although it is crucial to involve children in research – and, indeed, hearing the voices of children could ultimately improve the findings of this research - attempting to speak with children in three different schools was seen as prohibitive when securing access to schools.[63] Accessing children in social research introduces a host of additional ethical considerations. Also, whilst it would be interesting and informative to hear the views of pupils, the interviews/focus groups would detract from their class-time. Another concern was that asking schools to speak with both pupils and teaching staff would entail extra work on the school's part; this would not just incur greater work for the gatekeeper, but it could also have deterred the school from agreeing to the staff interviews. Some benefits and limitations of the interview method will now be explored, before attention turns to consider observational methods. The empirical process will be explored later.

Researchers affect the responses elicited during interviews in two main ways. Firstly, respondents have different opinions towards interviews; some may be pleased to contribute, whereas other may be frightened or irritated by them – of concern, in the school setting, some respondents may in fact be pressurised into participating (Bassey, 1999: 81). The interviewer not only has to prepare appropriate topics and questions for discussion, but

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[63] Lewis (2004: 1) notes that research with children is 'crucial.' Not only does it improve the depth and quality of research, but the findings of research can empower children and 'impact directly and indirectly on the lives of those researched and others in similar situations.' However, Lewis goes on to allude to the many critical concerns that are raised when conducting research with children; these include ethical considerations, gaining informed consent, legal concerns and power relations.

must also ensure that the context of the interview is appropriate for each interviewee. Gomm (Hammersley, 2008: 90-91) proposes that interview responses are 'driven by a preoccupation with self-presentation and/or with persuading others, rather than being concerned primarily with presenting facts.' If this were so, even to some extent, then the rapport between interviewer and interviewee is vital. The second area in which the 'interviewer effect' (see Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 133-134) is pronounced, relates to the influence that interviewers have over the direction and content of the interviewee's responses. In most interviews this inevitably occurs, as the interviewer wishes to speak about particular topics. But the reactions of the interviewer (Hammersley, 2008: 30), the use of leading questions (May, 1993: 81), and other visual and verbal gesticulations also affect responses. The problem of interviewer bias has been specifically levelled at unstructured interviews due to their inherent flexibility. If respondents are questioned disproportionately about an issue, they will become savvy to the researcher's particular interests and opinions (Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 138). As respondents may not have given prior thought to the issues being raised (Bassey, 1999: 81), they might only be starting to frame their views on the issues or, indeed, the researcher may actually be instilling their own position on respondents. Therefore, respondents may attempt to satisfy the researcher's interests.

At the beginning of each interview the interviewee was told – unambiguously and honestly – of the purpose of the interview. Inevitably, the precise goals and direction of the project shifted throughout its course. However, I remained clear on what the purpose of the *present* interview was. Because the interviewee's perception of the purpose of the interview will reflect on the findings, this was seen as vital (Woodhouse, 2007: 172-173). If I were to begin an interview by stating that the purpose was to hear about the success stories related to the SSP's impact on the school, the interviewee would approach the interview differently to being told the purpose was to develop an insight into all of the impacts, positive and negative.

The questions, excluding those of an introductory or classificatory nature,[64] were as 'open-ended, neutral, sensitive, and clear' as possible (Patton, 1987: 122). It was obviously

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[64] Bryman (2001: 326-328) provides a useful guide to different types of interview questions. The style of questioning used, and the consequences of the interview method will be discussed in the second methods

important to select issues that addressed the issues I was concerned with (Stake, 2005: 448), however, discussing unrelated topics, rather than being seen as a waste of time, was taken as an indication of what the interviewee views as important (Bryman, 1988: 47). May (1993: 81-82) provides a ten-point guide for developing interview questions. Not all of these will be discussed here, but two points that are worthy of note are; to 'avoid presuming that people have the information [...] you wish to know about' (p. 82) and, that 'hypothetical questions elicit hypothetical answers' (p. 82). In the case of the former, teachers in primary schools - although teaching all areas of the curriculum - usually have a single specialist area. Thus, there was only one (or two) teachers in each school who were administratively responsible for PE, and as a result, who worked regularly with the SSP. Most other teachers had less knowledge of the SSP and its work within school. However, these teachers still had a lot of important views to discuss. The second issue - that of hypothetical questions - is a problem faced in much qualitative research. When evaluating policy interventions, one of the most sought after findings is to determine what the implementation site would be like without the policy intervention. It would be useful to know if, and how, the school would manage without the SSP, and what position it would now be in, if it had received no help from the SSP. Not only is it difficult to disentangle '*all* the real change(s) attributable to the intervention from [...] competing explanations' (Davies *et al*., 2000: 255-256), but the very attempt at doing so is largely hypothetical; What if Y had not happened? What if X were to happen? What would be the likely impact of Z? In order to assess the perceived importance of the policy, it was necessary to encourage respondents to occasionally think beyond the current situation (past and future).

The interviews were audio-recorded (with consent being given) and brief notes were taken. If consent was not granted, or the use of audio recording equipment happened to be inappropriate, more extensive notes would have been taken. It was important to ensure that sufficient time elapsed between the first and second rounds of interviews, so as to allow for transcription and initial analysis. It was also important that I did not become a burden on the school's resources. As the data is grounded in the theory, the findings from the first interview had to be considered prior to the second. There was no intention to outsource

chapter. Prior to commencement, however, all questions were planned to be open-ended except for those concerning facts such as job role, length of time in position, name, etc.

transcription, as this was seen as too costly and a wasted opportunity to familiarise myself with the data. The transcription process allowed for the informal development of themes and categories for the second interviews and data analysis. On completion of the interviews, the data was transcribed as soon as possible.

The next stage in the data analysis was the coding of data. With somewhere in the region of 50-60 interviews being conducted, each lasting approximately 25-30 minutes, there was a lot of data to navigate through. Coding is a way of making the data more manageable, and crucial for the development of CMO configurations; it 'is the central process by which theories are built from data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 57).

Coding interview data

Coding is the pivotal link between the data that has been collected and the emergent theory that helps to explain the data. 'Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means' (Charmaz, 2006: 46). The codes that data are sorted into were created by examining the data and defining what it is that emerged. The coding process built on the grounded theory approach outlined by Charmaz (2006: 42-71). Charmaz provides a detailed account of how to code interview data in order to develop a grounded theory. There are two main phases in a grounded theory approach to coding; an *initial* phase and a more *focused* phase.

In the initial stage the categories must 'stick closely to the data' (Charmaz, 2006: 47). Although there were preconceived thoughts about what categories might emerge through the coding process, I abstained from interpreting the data; 'initial coding should spark your thinking and allow new ideas to emerge' (Charmaz, 2006: 48).[65] For example, the data may

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[65] It would be naïve to suggest that the research is free from pre-existing concepts. The choice of research topic and any prior social science training inevitably shapes even the most 'objective' of research designs. Realists and grounded theorists both acknowledge this (Miller, 2000: 15 and Charmaz, 2005: 510). There may, however, appear to be a paradox when theoretical debates are considered prior to the empirical research (which is subsequently claiming to be grounded in the CMO configurations). However, the theoretical discussions in Chapters One to Three are seen as essential prerequisites (maybe not in the precise content, but in consideration at least) for the empirical research. Yin (2009: 36) is resolute on this topic; arguing that 'theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies.' If the theoretical debates considered in the opening chapters were not explored prior to the empirical phase, then the empirical process would have been misguided - from the sample finally decided upon, through to the topics

have suggested that a school introduced measures aimed at teaching children how to manage their body weight. I may have identified this, based on prior reading, as a process of self-governance. However, at this early stage it was more beneficial for the theory development to 'code the data with words that reflect action' (Charmaz, 2006: 47-48). Thus, the actual code used for the data would be something like 'encourage children to lose weight.' Charmaz (2006: 48) argues that 'this method of coding curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* we have done the necessary analytic work.'

Initial coding is laborious. It can be done in one of three ways; word-by-word, line-by-line, or incident to incident (Charmaz, 2006: 50-53). Each method varies with regards to how meticulous it seeks to be. For present purposes, an approach that rests somewhere between line-by-line and incident to incident was adopted. Not all sentences are important for the construction of theory, so not *all* sentences were coded. However, by skipping from incident to incident, the coding may fail to identify some issues in between. The process of skipping between 'incidents' also superimposes the researcher's own interpretation of 'incident' on the data, thus potentially bypassing significant data. Being so thorough in the coding will reduce the likelihood of imposing preconceived notions on the data.

Focused coding is the second phase in grounded theory coding. This is a more selective phase of coding. After analytic directions were identified in the initial coding, this more focused approach was used to 'synthesize and explain larger segments of data' (Charmaz, 2006: 57). Focused coding required the identification of the most significant and frequently occurring initial codes, and then a decision as to which of these were most appropriate for categorizing the data in its entirety (Charmaz, 2006: 57). This not only makes the data more

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of questioning in the interviews and the method of observation used. All decisions were shaped by prior readings.

Glaser and Strauss (1967: 46), in their seminal contribution to grounded theory, argue that findings and conclusions 'combine mostly concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data with some existing ones that are clearly useful.' It may be argued that in a truly objective study the theoretical exploration would come after the empirical work. However, that line of enquiry was perceived to be inappropriate for, indeed detrimental to, the present research. This evaluation *does* claim to be firmly grounded in the empirical data though. As the empirical process develops there will be further theoretical reading to help interpret the emerging CMO configurations. The grounded CMO configurations will still 'emerge from wrestling with data, making comparisons, developing categories, engaging in theoretical sampling, and integrating an analysis ' (Charmaz, 2005: 510), but the research strategy will be better developed as a result.

manageable, but also allows for *within* and *between* interview classification and comparison. The combination of the initial and focused stages actively involves the researcher in the data. By submerging oneself in the coding process - acting on the data rather than just reading it - previously undetected themes and categories emerged (Charmaz, 2006: 59). The grounded theory approach to coding is meticulous and laborious. Less time-consuming approaches could have been adopted, but the method briefly outlined here, and further elaborated by Charmaz, ensured that little was missed in the process. This is important when trying to maximise the validity and objectivity of the findings. NVivo 8 (qualitative data analysis software) was used to store and code the data. The programme's simplicity, environmental friendliness and portability made it a more desirable option than traditional paper-based approaches to coding.

Observation

Significant emphasis is now given to the amount of time children are physically active for in school, particularly in PESS. The PESSCL/PESSYP surveys required schools to provide information on the number of children engaged in physical activity each week (see Figure 5.1). This is problematic in two key respects. Firstly, as the surveys are self-completed, schools can enter incorrect or inaccurate data. A SSCo in Smith and Leech's (2010: 339) research begs the question, when PLTs are 'under pressure from their head teacher to [reach targets], are they doing it appropriately?' Another SSCo similarly argues that 'it would be easy to be dishonest' (Smith and Leech, 2010: 339). Relating to the second concern, the numerical representation of time children spend in physical activity may not accurately reflect the length of time a child is *actually* physically active for. For example, Waring *et al*. (2007: 32) found that children spent an average of 15 minutes each day engaged in moderate levels of physical activity, *inclusive* of PE lessons. In relation to PE lessons, children were moderately of vigorously active for just 6.6 minutes per lesson. So, whilst Waring *et al*.'s research subjects may have been involved in two, three or even five hours of PESS during the school week (on paper), the amount of time they spent *engaged* in physical activity is likely to be significantly lower than the figure recorded in the PESSCL/PESSYP survey.

Combined, these concerns made it important to observe PE lessons to determine the reliability of the claims made by schools in the PESSYP survey. Whilst schools may honestly record that 'X number of children participated in two hours of PE per week,' the actual level of physical activity is likely to be significantly less. The government can proclaim that 90 percent of children are engaged in two hours of PESS each week, however the reality may be that children are active for less than half of this period of time; the results recorded by schools may therefore be 'unreliable and open to political modification by policy-makers to convey a more favourable perspective' (Smith and Leech, 2010: 337).

Figure 5.1. Extract from 2009/10 PESSYP Survey

Question 1
What is the total curriculum time in minutes that ALL pupils in each year group spend taking part in PE* in a typical week?
Enter total curriculum time in minutes *by gender* (put 0 if none, leave cells blank if there are no pupils in that year group)

GIRLS	BOYS
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2
Year 3	Year 3
Year 4	Year 4
Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6
Year 7	Year 7
Year 8	Year 8
Year 9	Year 9
Year 10	Year 10
Year 11	Year 11
Year 12	Year 12
Year 13	Year 13

(Quick *et al*., 2010: 77).

The role that was adopted can be described as 'observer as participant' or 'structured/ systematic observation.' Where researchers conducting 'participant observation' form relationships with the research subjects, this research is interested only in the lesson content, therefore the aim was not to establish rapport or 'go native.' The observer as participant role is more formalised, and is used in research where only a few visits are made to a research site (May, 1993: 118). For present purposes, observation of social interaction

was not the goal; the content and duration of lessons, and the levels of physical activity therein, are all that was measured. It was unnecessary to submerge myself in the research setting over a sustained length of time to achieve this – although, inevitably, the findings may well had been improved if observation were done over a long period of time.

The observational method was a secondary data collection technique; interview data formed the main research method, but the findings from the observations will be used to compliment this in the Findings and Analysis chapters. A major limitation with observation is that the researcher often affects the situation being observed (Robson, 2002: 311). For example, when observing a PE lesson it often appeared that children and teaching staff altered their behaviour to promote a different image of themselves (i.e., to be seen as an expert in delivering PE lessons, or for pupils, a proficient sportsperson). Also, as the lesson was being observed, teachers may have gone to extra lengths to ensure children were prepared on time. Although it is difficult to determine what 'the behaviour would have been like if it hadn't been observed' (Robson, 2002: 311), any irregularities or exaggerated actions/comments will be commented on in the second part of the chapter.

An observational schedule was constructed prior to the research. Recordings of the lesson observation were made on an adapted version of Waring *et al*.'s (2007) observation schedule (see Appendix 1 for blank observational schedule). The actual observational technique and the issues confronted will be discussed in the following section. However, this brief discussion of observational research will suffice for present purposes.

Generalisations

Prior to conducting the empirical research it was useful to consider the likely, and desired, representativeness of the findings. As the research evaluates only a handful of cases, it is not hypothesised that the findings will be generaliseable to the wider population of schools. However, some findings and observations may reflect characteristics of the wider population.[66] The fundamental aim of the findings will be to accurately represent the CMO configurations found in each case - to provide an evaluation of how SSPs impact upon

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[66] Although generalisations from the empirical data are not sought, there is a strong belief that case studies can 'provide reliable information about the broader class' (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 66).

different schools. Some degree of representativeness may be found when the three cases are brought together, and this may or may not compliment wider theoretical discussions, but the presentation of generaliseable data is *not* a fundamental aim. So, whilst seeking to capture the CMO configurations in each case, the findings *may* reflect the dynamics that are found in other cases. But this is not a prerequisite. When the desire to provide generalisations runs strongly through social research - especially in case studies – attention is diverted from the features that are important to the specific case (Stake, 2005: 448). The findings are often de-contextualised in an attempt to explain similar phenomena. Many case researchers initially claim not to be interested in making such generalisations, but then go on to do exactly that when presenting their findings (Hammersley, 2008: 36).

On the nature of the findings of case study research, Flyvbjerg (2001: 66-67) claims there are five misunderstandings;

> *Misunderstanding 1*. General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.

> *Misunderstanding 2*. One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.

> *Misunderstanding 3*. The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.

> *Misunderstanding 4*. The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.

> *Misunderstanding 5*. It is often difficult to develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.

> (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 66-67).

Flyvbjerg draws attention to some common, bad applications of the case-based method. Relating to the first of Flyvbjerg's misunderstanding, for evaluations specifically, context-dependent knowledge is vital. Data collected independently of the context to which it relates may be largely irrelevant. The analysis of the impact a SSP has in one area is unlikely to translate to explain the effect in another setting, less so will it help explain a different

intervention's impact. Rich context specific analysis is important when attempting to gather a detailed knowledge of a case.

Although large-N quantitative surveys cover a larger sample, and are thus likely to be more representative of the sample population, this does not mean that such research is more valuable than small-n research. For example, Evans *et al*. (2008), in their research into the effects of performance and perfection codes in PESS, provide an in-depth analysis of the impacts of popular pedagogies on individuals. The data compiled by Evans and colleagues captures the negative effects of dominant educational discourse on students. A large-N study examining the same issues would fail to capture the complexity and thought-provoking insights discussed by respondents. The findings of Evans *et al*. aid our understanding of the respondents' behaviour, and help explain the reasons behind their often-negative conception of self. These are important considerations when introducing measures that address such issues, and could not be achieved through quantitative analysis.

In relation to the issue of generalising from a small-n sample, an important point is that talk of generalisations is to generalise oneself. It is as much a generalisation to claim that one cannot generalise from a small-n sample to the wider population, as it is to claim that one can generalise from a large-N sample to a single case. The greater the number of cases does, according to probability theory, increase the degree of confidence we have in the patterns in a sample reflecting those in the wider population (de Vaus, 2002: 69). However, all generalisations, whether from small- or large-N samples are, fundamentally, generalisations. Whilst it may be statistically more probable that generalisations from a large sample will be correct, this does not mean that generalisations from single cases are intrinsically false. In the present research, generalisations are not, as stated above, the primary aim. The following remarks are close to the view taken here; 'each case study […] contributes to the cumulative refinement of contingent generalizations on the conditions under which particular causal paths occur, and fills out the cells or types of a more comprehensive theory' (George and Bennett, 2005: 113). It is not the aim to provide generalisations to form an encompassing theory, but rather to make empirically grounded claims that can help contribute to a better understanding of the impact SSPs have in primary schools, and why.

Summary

This section provides justification for and details of the research methods that were used. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with teaching staff. Observation of PE lessons and analysis of the respective school brochures and PE files will also be explored. It is hoped that, combined, this data will provide an in-depth analysis of the impact SSPs have had in the various schools. The data was analysed - with the CMO configurations outlined in the previous chapter in mind – to not only determine the impact of SSPs, but also to begin to assess 'what works for whom in what circumstances' (Pawson, 2006: 25)?

The following section was written post-completion of the empirical stage. Although the findings and analysis have not yet been considered, it is fitting to include this section beforehand as it helps elaborate on some of the issues raised above, and makes the empirical process clearer.

Chapter 5a

Methods (Part B)

This section is a reflective narrative on the empirical research process. As discussed in the previous section, social research, and particularly research within schools, is often a messy process, and rarely are the intentions operationalized precisely. The following highlights the difficulties faced, how these issues were managed, and considers the impact this had on the empirical process.

Sample selection

Research was conducted in nine primary schools altogether. Overall, 46 interviews were conducted and 16 PE lessons were observed. Four of the schools were special educational needs schools (SEN); the information gathered in these schools will not be considered in the thesis, as space will not allow for a thorough analysis. Research was not initially planned for SEN schools, however, due to the initial random sampling technique (see below), the opportunity presented itself and was taken. The data gathered in these schools varies so much from that obtained in mainstream schools - and, as the issues and barriers faced in SEN schools are so specific - that to explore the SEN schools in the depth they necessitate would require unfeasible amendments to the whole thesis. (It should be remembered that an analysis of SEN schools was never a research objective.) Two more schools were used to pilot the research techniques for interviews and observation. The final three mainstream schools were used for the case studies, and it is these that are the central focus of the research (Tweedale Juniors, Carraway Juniors, and West Hill).

Initially, 20 randomly selected schools from the sample population (a defined area in north east England) were sent postal invites to participate in the research. Of the five responses, four schools (two mainstream and two special educational needs) agreed to participate. After further information was sent to the mainstream schools, only one remained interested (Carraway Juniors). Both special schools participated. Follow up letters were sent to non-

returning schools, yet no replies were received. At this point an alternative approach was adopted. Drawing on contacts of the School of Applied Social Sciences at Durham University, and a senior county council official (who had already been interviewed), two further schools were approached; both subsequently agreed to participate. One of which, West Hill, was to act only as a pilot study but, due to one schools severing links, became the second case study school.[67] A final school was contacted (Tweedale), via the suggestion of a university source, and this became the final case study school. In gaining access to schools, probability sampling was less successful than snowball sampling, which, arguably, gave both the research and researcher increased legitimacy (Arber, 2001: 63).

One may query why only 20 letters were initially distributed to a sample population exceeding 300. Postal contact was always likely to yield little interest in the research (Bryman, 2001: 135), due in part to the large amount of contact schools receive from university students and staff. It would be risky to send postal invites to the entire sample population because, if and when refusals were received, these schools could not be contacted again, thus significantly reducing the size of the sample population. Although the response rate of the initial distribution was moderately successful (20 percent success), it took over a month to obtain all of the schools' decisions. The potential for building on contacts' networks to secure interest was seen as a quicker alternative, with an increased likelihood of success; this proved to be the case.

The criteria for the inclusion of schools – in both postal responses and contact formed through networks - was based on the following conditions; a) all schools are attached to a different School Sport Partnership, b) there is variance in school size (number of pupils and teachers), c) Ofsted inspectorate assessments are of mixed standards, d) the location of the schools is dissimilar (i.e., rural/urban), and e) the affluence of the three schools' localities vary. These themes had been highlighted in the literature discussed in Chapters One and Two and interviews with senior figures. School size and Ofsted ratings were easily checked on the internet (Directgov, 2011), as was the location of the school (via Google Earth and

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[67] One visit was made to the school that was originally intended to be a case study, however, the head teacher had forgotten I was visiting, and only allowed me to interview three teachers (one, intermittently, during a lesson she was delivering). After the visit attempts were made to arrange a second visit, which had been promised by the head teacher, however, no further contact was made by the school.

respective school's website). Determining the affluence of a school's locality was informed by Ofsted remarks and, more dubiously, visits to the areas and conversations with colleagues familiar with the areas.

The three mainstream schools that the findings and analysis chapters discuss have each been identified as a 'case'. The thesis is thus to be seen as a piece of case study research. Although case studies are often seen as synonymous with ethnographic research, this research makes no claims to be an ethnographic study. Whereas ethnographers usually spend long time periods in the 'field' collecting detailed observational evidence on their cases, case studies do not have to be protracted explorations. Gerring (2007: 17) highlights many different meanings that researchers associate with the word 'case', thus demonstrating the lack of consensus surrounding definitions of 'cases' or 'case-based research'. As discussed in the Methods A chapter, the three case study schools are defined as such because they have 'identifiable boundaries and comprise [...] the primary object of an inference' (Gerring, 2007: 19). The case study method has been employed to investigate 'a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context' (Yin, 2009: 18). The individual schools (cases) are explored in order to engage with particular contextual questions about the impact of SSPs in different schools.

Ethical concerns regarding accessing primary schools

Ethical considerations are important in all social research, and can arise at any stage of the research process (Bryman, 2001: 505). It is important that researchers 'have a clear understanding of the ways in which ethical dilemmas can arise when carrying out their research' (Henn *et al.*, 2006: 68). This research was initially perceived to face potential ethical problems on numerous fronts. An early ethical consideration was the 'worthiness of the project' (Punch, 2009: 50). As I planned to go into schools, interview teachers and observe lessons, I had to be certain that this would not be a waste of teachers' time. The rationale for the research (presented in Chapter One) suggests that this is a worthy endeavour, and can contribute to both academic discussions and the implementation of the SSP initiative. Still, it is important that I minimize the infringement on the workload of teachers and, in general, the time I detract from children's education.

A further ethical concern relates to gaining informed consent. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) takes informed consent 'to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway' (BERA, 2004: 6). As head teachers act as gatekeepers to schools, it was critical to gain their consent. However, this did not mean that all of the teachers who were interviewed also consented (BSA, 2004: 4). Neither did the head teachers' consent extend to the children who were observed. In many instances - particularly when using observational methods - the number of research subjects will be many, and it is often unpractical and potentially disruptive to gain informed consent from each individual. The British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines seem to acknowledge this when stating; '*As far as possible* participation in sociological research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied' (BSA, 2004: 3 *italics added*). For example, when observing lessons, between 10-30 children were in each class.[68] If consent were to have been sought from parents – as the ability for young children to comprehend the aims of research, and then decide whether or not to participate is not a straightforward issue (BERA, 2004: 7)[69] – the logistical task would have been incomprehensible for this research, and may well have deterred schools from participating. Gaining informed consent from each interviewee was less problematic, and was sought at the beginning of each interview. However, teachers were asked, or possibly even *told*, to speak with me, there is the chance

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[68] David *et al*. (2001) highlight some issues involved in gaining informed consent from children. Firstly, if researchers are to gain informed consent it becomes a question not merely of age, but one of 'providing children with information that is adequate to their competencies in order for them to make informed decisions' (David *et al*., 2001: 349). However, David and colleagues go on to suggest that no matter how much agency researchers want to accord children, there are always 'layers of gatekeepers who exercise power over children to process through' (p. 351). They go on to argue, based on past research, that children's participation is often a case of coercion, whereby participation becomes merely another form of school work (pp. 351-352). Israel and Hay (2006: 72) similarly suggest that 'requests' from teachers may, in reality, be 'requirements,' and seen as 'simply more school work.'

[69] The BERA 'requires researchers to comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. Article 12 requires that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated to give fully informed consent' (BERA, 2004: 7). It is difficult to determine which children are capable of forming an informed decision, and this will not only vary between age group, but is entirely individualistic. Due to difficulties in determining which children would, and would not, be able to fully comprehend what they are consenting to, and the vast amount of children being observed, it was decided not to seek consent from children. The BERA (p. 7) suggest that when any vulnerable circumstances (age or intellectual capability) limit the extent to which individuals can make decisions, consent should be sought from guardians. Again, the sheer number of parents means that this is not a feasible idea.

that their consent is less 'informed' than 'pressurised' or even 'forced.' The informed consent form also stated that participants had the right to withdraw from participating at any time (BERA, 2004: 6).

All schools and participants' identities have been kept confidential, in accordance with both the BERA (2004: 8) and BSA (2004: 5-6) guidelines. Confidentiality is often taken to be synonymous with anonymity, however the two are different procedures. Anonymity is a technical procedure offering 'some protection for an individual from public gaze […] It actually means in certain cases not reporting information that a person has given in confidence'' (Simons, 2006: 260). Anonymity is a more basic process of removing the identity of the schools and individuals (for example, pseudonyms have been used). Confidentiality, on the other hand, is an active process to remove not only the name, but also *any* identifying features of participants (Henn *et al*., 2006: 85). This entailed the withdrawal of easily identifiable information about the schools/staff. Any potentially implicating information has been removed.

In two of the three case study schools the gatekeepers (head teachers) had a PhD. Both gatekeepers were more accommodating than any other school (allowing me to interview staff, observe lessons and analyse PE files, as well as going to extra lengths to accommodate my needs). On several occasions these teachers empathised with the difficulty of researchers accessing primary schools and offered as much assistance as required. Two head teachers having PhDs, from such a small sample of schools, is unrepresentative of the wider population of head teachers. Whether or not this is a general issue would be interesting to know. The implications of such a trend could impact significantly upon the reliability and representativeness of research in schools (if much research is done in the same schools, but for confidentiality reasons this is not known to researchers, then the quality of research will be severely compromised). If only a minority of schools frequently grant researchers access, this is also ethically problematic as pupils within these schools may have their education disproportionately affected by researchers observing lessons, or their regular teacher being out of the classroom for research purposes.

All visitors to schools must produce a Criminal Records Bureau check (CRB) on entry. Whilst a recent CRB was viewed in each school, the formality of the procedure varied widely. In one

school I was asked to provide photographic evidence confirming the CRB was actually my own. The documents were then photocopied for reference. In another school (not case study) no request was made for a CRB. The CRB was viewed only as a result of my suggestion. It was viewed by a teacher and immediately handed back. All schools had a signing-in process but, again, only one asked for proof of identity. As I was frequently left unattended in schools, the negligence of some could potentially lead to harmful consequences given a visitor with illegitimate intentions.

A further ethical concern relates to a worrying level of access one school granted. On two occasions, prior to observing PE lessons, I was invited into the classroom to wait. During this time children came in to change for their lesson. I found my presence in such situations unnecessary and inappropriate. On both occasions I suggested I wait outside. Although a CRB form had been produced, it is clearly concerning that an outsider is given access to such private situations. CRB forms should not act as an exhaustive assessment of an individual's legitimacy. Although it is a compliment to be entrusted by teaching staff, it is genuinely alarming that one can gain such trust within a half-day visit.

Interviews

Interviews with county council employees helped develop an insight into the impact of the initiative at a regional level. The information gained was used to inform the sampling decisions and ultimately the selection of pilot- and case-study schools. For this reason, the first of the interviews (with two senior PE-related council staff) was conducted prior to contacting schools. Two board members of the YST were also interviewed (one via telephone, with a pickup device being used to record), regarding the national impact of SSPs. The YST interviewees divulged interesting information concerning the initiative's inception, its shifting objectives (and governmental influence thereof), and the intricate nature of multi-agency policy delivery. Interviews lasted for an average of 42 minutes.

The majority of interviews were with teaching staff. These were conducted in four mainstream primary schools (n=39) and four special educational needs schools (n=7). In the three case study schools, interviews (n=36) lasted for 26.13 minutes on average, ranging

from 11.48 to 39.56 minutes in length.[70] 14 respondents were interviewed on two occasions (Tweedale and Carraway Juniors were visited with a six month gap between visits, and West Hill - originally the pilot study – with an 11 month gap). Repeat interviewing was preferred for reasons outlined in the Methods A section. Interestingly, in the smaller schools – Tweedale and Carraway – 11 of the 12 interviewees were spoken to on both visits. In West Hill, only three interviewees were spoken to on both occasions. Overall - from all nine schools - only two male teachers were interviewed; both were head teachers.

Case study schools gave permission to speak with teachers for 30 minutes each. However this was often unworkable logistically. The format of visits was identical in each school; a date was arranged with the head teacher (gatekeeper), who arranged for teaching staff to participate. I was invited to come in either for a morning or afternoon session, and would interview teachers successively in thirty-minute time slots (9.30-10.00am, 10.00-10.30am, etc.). Interviews were staged in staffrooms, empty offices, or classrooms. A recurring problem was that interviews were without exception conducted successively. When interviewees arrived late (most were at least 2-3 minutes late), there was a reduction in time from subsequent interviews. So, for example, in one case the first interviewee was 10 minutes late. This meant that of the five interviews conducted that day, 10 minutes had been wasted.[71] The following three interviewees were also a couple of minutes late, leaving only 15 minutes for the final interview. Also, due to a lack of unoccupied space in the schools, staff and pupils often interrupted interviews. On occasion, the latter stages of interviews had to be conducted with additional staff members in the room, which made both respondent and interviewer uneasy. All interviews were digitally recorded with the consent of interviewees - all respondents read and signed an informed consent form.

A further problem, identified in West Hill, was that the interviewees had been provided with information reminding (or informing) them of physical activities that had been offered in the

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[70] In response to authors such as Robson (2002: 273), who suggests that an interview lasting 'under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable,' one would contend that the length of an interview is a superficial and perfunctory indication of the quality of its contents. Indeed, as will be seen in the findings section, a wealth of pertinent information can be garnered in a relatively short period of time.
[71] I was unwilling to let interviews run into teachers' break/lunch-times as this was as an intrusion of their free time.

school. When I asked to see the day's interview schedule there was, written on the opposite side, clearly not intended for my viewing, the following handwritten notes;

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Wide range offered.
Cheer leading – multi sports
Link with other experts/agencies
–   dancemats
-   cheerleading
-   tennis
-   rugby
-   hockey
-   karate
-   table tennis
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This is clearly an attempt to 'remind' staff of what to mention during their interview. This may have happened in all schools, however due to the overall responses of other schools (not so positive), it is unlikely. Little can be done to reduce the chances of such occurrences as *all* interviewees, in most social research, can quite easily be briefed by a superior prior to being interviewed. In this particular case, the 'briefing' bears little impact on the overall findings, as it merely concerns the activities on offer. There is an obvious concern that such interventions may be more serious but, again, little can be done to counter this. Upon reflection on the findings, and the variance of responses, it is unlikely that interviewees followed any particular 'orders.'

Transcription and coding of interview data

Interviews were transcribed soon after each school visit. To maximise the familiarity with the data and to ensure coding was grounded in the empirical data, all transcriptions were conducted by myself. Textbooks prepared me little for the laborious and time consuming process this proved to be. When all interviews had been transcribed, the data was transferred to NVivo 8, from where it was analysed. As new themes emerged from the text, additional categories (nodes) were created; these were then subdivided into more specific codes (to form tree nodes). Figure 5.2 demonstrates how categories beginning under one

heading were subsequently divided into further codes to more accurately reflect the interview data.

NVivo was a useful tool for efficiently storing and coding data. An attempt was made to annotate the interview transcripts, firstly line-by-line and then theme-by-theme (in accordance with the advice of Charmaz (2006: 47-54)). This was an unnecessary process as the length of time taken and large amount of data produced was excessive and helped little towards category development. It is perhaps worth clarifying the extent to which the categories were actually 'grounded' in the data. Significant reading around the subject area had been done prior to the empirical stage. Without such reading purposeful interview questions would be difficult to posit. So, in this respect, data is dependent upon the literature that informed the themes covered in the interviews – although, questions were asked in a neutral, non-leading manner. The categories were overwhelmingly dependent upon the empirical data - as new themes emerged, new categories were constructed. *No* category was constructed prior to its emergence from the data. The codes that emerged from the analysis of the first school were used for the second and third schools. This was to save time reconstructing the same categories. If responses did not fall into a previously constructed category, a new one was made (if not used, categories were erased).

The coded interview transcripts were explored and presented in a school-by-school format, as opposed to issue-by-issue. Presenting the findings via a narrative for each school is more accessible and easier to navigate through than would be the case for discussions of individual issues. This style also provides more appropriate depictions of the three case study schools, whereby the CMO configurations for each school are progressively teased out. Myriad tangential issues were raised in the interviews that warrant further exploration, however, space will not allow for such digressions.

Figure 5.2. Categorisation of coding themes.

Carraway Juniors, West Hill, and Tweedale Juniors
(the same categories were used for all schools)

OSHL and Club Links	Paperwork and Organisation	Physical Education
(Original code)	(Original code)	(Original code)

OSHL and Club Links: Problems, Competition, Non-PE links, Club links, People coming into school, Inter-school links, OSHL on offer, Facilities

Paperwork and Organisation: 2 hours and other claims, PESSCL/PESSYP Survey, Organisational impact of SSP, Paperwork, Transport and logistics

Physical Education: Lesson, Purpose, Motivational climate, Teacher, Structure of PE, Importance of PE to curriculum

Observation of PE lessons

Although interviews were the principal research method, 16 PE lessons were also observed (10 of these lesson observations were in case study schools). Only two case study schools would allow observation of lessons; a precondition for West Hill was that no lessons were observed.[72] The role of overt non-participant observer was adopted for observations. The objectives of lesson observation were to;

- determine the involvement of SSP staff in the delivery of PE lessons;
- consider the motivational climate of lessons, and the content therein;
- record the duration of lessons (both start to finish, and the amount of time spent in activity);

[72] Upon this declaration considerable thought was given to selecting another school. However, due to the formative findings of the observations in other schools, observation was not perceived to be crucial in determining the impact that SSPs had made. Information gathered could be just as fruitful without observing lessons.

The refusal to allow lesson observation was not the school's decision. West Hill was the only school where the initial gatekeeper was the SSCo, and not the head teacher. The head and teaching staff were happy for me to observe lessons, but the SSCo said that teachers already have enough pressure, and they do not need people observing their lessons.

- assess the intensity of physical activity levels in lessons.

Recordings of lesson observation were made on an adapted version of Waring *et al*.'s (2007) observation schedule (Appendix 1). Waring *et al*. took notes every 15 seconds, however, due to the difficulty of a sole researcher successfully recording such frequent observations, combined with the lack of necessity for such a degree of scientific rigour, it was decided that notations in five-minute blocks would suffice. The recording of information in five-minute blocks was problematic and not systematic. Notes were made regarding; the focus and content of activities, key words spoken by teachers and/or pupils, an assessment of the level of activity, and the teacher's involvement. Notes were taken as often as possible and grouped within five minute blocks; so, if a five minute period had a variety of activities taking place, the notes would be dense, whereas for relatively inactive periods notes were sparse. The spasmodic nature of this process *does* capture the overall flow of lessons and their content, but judgements as to how many minutes of vigorous physical activity children were engaged in, the length of time teachers actually engaged with children, or the motivational climate fostered during the lesson, for example, are subjective and open to rebuttal. The duration of lessons, and the amount of time children were physically active are objective measures and reliable measurements. For these reason, the data presented in the findings section should be seen as providing an insight into PE lessons and not a scientific and physiological deconstruction of lesson content.

Some teachers appeared to adapt their teaching style to influence my perception. In numerous lessons staff would look to me for a reaction when new activities began or particular announcements were made. At the beginning of each lesson it was stressed that teachers *per se* were not being observed, but rather a picture was being formed of how contemporary PE lessons were manifested. Children also noticed my presence; teachers usually introduced me to the children and stated the purpose of my observation. Regardless of teachers' pronouncements, some children took me to be a scout for a sports club, and thus attempted to impress their talents upon me. In these respects my presence can be seen as impacting upon the lesson; both on the teaching of, and motivational climate within. Given that both teachers and students were aware of my genuine goals, but decided to reinterpret these, there was little more that could have been done to avoid such outcomes.

Observation provided a useful insight into the structure of PE lessons. Using lesson observation as a method for assessing the impact of SSPs, however, is only appropriate if that lesson is being taught by SSP staff or external coaches introduced by the SSP. The observations were useful in assessing the validity of government's claims (such as the number of children engaged in PE for two hours per week), the motivational climate of lessons, and the level and duration of engagement in physical activity.

Reflectively considering the research process

The third research method that was to form a key part of the thesis was analysis of the PE data held by schools. This consists of a record of activities children have participated in, training course invitations/participation, curriculum issues, and general information regarding all aspect of PE. Only Tweedale and Carraway allowed me to analyse their 'PE files.' And the data provided was not as informative as hoped for. West Hill failed to respond to my request. For these reasons, the findings from the analysis will be discussed, so as to add depth to the findings, but they will not be used for any comparative purposes, as this would provide an unequal representation. The findings from the data analysis are built into the general findings chapters.

Whilst the above discussions offer a largely reflective and critical account of the empirical process, this section will consist of a brief assessment of the impact of the researcher on the research process. Perhaps the main limitation was the researcher's lack of 'in the field' experience. Having only conducted a handful of interviews and one focus group prior to embarking on the empirical process, I was ill-experienced and lacking confidence in the early interviews. As the first interview was with senior council officers the information gathered may not be as insightful as it could have been. The pilot study was meant to act not only as a stage on which to perfect the interviewing schedule, but also one where my interviewing skills could be honed. As the pilot study ended up becoming one of the case study schools, there is the possibility that the quality of the first interviews are not equal to those conducted in the other schools. On cross-referencing the transcripts, however, there appears to be little inferiority of data.

Silverman (2005: 211) suggests that researchers must give special consideration to how they can 'convince themselves (and their audience) that their 'findings' are generally based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen 'examples.'' It is not enough to emphasise that the findings are an accurate reflection of the interview transcripts (as has been done above). It is necessary to specify any weaknesses in the findings in the hope of increasing their legitimacy, and thus minimising the concerns Silverman raises. The issues raised in the interviews are unavoidably guided by themes deriving from the literature. This inevitably elevates certain themes over others, and thus guides the findings along a particular path. The topics that were considered were perceived to be of importance in determining why SSPs work differently in different contexts. Of the issues that respondents raised during the interviews, some were discriminately bypassed due to my perceiving them to be of little relevance. Another researcher, with a different stock of knowledge, may have pursued alternative emergent themes at the neglect of others.

The findings, to be presented in the following chapter, are presented in such a way that allows the reader to judge for themselves the representativeness (amongst respondents) of the claims. The findings chapter is based overwhelmingly on the interview data, thus utilizing the voices of respondents to 'tell their own story.' Measures have been taken to ensure that all claims made in the findings section not only appear 'in-context,' but also that insouciant comments receive minimal attention. To ensure the authenticity of the findings, data has been either cross referenced with statements made in other interviews, or reinforced by additional comments made by the same respondent. This, it is hoped, will convince the reader that the findings are indeed based on 'critical investigation' and not 'well-chosen 'examples'' (Silverman, 2005: 211).

Finally, several issues to do with appearance are worthy of mention. I had the distinct yet intangible impression that because I appear young, several respondents instantly made a decision that both I, and the research, were not important. It took several minutes to engage some respondents, largely as a result of having to legitimize my presence. This is a significant issue given that only 30 minutes were available. Also, due to the risk of being too casually dressed, and thus damaging my legitimacy further, in the earlier interviews a suit was worn. This proved to be inappropriate attire within primary schools, and may have added to the

uneasiness of some respondents. Striking a balance between inconspicuousness and being either over- or under-dressed is difficult, especially in a female dominated environment where the male is likely to stand out regardless.

Chapter summary

The preceding section has documented the empirical research process. The intention was to describe some of the disjunctures between the 'actual' empirical process, and the intentions laid out in the first section of the chapter. The process was stressful, accompanied with a consistent sense of being a burden on schools, but ultimately rewarding. There were several issues that emerged due to my inexperience, which are avoidable in future. However, the majority of complications and unforeseen hindrances were beyond the researcher's control, and reinforce the conclusion that social research in schools is an unpredictable and messy process. The process of conducting qualitative research in primary schools - based on my experience, at least – is intricately tied to the general support of school staff (especially the head teacher) and the day-to-day functioning of the school. A researcher's best laid plans can come undone due to the largely unpredictable demands faced by, and decisions taken by, teaching staff. Researchers can develop a 'research plan' with school staff, however, if and when issues emerge that have the potential to affect children's education, the research is inevitably sidelined. For present purposes, as the preceding discussions demonstrate, the original intention (and formulated plans) to conduct interviews, make lesson observations and analyse schools' data had to be significantly revised, often with minimal notice.

Taken as a whole, this chapter provides detailed justification and descriptions of the research methods used. The first part of the chapter built on academic discussion around issues such as case-based research, research methods, access, sampling, and coding. These considerations provide details of the various decisions made prior to the empirical process. Justification for the proposed research process was also given. The latter section provides a more reflective account of the research process; this section reports on the issues faced and necessary amendments made to the proposed plans. Overall, it is hoped that this chapter not only justifies the empirical research, but also makes clear the precise method through which the data was collected.

Chapter 6

Findings

The wider view: 'transforming PE and school sport'

This section will explore the data that was gathered from interviews with two senior Youth Sport Trust employees and three North East County Council Officers (who are responsible for PE). The following discussion is important in two respects. Firstly, the aims and objectives of the Youth Sport Trust (the charitable organisation overseeing the SSP initiative, and PE in state maintained schools generally) and local County Council will provide a breakdown of the overarching aims of the SSP initiative. Used in conjunction with the rationale provided in official discourse, this will help refine the programme theory. Second, as these interviews were conducted prior to the empirical work in primary schools, the data helped identify important issues, which were used to inform the interview schedules for teaching staff. On the whole, this discussion deepens the understanding of the impact SSPs have had in primary schools. The pseudonyms used for each respondent will be unisex so as to ensure confidentiality.

The concept of School Sport Co-ordinators was initially developed for a prospective National Lottery funded Sport England programme. The 'very random' plans of Sport England prompted a senior YST employee to plead with Cabinet Ministers for a more sustainable intervention. The YST suggested that the plans should be 'built around the Sports Colleges so that we [get] these real hot spots of quality physical education and sport' (Jamie). Central to the YST's plans was a coherent national infrastructure that involved *every* school. The YST was given approval to develop their thinking and; 'So we created the model of School Sport Partnerships [and] managed to get the Lottery to fund this model' (Cameron). The goals of the SSP programme are clear to its members; the organisation's aims have always been to;

give kids high quality physical education and as much opportunity to take up sport - physical activity - after school as we can, on school sites, because we believe in it as a subject, and we believe it can change lives. And, we've never varied from that

(Jamie).

Since its formation these underlying aims have changed little. However, senior members have increasingly understood the significance of aligning the organisation's programmes with the wider political agenda. 'The trick,' as Jamie puts it, 'is to be in the right place at the right time, and try and do the right thing.' For the YST, this means understanding 'what the government's priorities are and demonstrating how PE and sport could [help] deliver them' (Cameron). Both Jamie and Cameron believe that the YST has got 'very good' at doing this, whilst simultaneously pursuing the fundamental aims of improving PESS. As Jamie declares;

I've always known where we're going; what I've had to do […] is look at what the next agenda is for government - whatever it is - not diverting off course from where I'm going, but being able to communicate that course effectively into that agenda. So, whether it's extended schools, whether it's talented and gifted, whether it's healthy schools [or] twenty-first century schools, as it is now. The skill is not reinventing yourself and stepping off sideways.

This pragmatic yet effective organisational approach has filtered down to the regional level. Rory - a former SSCo and current PE advisory teacher – claims that the work of the regional PE team and SSPs 'is guided by what's going on in schools in other areas of the curriculum, and the [various staff] work on how we can adapt PE to fit in with the whole school needs.' For example, 'the Creative Curriculum is […] the way most primary schools are going now, so we're going to be looking at how we can incorporate physical education into that' (Rory).

Both YST and County Council staff share common views as to the purpose of physical education within school. Whilst acknowledging that 'You won't see PE in the top five things on a school development plan,' Cameron argues that you '*will* see improvement[s] in exam results, reducing truancy, bullying, improving kids' concentration […] reducing obesity, etc, etc.' All senior interviewees suggest that PE has many benefits; corporeal, mental, behavioural, and educational. However, in various guises, each respondent suggests that the central importance of PE lies in 'the two words; 'physical' and 'education'' (Jamie). The latter is concerned with educating children about the body and exercise, and the relation these have with health. In the case of the former, being physical is;

critical in kids' health; helping them learn and understand how to be active, stay active, stay healthy, to develop movement competence [...] it's a massive part of our feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, how we move, how we look

(Jamie).

At the grassroots level, Rory claims that 'teachers and parents and other professionals' often fail to realise 'the difference between being physically active and physically educated.' On a wider scale, a similar misunderstanding is played out in relation to 'physical education' and 'sport.' Jamie argues that in the YST's formative years 'it was impossible to find anybody to talk to me, in government, about physical education. They would talk to me about sport, but that was usually interpreted as football' (Jamie). To demonstrate this point, Jamie recalls the process of replacing the PESSCL strategy with PESSYP; the government 'wanted to remove the 'PE' bit; they just wanted to call it 'School Sport Strategy.' Sam understands that the government 'have got a remit for both,' but shares Jamie's sentiments, in that;

physical *education* [is] a curriculum subject and sport [is] that that we do afterwards. And whilst you could be teaching a physical education lesson using tennis or a *sport*, so it might look like sport; if you're doing good physical education it's a lot more than that [...] the context is merely a vehicle within which we *educate.*

The aim is to provide a wide range of physical activities and sports that 'appeal to 100 percent of kids' (Jamie). By providing a broader range of activities it is hoped that 'those kids that would have turned off from sport at the age of twelve [...] will hopefully be attracted to something else' (Cameron). Respondents are mindful that covering too many topics may compromise the quality of the experience, but insist that the 'high-quality' element is 'at the front of our thinking' (Sam).

The focus and impact of SSPs

When developing the SSP model a fundamental objective was to establish 'a national infrastructure' that would 'be consistent across the country' (Cameron). Although the scope is national, the intention is not to impose a centralist model. As Jamie sees it, 'our job is not to have a preconceived model in our head, our job is to make sure young people are getting quality provision in a range of opportunities that appeal to them.' This laissez faire approach is enacted through a culture of 'persuasion' rather than 'prescription'; 'if you present a powerful enough argument to *persuade* people [...] you tend to get better results' (Cameron). This philosophy is evident at the regional level. County Council staff work closely with Partnerships within their region and help train the SSCos, 'so that when they're working in schools they are giving out the same kind of messages' (Rory).

County Council interviewees suggest that changes to the national agenda - from an initial 'two hour offer' of PESS, to three, and recently a 'five hour offer' – 'has changed the role of School Sport Partnerships' (Sam). When the target was two hours, SSP staff focused on teacher training (particularly in primary schools), so that schools would be able to provide the offer in-house. However, as there is now a need to provide three hours of sport outside of school hours, SSP staff 'have been very much involved in making that happen and drawing away from this curriculum part of it' (Rory). This shift, from in-school to out-of-school assistance, is not welcomed by all schools. As Alex argues, 'the primary schools particularly, still want that... they don't want a shift just towards sport; for them, obviously, the curriculum [provision] is still the most important.' The value of in-school provision for some primary teachers is because 'there are those who come out [of university] with completely inadequate support to go out and teach the subject proficiently' (Jamie). The impact SSP staff have upon teacher training, especially in primary schools, is seen as an important aspect of Partnership work. Primary schools 'have had a lot of training from the School Sport Partnerships' which has 'up-skilled' teachers and made them 'more knowledgeable' (Rory). As an example, Rory reflects on the training needs of schools preparing for a dance event;

> the year I began we were having [...] a dance festival, and my role was to offer support to any schools in that Partnership that wanted support with dance – so all 45 primary schools wanted my support; because all 45 hadn't done dance before. [...] Next year we had a dance festival, and maybe about 15

schools asked for my support. And the next year: [just] two. And that event still goes on with very very little input [...] So that's just amazing. That gives you a fantastic feeling that all of those teachers are now comfortable; happy doing it themselves.

In such instances as this, SSP staff use their expertise to provide initial training to teachers and pupils. The training – which is specific to forthcoming SSP-organised events – is seen as sufficient exposure (by teachers and SSP staff) for schools to provide lessons independently in future.

An additional achievement of Partnerships has been to increase collaboration between schools. In those situations in which inter-school cooperation has improved, Cameron claims that the 'collaborative working between schools has probably been one of the greatest success stories.' The impact of partnership working between schools has been particularly pronounced, and especially beneficial, where the relations between *primary* schools have improved (Jamie). Overall, YST and County Council staff considered the initiative to be a great success. Senior practitioners suggest that the major benefits (aside from those reported in PESSYP surveys) have been through raising the status of PE in the curriculum, and improving partnerships between schools. Sam believes that PE 'was dying a death' before SSPs were introduced. However, the initiative has helped 'raise the profile of the subject in schools.' At national conferences, Jamie repeatedly hears head teachers say 'You don't have to convince us anymore about sport sitting at the heart of school life.' PE is now seen to occupy a more significant position in many schools, and the credit for this is largely given to the work of SSP staff. Having the extra personnel allows schools to 'provide all of these after school clubs and organise competitions' (Rory).

Effective School Sport Partnerships

Defining the characteristics of successful Partnerships proves difficult for respondents. The nationwide scope of the initiative means that all SSPs function differently. It is difficult, therefore, to transport examples of good practice from one site to another. However, what *is* seen as important by several respondents is the workforce implementing the initiative. A little background information is necessary to help explain their point. Whilst individual skills and personal characteristics are inimitable, the most significant issue concerns the structural

makeup of the workforce. There is no exact organisational model that SSPs must adhere to; for example, Partnerships cater for a diverse range (and number) of schools, they have unequal levels of external funding and sponsorship, unique core staff positions, and varying numbers of personnel (core and ancillary). In particular, concerns are raised *vis-à-vis* the role of the SSCo(s) within a given Partnership. The experiences of two County Council respondents (both of whom were previously SSCos) help to explain the issues.

SSPs employ different numbers of SSCos, who may be employed full- or part-time; in the latter case, the individual's time will be divided between secondary school teaching duties and Partnership responsibilities. The Partnership that Rory worked for employed five full-time SSCos, who worked out of the same base. In a neighbouring area the SSCos were stationed in secondary schools, and released from the school two days per week to fulfil their SSP obligations. Rory suggests that 'it's a difficult job to do – to have your teaching commitments and your commitments to the SSCo [role] – so it's bound to be far more limited in what you can offer.' In contrast to this, Rory reflects that;

> having worked in a Partnership [with] full-time [SSCos], the impact was huge; it was absolutely huge.
> And it's just sad to see some of those who are doing it for two days, who know what they want to do,
> have the ability to do it, but they haven't got the time to.

Whilst the full/part-time status of SSCos is important, an additional factor relates to the past experience of the individual. Some SSCos have sport coaching backgrounds, but the majority are former teachers. Sam believes that the 'more successful' Partnerships are those that have a combination of primary and secondary specialists. Due to the requirements of teaching PESS to young children, it helps to have experience and specialism in primary teaching.

The remaining factors that respondents raised, concerning the effectiveness of SSPs, are extraneous, situational issues. In general, SSPs are thought to operate more or less effectively depending on particular environmental conditions. Partnerships that work with clusters of geographically dispersed schools tend, perhaps inevitably, to find their work 'more challenging' (Cameron). For a coach delivering lessons to multiple schools, for example, it is easier to provide for schools that are clustered nearby one another. In general, coaches are less willing to provide assistance to sparsely located schools, as it is financially

and logistically inefficient. Sam believes that 'the will *is there* for people to work in clusters […] but when you've got schools that are miles and miles apart, transport is always [problematic]'. Rory provides a good example of the dynamics;

> [a local Partnership] is geographically small, and if you employ coaches to deliver, say, archery, they're not going to have to travel very far to each school, whereas if you send that coach to [a rural] Partnership it would take them an hour and a half to get there to deliver an hour's session, and an hour and a half back. You're not going to get someone give up four hours for one hours PE are you?

A further limitation for isolated schools is often a lack of leisure facilities and after school provision. Partnerships based within close proximity to metropolitan areas are likely to have better access to facilities. For instance, an urban Partnership in the region has access to 'fantastic sporting facilities and a wide range of clubs to feed children into.' In contrast, for rural Partnerships 'it's a lot more difficult'; opportunities for extra-curricular activities are limited because 'they just don't have the clubs, and children have to travel 30/40 miles to the nearest club' (Alex). Sam suggests that the lack of facilities is not only an issue for rural schools, but also for those based in deprived areas.

> If you look at [a local] city, you see, [they] have got fantastic sporting clubs, loads of opportunities. Go across to [a more deprived area] and you'll struggle to find anything other than a football club, a dance club, and one or two gymnastics clubs – not much at all. So, there's real inequalities around the [region].

At the national level, the YST are aware of the difficulties faced by rural schools and Partnerships. The work of rural Partnerships is seen as 'more challenging,' however Cameron goes on to argue that the hurdles faced in PESS are no different from other aspects of rural life;

> overall our view would be that by-and-large, people that live and work in rural areas are used to that in every aspect of their life; so, they've kind of found ways of managing it. It becomes an easily used excuse and yet, actually, they're used to doing it. So, having to travel ten miles to the sports club is a problem not a lot different […] from having to travel ten miles to the post office or the dentist. So they've kind of found a way round it, a way through it […] and sometimes when you ask them 'Well, how do you deal with this, and this, and this?' They say, 'Well we do this, and this, and we do this.' And you say 'Well, could you not do this around PE and sport?' and they say 'Yeah, we probably could.'

A final issue raised by respondents, which links to the subjective willingness alluded to by Cameron, is the importance of parental input. It is parents who influence their child's attitude towards physical activity and encourage certain (sedentary or physically active) behaviours in the early years. Thus, a 'huge responsibility is there, parentally' (Jamie). On top of parental views towards physical activity, Cameron believes that their opinions towards PESS are of equal importance. For example, parents 'lend a degree of credence to [the subject] in kids' eyes – so if a parent says 'Don't worry about PE son, maths is much more important,' then it doesn't help any of us' (Cameron). At the regional level, the extent to which parents encourage physically active lifestyles varies between areas;

> naturally, in an [an affluent place], you've got very good parental support, you go to some [other, less affluent] areas, where there are one parent families - 50 percent of people don't have a car […] it's very very different.

> (Sam).

The consensus is that parental encouragement and support has a significant impact upon children's attitudes towards PESS, *and* the opportunities available to them. When there are high levels of parental support the work of SSPs is made easier than in those areas where parents are unable or unwilling to assist.

Summary

This section reports on the interviews with county council PESS staff and YST board members. Many issues were discussed in an attempt to succinctly reflect the opinions raised by the various respondents. The focus of SSPs has changed somewhat over the years, in keeping with the wider aspirations of the incumbent government. A consistent goal has been to provide *all* children with appropriate physical activity opportunities. There is a general consensus that SSPs have improved the PESS available to children in schools, however, there is still room for improvement. When it comes to defining successful Partnerships, respondents find it difficult to narrow it down to specific characteristics; the issue most frequently noted is that the workforce implementing the initiative must be passionate and skilled. A particular hurdle for effective implementation was faced in rural areas, where the logistics of promoting partnership working were more difficult due to

issues concerning location, accessibility, and cost. Parental support was also identified as being crucial to successfully engaging as many children as possible in PESS.

Carraway Juniors

Located in a 'very rural' village with 'above average socio-economic character' (Ofsted), the majority of Carraway Juniors' 48 pupils live within 500 meters of the school. The largest year group has eleven children, and the smallest five - due to the small numbers, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Ofsted classify Carraway as 'good' overall, with 15 of the 26 individual assessments being 'outstanding.' The school 'provides a good education for its pupils,' with SAT results consistently and 'significantly above the national average' (Ofsted). The work force consists of a teaching head teacher (teaching 0.6), three class teachers, and two teaching assistants. Physically, the premises are very small. For example, the school 'really really struggles [with indoor PE] our hall – so called – has now been designated as circulating space, because it's so small' (Belinda). Outside there is a field, playground and play space for infants.

The school has a 'very friendly' (Julie) 'family type atmosphere' (Belinda), where teachers 'know the children inside out' (Daisy). Lucille claims that 'with it being a small school […] pupils just get so much attention, and any problem areas are highlighted early on and are dealt with very quickly.' Paradoxically, the school's size and the local affluence are also limitations. Reflecting on her dual role as teaching head, for example, Belinda identifies how the small workforce can be restrictive. She concedes that 'it's just a nightmare trying to run a school and teach […] 'if you've got 20 members of staff you can spread all of these government initiatives out, but in a small school; I've only got two other people. You know, I can't do it.' In relation to what can be offered after school, Daisy again indicates that the small staff force is problematic;

> [It is] a time factor; we've got a teaching assistant who works here, but she's only part time. I think the other teachers are just so busy, what with the end of the day; they've got so much marking to do, so much preparation for the next day. There isn't anybody else really who can do those activities

A final concern, raised by Belinda, is that the affluence in the locality is counterproductive *vis-à-vis* governmental assistance. She alleges that the school;

suffer[s] in terms of grants and stuff. Because we're affluent [...] things tend to come pretty much last to us. I suppose it's going to be a money thing, you know, any initiatives are going to go in areas where there's a perceived problem, and you've got a large target audience.

Although the local village has minimal facilities, there is a general view that children have good access to leisure facilities. Most 'local' recreational facilities are in a nearby town which, although five miles away, is seen to be 'on the doorstep' (Lucille). Sharing this apparent indifference to distance, Jordan similarly notes that 'there's a running club up at [a town 20 miles away], which isn't too far away.' In the closest large town, children have access to a swimming pool, leisure centre, and sport fields. There are various courses and fun weeks offered in the leisure centre during school holidays - Julie stresses that most 'children [are] fortunate in that their parents are able to support them in doing these extra things.' Parents are significantly and proactively involved in school life; they '*do* want to get involved a lot. We seem to have the type of parents who don't just drop them off at the door and then, 'That's it, the childcare's dealt with' (Penelope). Julie tells of how a group of parents had 'the presence of mind to hassle people to try and raise money and lottery funding' for a play park. This well-resourced play area is, aside from a village hall, the only facility in the village.

Physical education: importance, structure and philosophy

PE is 'incredibly important' at Carraway Juniors (Lucille); in comparison to other subjects, it is 'quite high up there' (Myrtle). Julie suggests that because the head teacher is 'a keen runner [...] we're quite strong on PE.' Belinda herself acknowledges that the centrality of PE is 'probably because I was quite sporty when I was young.' The majority of teachers felt that the *purpose* of PE related to the development of teamwork and leadership skills. Penelope claims that whereas many children 'wouldn't want to lead a team of mathematicians solving a problem [...] they might be happy to go forward and lead in a sports role.' All teachers cited the development of healthy lifestyles as an objective of PE, however this was considered an ancillary motive. A final reason given by teachers is that PE is 'great [for] the

ones who aren't academic' (Penelope) and to give 'extra opportunities to those who have got a natural ability and those who really want to be sports people' (Belinda).

There are mixed opinions regarding the degree to which PESS should be competitive. For Jordan, competition is 'a good thing' because children should 'know what it's like to win and lose.' She asks, if children are 'winning and losing in every other subject, why can't you be competitive in sport?' Daisy shares these sentiments;

> a lot of people don't like to have competitions because they don't like to lose. But I think it's a good thing to lose […] It's like tests isn't it? You know, you're not always going to get top marks, you've got to realise that you've got to work really hard and some things you're good at and some things you're not good at.

On the other hand, Penelope and Belinda believe competitive PE fosters an inappropriate educational environment. Penelope is 'all for competitive sports,' however;

> it does worry me with some of the little ones, how upset they do get if they don't win. And I think it's a bad thing if all they want to do in games is to win […] for the ones who don't excel, it's like setting them up for failure all the time. And it can't do their confidence any good at all, can it?

In general, the motivational climate adopted in school is non-competitive, and thus largely inclusive. There is 'more emphasis on the fun side of PE and getting every child involved [than on] the prestige of winning' (Myrtle). Penelope implies that the very structure of the school – the small size and cross-year group integration – places a greater emphasis on inclusion.

Relating to the structure of PE in school, the lack of indoor facilities leads to an unconventional PE schedule. Once a week Key Stage 2 travel to a leisure centre (4.7 miles away) for their PE lesson. The necessity of hiring the centre is captured by Key Stage 1 teacher, Jordan;

> I *hate* teaching PE here because I hate what [facilities] I've got. Now we went to the sports centre two weeks ago, we did a hockey lesson, and I was just in awe. […] squashing them in that [school] hall with no space, it's unrealistic and it's not fair. My lesson up there was 100 percent better I would say, not because of what I did particularly, but because of what I had there […] I came back and I thought 'I really enjoyed that; I wish I could go there every week.' But we can't because we've got no money.

All teachers highlight the problems caused by the size of the hall. Although hiring the leisure centre is preferable to staying within school, it takes 'another hour out of the timetable, just getting them there and getting them back' (Julie). For Daisy, 'it's a real drag,' and when taking travel and changing time into account, she estimates that the children 'only have about half an hour' of physical activity. Due to financial constraints, Key Stage 1 lessons must be taken on-site. Of the three lessons (all Key Stage 2) that were observed, two were staged in a leisure centre and one on-site. The former took up 90 minutes (30 minutes was travel time) compared with 60 minutes for the latter. At the leisure centre, the group split into two; one taking a swimming lesson (led by a swimming instructor) and the other playing competitive hockey (taken by the head teacher). It was difficult to assess the length of time spent in activity as my time was divided between the two lessons. The lesson that was observed in school (football, taught by a sports coach) lasted for 54 minutes, of which children were active for approximately 19 minutes. The majority of time was spent preparing for activity and being instructed.

Partnership working and inter-school activities

Carraway has no school links and only one club link, with a tae-kwon-do club run by Daisy. All 20 of the club's members attend Carraway Juniors. Indeed, it would be run in school, 'but the school hall is just too small' (Daisy). When external staff come into school, there is widespread praise of the assistance received. Penelope suggests that due to the small workforce, PE 'could get very stagnant' without such help; the 'various people who come in give us a bit more focus and […] enthusiasm.' When external staff lead classes 'children probably get a much more rewarding session' (Julie). With shadow lessons, in particular, subsequent lessons benefit due to the teachers' acquisition of new skills and practices. There has been no sharing of resources or equipment between Carraway and other schools. The main interaction between schools is through inter-school sport/physical activities, organised by the SSP.

Belinda claims that 'every single child in our school has taken part in *a* festival, at least once this year.'[73] Julie believes the 'breadth of activities that they can offer' is the best thing about the SSP. All of the inter-school events the school is involved in are organised by the Partnership. The majority of the activities are aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils, largely because the festivals 'have become very competitive' (Belinda). This competitive focus has 'a very negative impact because [of the] small year groups.' Belinda concedes that even talented children benefit little; 'because it's team thing, small schools don't have a chance […] those who do have a talent for PE get quite frustrated with the rest of their team because they're never winning.'

Whilst Penelope advocates the identification and training of GT children, she believes the competitive focus is counterproductive; 'there is a massive bulk of people that just need to participate in sport and make it part of their life. And you can get put of very very early on by this competition, this needing to win element.' When compiling teams for inter-school events, therefore, the school disregards the competitive focus and 'quite often try and [send] mixed ability, or mixed *age*, groups' (Penelope). Whereas some schools need to be selective, Carraway can send entire year groups. As Julie recalls; 'we actually took the whole of Key Stage 2 last week, just the way the numbers worked.'

Although teachers believe the SSP-organised events can make a positive contribution to children's education, the philosophical division just one of several impediments. Firstly, the beneficial impacts associated with the inter-school events are seen to pivot around social issues. The activities are seen as opportunities 'for the children, particularly from smaller schools, to come together and get on' (Julie). Specifically, Key Stage 1 children 'thoroughly enjoy it' (Myrtle). As events for Key Stage 1 children are not competitive, 'it's kind of nice because everybody gets a certificate […] and they all get praised' (Daisy). A further advantage is skill development; the 'SSCos are usually there, and they'll maybe do a bit of coaching as well' (Julie).

In relation to the negative impacts, inter-school activities can be problematic in several respects. The SSP invite a certain number of children to each event, and the school must

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[73] Teachers recall involvement in tag rugby, tennis, cross country, quick cricket, football, and multi-skills inter-school events.

select a small number of participants. Penelope explains the impact this has on a school of Carraway's size;

> if we take part in any activities it's a case of 'Well, you can bring five from Year 6 [for example].' We might only have 7 children in that year group. So sometimes there are some children who perhaps don't like long-distance running but we have to pick them because basically we haven't got a big lot in that year group. And you'll get the odd grumble then, '*Oh, I don't really want to do it*.' You just have to pump them up and say '*Oh, it's the taking part that counts, you're doing this for your school*.' […] they get picked *because we're desperate sometimes for numbers*.

A final consideration is the location of events and the related issues of transportation and cost. The inter-school events *always* entail a bus ride, but they 'are usually within half an hour's drive away' (Lucille). If the event is regional, comprising of stages, later rounds may be held further away. Belinda suggests that the location of events can be 'difficult.' She ironically claims that;

> there's the risk [laughter], the '*risk*,' that we might get through to the tennis, the mini-tennis for the Year 3/4, because we came second. But that's being held in [a city 55 miles away], you know, we're just not going to be able to go really […] if they got through, there's eight of them, so there is no way I could afford a coach to carry eight…

Whilst teachers believe inter-school events provide good social and practical opportunities for children, the competitive motivational climate of the activities is seen to have a detrimental impact upon a school of Carraway's size. Also, due to the school's location, accessing events is expensive and time-consuming.

The impact of the SSP on physical education

The one after school club at Carraway Juniors was established because 'a lot of the parents […] don't finish [work] 'till five o'clock, so it's just that after school care for them' (Daisy). The club has 'no strong emphasis on sports or anything' (Daisy). Except for a netball club in the summer term and football on Friday lunchtimes, there are no physical or sport activities outside of school hours. Tae-kwon-do is promoted in school, but it is an independent business. Teachers accept that the 'after school activities are quite limited' (Lucille), but justify this on two grounds. First, although teachers would like to offer more clubs, because

there are 'very few staff it's limited on how much time people can give' (Belinda). Daisy suggests that regardless of the small staff force, 'the amount of paperwork involved in schools now, it's having that time to be able to take that hour at the end of the day.' Both Daisy and Belinda suggest that, on top of this lack of time, the school's isolation makes it difficult for external agencies to run clubs on site – it would be too time-consuming and therefore expensive for clubs to regularly visit the school, and with few potential recruits for coaches. Secondly, teachers worry that additional after school clubs will detract from attendance at the existing club. Because 'a critical mass of children' is required for the existing club (Julie), there has been a conscious decision *not* to offer additional activities. Belinda pragmatically states that;

> we don't like to do sport after school now, because we don't charge for extra-curricular PE type stuff,
> so [we are concerned that] people will send their children to our sports club after school, which
> actually hasn't got a charge. So our after school club, which has got a charge, *suffers*.

The SSP has minimal impact on the school. The two main ways in which it does affect PESS are through inter-school events and, to a lesser extent, teacher training. Teachers agree that the range of physical activities 'has expanded over the last few years' (Myrtle), largely due to the many SSP-organised festivals the children attend. The impact on teacher training has diminished over time but, reflecting on a previous SSCo, several teachers note that 'it has been useful to have them come in' (Julie). Daisy suggests that assistance from the SSCo 'is very good because they're specifically trained in PE [...] and they're very skilled in their sport.' General awareness of the SSP staff and what their roles are, is now poor. The school secretary, for example, 'doesn't know an awful lot about them.' For Lucille, 'it's a string of words that I hear from time to time.' This unawareness may be due to the limited time SSP staff spend in the school; Jordan estimates that 'they come in a couple of times a year,' but, she 'hasn't seen anybody this year.' Belinda stresses that school staff have to proactively seek SSP assistance; 'we do invite them in, but it's the one Co-ordinator between all the schools, about 13 schools, so her availability is obviously quite limited.'

The SSCo is based at the nearest Sports College, which is located 18.1 miles away, thus entailing a lengthy, time-consuming, roundtrip. Belinda follows on from this, claiming that 'because we're spread out you can't just pop in from one school [to another]; you're talking

half an hour down the road to the next place.' Due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, teachers only learn of what the SSP can provide via the 'occasional letter' or the Extranet. The outcome is captured by Myrtle, who suggests that 'because they don't pop in so much you're not inclined to think 'Are you available? Could you come and do a couple of Thursday afternoons or something?' Daisy believes there has been a breakdown in communication; for her, contacting the SSCo 'would be more like the head's job.' Several staff are concerned that the SSP only provides input in relation to, and immediately preceding, events that it organises. SSP staff do not loan equipment to Carraway, and neither do they facilitate partnership working between schools.

> whether they just think [that] once you've done a dance festival [for example] you know what's expected and *you've just got to get on with it?* But it's good to have that extra person come in and give you ideas, so it's a shame that we don't have anybody.
>
> (Daisy).

The lack of SSP input also means there is no help with GT provision. Jordan is concerned that children on the GT register 'don't get that extra support.' In relation to SSP assistance in GT provision, Jordan states that;

> I'm not aware of what the School Sport Partnership does with the gifted and talented to be honest. Apart from the fact that we have a register ourselves within the class, and if […] anybody is good [they] will be put on the register. And that goes to the head, and where it goes from there [throws hands in the air]. I don't know how far the School Sport Partnership goes ahead with developing that information that's passed on to them.

Reasons for investment in PESS

At the beginning of each of the second round of interviews, respondents were asked why they thought the government had invested so heavily in PESS (relative to historical investment in the subject). This section will consider the responses given by teachers. All respondents argued that the reasons for the government's investment pivoted around the promotion of healthy lifestyles and reducing childhood obesity levels. For Myrtle, it is 'just to get kids into a healthy lifestyle of eating well, taking lots of exercise; childhood obesity – it would get that down.' Belinda agrees that the investment is a response to 'childhood obesity and couch potato lifestyles.' Jordan and Gill also stress concerns over obesity, but see the

investment as a long-term solution to 'reduce bills for the NHS' (Gill) and improve 'long-term health [and prevent] health implications for later on in life' (Jordan). Aside from weight and inactivity, Daisy suggests that the '2012 Olympic Games might have some kind of an affect as well.'

After reflecting on the motivation of the increased investment in PESS, respondents were asked if the factors they cited needed to be addressed in Carraway Juniors. The general response is best captured by head teacher, Belinda. She suggests that the investment in PESS is;

> is directed [at] the urban model; very much inner city problems and issues that don't necessarily translate to the issues that rural communities have. Our kids are active, they live on farms, they're chasing sheep, they're active! [...] It's quite unusual to have a child that does have that sort of health issue really. I mean it's nice because we have access to SSCo and things like that, which we wouldn't have had if the government hadn't of put the money in. But then you get this; they're being directed by Sport England, in my understanding, and there's other targets that don't relate to our situation.

All other teachers concur that the issue being addressed are not relevant to Carraway. Myrtle, similarly does not believe that obesity and unhealthy lifestyles are of concern in the school or local area; 'I wouldn't say things like childhood obesity were [problematic] I would say the majority of people who live here lead quite a healthy, active, lifestyle.' Jordan echoes these responses with the same degree of certitude when noting that;

> I mean obviously here, here in this village, no, because you've got a lot of people who are very wealthy and can afford to buy good food. You get obesity, and you get that in families where they can't afford to pay for things, they can't afford for their children to go to clubs.

Summary

There is a strong belief that children enjoy PE at Carraway Juniors; Daisy thinks 'they would probably all enjoy it if we done more of it.' Unfortunately, the Partnership is seen to offer little to the school except for the opportunity to participate in inter-school activities (that are based a significant distance away from the school). When the school does attend such events it is a costly and ultimately negative experience (due to the location and size of the

school, respectively).Teachers welcome the input of external PESS staff on-site, and they are generally happy when they do receive such assistance. However, this has been increasingly withdrawn of late. School staff accept that the location of the school might deter some people from offering clubs, but there is an implicit assumption (from teachers and external staff) that the parents can, and will, make up for the lack of assistance in school time. There is a consensus amongst staff that the rationale underpinning the increased investment in PESS is to address concerns over childhood obesity and unhealthy lifestyles. However, when asked to consider these issues in relation to the school's pupils, teachers believed there was no problem and that, in contrast, pupils were discernably active and healthy.

Tweedale Juniors

Tweedale Juniors has fewer than 150 pupils and serves a 'fairly affluent rural' area (Ofsted). Ofsted rate Tweedale as a 'good school' with 'outstanding' personal development; in all measures, the school was ranked 'good' or 'outstanding.' With a large dining/sports hall, playground, and grass area, the school itself is considered to be '*the* facilities' in the host village (Emily). On the whole pupils' parents are 'very very supportive […] 'very middle class, very well off, very well educated, and very concerned about their children's education' (Ellie). The high level of parental engagement is demonstrated in the regular attendance of between 80-100 parents at weekly school assemblies.

The small number of pupils is viewed as beneficial in that children are known personally by staff members, thus creating a communal environment (Ellie). On the other hand, the small workforce (a result of the small pupil numbers) causes several problems. All schools must cover the entire National Curriculum. Thus, in a large school with many teachers, more staff are available to provide the necessary coverage. Some problems are captured by Ellie;

> I co-ordinate seven different things [here]; in my last school I co-ordinated one. So you focus on that one particular area […] Because there were something like thirty-odd members of staff [in the previous school], whereas here there are six members of staff […] I mean I co-ordinate two of the biggest areas of the school curriculum, but one of our year three teachers, she co-ordinates *four* of the core subject areas.

The school's most experienced PE teacher, Sophie, is music and literacy co-ordinator. As a result of this demanding workload, the PLT's role has been taken up by the head teacher. Speaking from experience, Sophie suggests that although 'the head teacher [has] tried to do it for a while [...] it's an enormous job, and she just [does not] have the time.'

Physical education

In relation to the status of PE in school, Emily's comments are interesting in several respects. She claims that;

> top ranking is literacy and numeracy, because it needs to be and that's what we're assessed through. Coming a close second […] is ICT, because that's the way forward […] I make great efforts to get

children outdoors doing things; gardening clubs and things like that. But in terms of, if you're talking about sport, it would to me just be one of a variety of foundation subjects that we do in the afternoons.

This extract highlights the privileged position of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the school. When referring to PE, 'sport' is used as a catch-all phrase for the subject. Regardless of semantics, PE is seen to occupy a peripheral position in the curriculum. Also, there is a belief that children do want to be doing outdoor activities, but those activities are *not* necessarily sports-based.

Strong emphasis is placed on providing opportunities for *all* children rather than just the 'sporty' few. The motivational climate fostered in school is best expressed in contradistinction to inter-school and after school activities. To demonstrate this, Sophie draws attention to a shift in the organisation of activities. When the SSP was introduced, a coach would come into school to lead lessons. The whole year group would then receive coaching, which 'was really good' (Sophie). However;

we began to find that people weren't coming in as much. And then it was sort of 'Can you select eight kids to do this?' Well, you know […] 'one, we've not been teaching it yet, and, no, we can't pick eight because we don't know who…' We kind of got away from what we felt […] it should be about in primary

(Sophie).

Numerous explanations are given for *what* PE should provide children with. For Emily, PE should 'extend a child's horizons; and if they think 'Ooh, I'm really good at hockey,' or 'I really enjoy this,' then I think then they can follow a specialist route.' Chloe feels that children 'should get an understanding about exercise and about why it's important,' 'learn new skills' and have the opportunity to develop 'collaboration and teamwork' skills. 'But,' she stresses, 'I want them to enjoy it; I want them to think '*Yay, PE!*' which actually most of them do.'

Five PE lessons were observed in Tweedale; four took place in the sports/dining hall, and one on the school playground. Three lessons (healthy lifestyles, golf, and tennis) were led by external staff and the remainder (speed, agility and quickness, and jive) by class teachers. The mean average duration of lessons was 55 minutes with an average time of 11 minutes

spent changing (thus, average time spent on activities was 44 minutes). Of the 44 minutes children were involved in their lesson, 22 minutes of this was spent engaged in physical activity; the majority of the remainder of the time was divided between queuing/waiting and receiving instructions. No lesson was inherently competitive, although in all lessons children could be seen to introduce an element of competition (be this hitting the golf ball furthest, dancing or remaining in a game for the longest time, or beating an opponent at tennis). In all lessons except for speed, agility and quickness, children were static for longer periods than they were either moderately or vigorously active.

Activities on offer

All teachers offer at least one after school club within the academic year. Relating to PESS, children have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities. The school has formal links with the local tennis and cricket clubs, and there is also a football league between primary schools. Although the cricket and tennis clubs are the only sport-based clubs in the local village, the nearest town (1.8 miles away) has rugby and football leagues, a sports college, dance school, and swimming baths. Whilst children do attend these facilities, 'there's no links to [Tweedale Juniors]' (Jessica). Involvement in the clubs is 'more a case of parents involving children […] it's not through us' (Sophie).

External staff/coaches have been into school to lead lessons, train staff, and promote clubs. All teachers acknowledge the benefits of having these 'experts' lead lessons. The most successful input follows the same format; a club representative delivers lessons in school and then promotes their club/sport to children. In tennis, for example, the local coach has;

> done a series of ten lessons, so that's worked really well because he's coming in, it's enriching the PE for all of, say, year three. He may then pick children out for a tournament, but they've all had the coaching.

> (Sophie).

Although the school welcome external input, Sophie argues that provision is 'very random,' often with people coming in 'for ten weeks, and then you don't get anything.' The *ad hoc* provision leads to 'disenchanted' feelings as some year groups become 'disrupted.' As the school plans its curriculum a year in advance, sudden amendments to provision result in one

'class end[ing] up doing something different from the whole of the rest of the school' (Emily). Emily would like 'a little bit of continuity with some of the subjects.' What the Partnership now offers, though, is '*never in our school*,' but entails the children going to a different venue *within* school hours (Ellie). Teachers would rather the competitions were staged outside of school hours, when supply teachers were not needed and there was no missed school work. Additionally, there are calls for the Partnership to provide more input on-site, within and after school hours. Tweedale shares no formal links with other schools, and the majority of inter-school activity is the result of SSP activities.

Inter-school activities

It is difficult for teachers to raise these issues with the SSP because of timetabling and communication issues. The SSP meet with the schools in its clusters on Friday mornings, once a term. However, Emily points out that 'that's when I have my parent's assembly. And it's *always* Friday mornings.' Regardless of whether this demonstrates inflexibility on the behalf of the school or SSP, there is a resultant breakdown in the relationship between the two. The school is thus unable to contribute to the plans of the SSP and staff find it difficult to voice any concerns.

The greatest affect the SSP has on children is through the inter-school events it organises. Due to the number of schools affiliated to the SSP, when inter-school events are organised restrictions are placed on the number of pupils each school can enter into the events. Teachers worry that by restricting the number of children schools can enter into competitions, 'you could end up with the same people having [all of the] opportunities' (Sophie). Ellie believes this is the case in other schools, where the same 'elite group' attend events. In Tweedale, though, 'if some children have had an opportunity to do something, we will then try and send another group, so [they also] get the opportunity' (Ellie). The school's selection process is captured in Chloe's explanation of how decisions are made;

> [teachers] make sure that whenever [children] go to competitions, that everyone can take part [...]
> it's not a better team, and then a second team - it's just a general mix, to let everyone play and feel
> included [...] some schools are very very competitive and only put their best team out. But I don't

think that's what it's about at all. Actually I think our school's very much got that attitude, that everybody should be involved.

When children perform well at inter-school events, teachers are 'proud more of their sportsmanship, their teamwork, [and] their attitude towards PE and games, rather than winning all the time' (Emily). Ellie boasts that 'people always say about us, when we go to the events, 'Ah, you're the nice school.''

Due to the increasing emphasis given to inter-school activities, there has been a concomitant reduction in the input SSP staff provide Tweedale *within* school. There is now little provision for *all* pupils within a class or year group, and no longer is the assistance given on-site. The quantity of SSP-organised competitions in the previous year was so great that the school 'almost got to the point where there was too much competition and not enough groundwork' (Sophie). Teachers have several problems with the current organisation of competitions, chief amongst which is that '*all* of [the competitions] are *in* school time' (Ellie). Taking a small group of children to an event in school hours is financially expensive, 'as you've got to get a supply teacher – £80-£90 a day for a supply teacher – [and] you're looking at £100 for a bus' (Emily). Further, because children miss out on work whilst out of school, 'the onus is [then] on us to make sure that they don't lose out academically' (Chloe).

Those children who do go to events 'absolutely *love* going.' But, as Sophie points out, 'then you also get the ones who didn't have a chance.' Staff would prefer 'the specialists to come into school, to work with a whole class of children [and] to then select children, [that] they with their expertise can see have talent, and to take those children forwards into the competitions' (Emily).

An additional problem with the inter-school activities relates to the motivational climate fostered in such events. The motivational climate inherent in SSP-organised activities runs contrary to the school's ethos. Sophie recalls the issues faced when the school attended a swimming gala. Tweedale provides swimming lessons for year three and four pupils and thought it appropriate to enter these children into the gala. However, Sophie recalls that when the school went to the gala, there were 'year fours racing against year sixes, who might [have been] club swimmers.' As a result, 'well actually, is that then a positive

competitive experience? Probably not I would think.' When asked how pupils view SSP-organised events, Ellie replied that they;

> do enjoy them, but they find them quite disheartening in the fact that [for example] sometimes our year six will say 'What's the point in going because I know such and such is going to be there, and we're never going to win.' […] I don't know what it does for their morale, and their self-esteem, and it is completely at odds with our school ethos and philosophy.

Ellie worries about the competitive nature of the activities offered by the SSP; 'there are some children, no matter what you do, they are just not going to enjoy sport.' Recalling how there was 'this *big move* away from competitive sport,' she argues that 'the Sport Partnership seems to have really focused back in on sending your best children to everything.'

Aside from these concerns, the school 'gets a lot of short notice for things,' which is a problem in itself. For instance, if progress is made to 'further heats, there are additional dates that you then have to find transport for [and] staff to cover' (Emily). There is also the additional expense to consider. Sophie highlights the problem this creates;

> we've ended up getting through to finals; you're only given a week's notice, because of course you don't know you're going to get through. So then when you do get through, you then need to be there next week; well you can't book a bus! […] it's really hard to get consent forms out, to get consent back, and then book a bus…

Whilst children do enjoy attending the events, staff at Tweedale have many apprehensions about the way in which they are organised. Due to poor communication between the school and SSP, teachers find it difficult to raise these issues. The two core issues are with the different motivational climates promoted in school and at the inter-school events, and that fewer external staff are now coming into school to teach (thus, no longer are all children benefitting).

General opinions of the SSP initiative

Although the events offered by the SSP are often opposed to the school's ethos, general views of the SSP staff are positive. Jessica claims that the SSP staff have been 'fantastic and we get on so well.' Reflecting on the school's relationship with the SSP Emily feels that they have;

> done loads to support me and keep me and my school on board […] the personalities involved in the Sports Partnership are actually very good, and undoubtedly if it hadn't been for some of the teachers and the pupils there, I would have gone 'Pfff, I can't do it!' long ago.

Despite such views, the SSCo is the *only* point of contact the school has with the Partnership. 'Nobody else seems to be involved […] The only person we know is [the SSCo]' (Ellie). As the SSCo is part time (his role is divided between coordinating a subject at the Sports College and the duties associated with the SSCo position) he is only in Tweedale 'two or three times a term' (Emily). Although his physical presence is minimal, the frequency of emails is often excessive. When Sophie took over the role of PLT - a role she soon vacated because 'it was just too much' – she recalls how the SSCo 'was emailing me and letting me know when meetings were coming up and stuff. But […] you just felt inundated, and it was almost like you wanted to say 'Look, we're not just doing PE!'' Emily also dislikes the 'masses of emails' she receives; they 'swamp me and crowd me out, and just put me off before I actually read [them]. I just think 'Oh, no!'

Many staff members view the SSP as an admirable idea, but feel the initiative demands too much from the school. The approach of the Partnership – which is often seen as 'very didactic' (Ellie) – produces a negative view of the impact it has on the school. A further reason for the unfavourable views towards the initiative relates to the amount of compulsory paperwork. The PESSYP survey is a major drain on the school's resources. Emily considers the survey to be a 'colossal' task. For Ellie, the survey is '*a mammoth task* […] very demanding indeed.' The problems associated with the survey were further exacerbated when Jessica, the former PLT, left Tweedale. Emily recalls that 'I just could not keep on going with the work at the end of last term. I used the supply money that they paid me to bring back the teacher [Jessica] who used to do the Primary Link Teacher's role.'

To cope with the increased workload the school actually paid for a supply teacher, whose sole remit was to complete the mandatory PESSYP survey. The general communication problems and the increased workload associated with the SSP, leads Ellie to state that the 'School Sport Partnership tend[s] to cause us more headaches than anything.'

Gifted and talented provision in PESS

Teachers believe that a child's talent in PESS is heavily influenced by parents and input from external coaches and clubs. Ellie, who is in charge of the school's GT provision, believes 'a lot of children who are gifted and talented are [so] because of the input they have outside of school.' Jessica concurs; identification of GT children is 'brought to our attention by parents.' Therefore, children who attend sports clubs, or those with proactive parents, are more likely to be identified as GT. Ellie and Jessica have several concerns with GT identification. As evidenced in the following remarks, the blame is explicitly levelled at the SSP. Ellie argues that children fail to 'get the opportunities because we don't get the input from the Partnership.' When asked if SSP staff identify GT pupils, Ellie replies that;

> *No!* We are asked by them to identify our gifted and talented children. And we identify our gifted and talented children on the PESSCL form, but they don't ever come into school and do anything with those children.

Prompted to give examples of SSP involvement in GT identification, Ellie insists that 'It just doesn't happen […] we have very limited communication with them, and the communication we do have tends to be via email.' If the SSP fails to identify GT children, teaching staff (along with parents and/or private coaches) must fill the void. However, when the SSCo asks the school to send a group of talented athletes to a competition;

> I do not have the expertise to select children, for example, for athletics. So I'll get a letter saying 'Can you send six boys and six girls to athletics?' You might as well pull the names out of a hat to be honest, because I don't possess those expertise.
>
> (Emily).

Ellie claims that the GT problems are not specific to Tweedale but can be seen across the region. Having knowledge of the processes in place for GT children in other subjects, Ellie locates PE within the wider curriculum;

in other subject areas gifted and talented provision is offered by the County [Council]. They will run workshops and things for the gifted and talented children; there's the Young Gifted and Talented Association where children can go and work online and do things. But in terms of sport and PE, I certainly think that's an area that they fall down on, that they don't afford the opportunities for the gifted and talented children.

Teacher training

Respondents are generally happy with the PESS-related training provided within school. Views towards external training, however, are less complimentary. The in-house system is limited because 'where the children get to […] depends on the expertise of the teacher.' If no staff member is adept in gymnastics, for example, the provision would then be inadequate. There is also a secondary effect, in that the reliance on internal training leads to a general incognizance towards external provision. This is captured by Chloe, who claims that if she required extra training, she 'wouldn't know who [from the SSP] to contact directly. I would probably go to Emily first and see what she suggested.' All interviewees commented on the PE teacher training offered by the SSP. Emily describes it as follows;

> for a short time, for a lot of the activities, they'll put a coach in; like dance for example, they'll put somebody in to do dance with the children. But then that expertise is supposed to rub off on the primary teacher [however] it doesn't, you know, we haven't had anything like the training they have.

The intended benefits of this approach are understood by all; staff observe an expert lead a lesson, and incorporate the practices into their teaching, thus enhancing the provision. Chloe provides an example in which this has worked effectively. There was a visit from a gymnastics coach, and 'that was lovely, because we would obviously participate and watch. And then now, when I go to teach gymnastics I obviously use what I've seen her do, in mine.' The main concern with this style of training is its inadequacy as the primary means through which staff learn to teach. According to Sophie, the present format is a relatively new development. Training as a teacher some ten years ago, she recalls how she 'went on an awful lot of PE inset training […] But there doesn't seem to be the inset training [now].' The effect of the training method adopted by the Partnership is captured by Emily;

> the bottom line is that not everybody is going to be an expert […] it's like sort of saying 'Oh, we'll bring some people in to teach a bit of French; you'll learn whilst you're there and then you can teach

it.' But it takes a certain amount of expertise, and confidence I think. And some people really aren't confident teaching PE.

Reasons for investment in PESS

Chloe suggests that the government's investment in PESS is part of 'a big drive towards health [due to] rising obesity [levels].' Emily responds similarly, arguing that it is to 'spread the message of healthy lifestyles and healthy eating [...] so that they don't end up with an obesity problem – which is increasingly, apparently, a problem in our society.' For Ellie, investment is because of 'problems with childhood obesity rates and things' and for Sophie – the only respondent not to mention 'obesity' – the increased interest is because, 'generally, fitness and health of children is a big issue.' There was a unanimous belief that the reasoning behind the investment in PESS, post-1997, was premised on reducing levels of obesity and improving children's health.

When asked if the issues they cited were problems in Tweedale Juniors, responses were closely aligned. Chloe feels that 'there are a lot of children, and worryingly so, who spend an awful lot of time on computer games.' '*But*,' she goes on to argue, 'this is quite a wealthy area [...] and therefore parents do have more money to do activities with children, and they are very active children.' Ellie and Emily's responses are very similar to Chloe's, in that the affluence of parents is again alluded to. Emily claims that there is not 'a huge problem with overweight children in our school.' Picking up on Chloe's observations on the affluence of parents *and* the concerns over increased use of gaming consoles, Emily feels that;

> There are a lot of families who are engaged in quite a lot of sports, and for a fair proportion of my families I think money would not be a problem to the extent that they couldn't afford to pay [for activities]. *However*, I think the staying indoors and playing with PlayStations and whatever is a problem, *definitely*.

As to whether obesity is a problem, Ellie shares similar sentiments;

> Not in our school [...] if you were in an inner city school, possibly, it might be [an issue]. But because of the make-up of our school, and the type of parents that we have, they are all very interested in their children, I mean all of our children are involved in a lot of things [...] So I don't think that's an issue here.

The only staff member to differ in the general focus of their response is Sophie. The idea, for Sophie, is to 'give children more opportunities to take part in sport.' Concerning whether this is an issue in Tweedale, she suggests that it is;

> I think in the primary sector the problem is [that] you are restricted by the expertise of you and your staff. And, in a primary school, the likelihood is that you probably won't have a PE expert.

Summary

Generally, views towards the SSP are negative. Sophie suggests that it 'isn't a lack of enthusiasm' on the school's part, and Emily claims that she has 'always tried to support the Partnership, even though I don't do it very well.' The reasons for the dissatisfaction are threefold; logistical, organisational, and philosophical. Inter-school events - the main input the school receives from the SSP - adopt a competitive motivational climate which is at odds with the school's inclusive ethic. The events are also logistically and financially problematic. The shift from in-school assistance (teacher training, leading lessons) to external activities (inter-school activities) is seen as counterproductive. The shift may also have negative impacts on GT identification and the quality of lessons. Overwhelmingly, staff believe the government is using PESS to address issues related to obesity and sedentary activity, although, on the whole, such issues are not seen to affect pupils at Tweedale.

West Hill Junior School

West Hill has 236 pupils and serves an area of 'above average social deprivation' (Ofsted). Ofsted classify West Hill – in all but two categories – as 'good.' The school aims to provide 'a broad and balanced' curriculum that allows children to develop skills they can use 'throughout their life.' Teachers are there to;

> provide a service for the children, not for our reasons; it's for them. At the end of the day we need them to feel comfortable coming to school so we'll do, obviously within limits, whatever we can to make them feel comfortable, and get them involved.

(Poppy).

West Hill has excellent facilities. There is an on-site swimming pool, two large fields, a permanent sports hall, and two playgrounds. As the swimming pool is in need of refurbishment, however, it has become financially burdensome. Josie would like to 'open the pool up to the community a bit more […] but the system at the moment just won't cope with it.' The school is one of 425 schools nationally to have Zoneparc.[74] 'Until about three or four years ago the kids would just go out and play around. But now they've got play equipment, which obviously gives them some more forms of exercise' (Jake). There are also boogie boxes on each playground to promote music and dance. As a result, 'the children do lots of dancing and singing and performing' at break time (Josie).

Although the local area has average sports facilities, 'free of charge, there's not enough' for children to do (Catherine). There are local football, cricket and rugby clubs, two leisure centres, swimming baths, and play parks (although the parks are not used by children as 'the youths go in there and abuse them' (Irene)). Most local facilities are in the town centre (one mile away), which is seen as inaccessible due, largely, to a lack of parental support. To teachers' knowledge, outside of school pupils are involved in rugby, football and cricket clubs, and some attend dance and gymnastics schools.

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[74] A Youth Sport Trust initiative which, through a series of markings and playground equipment, aims to further promote active play. The initiative is 'aimed at tackling social exclusion and increasing activity levels of young people by introducing innovative break time activities and playground management systems.'

Jane, for example, recalls how one child was particularly good at tennis; the SSCo said he 'would be recommending [the child] to go to a tennis club or a tennis academy or something… But there's none around here.' To access facilities/clubs children must rely on parental support (financial and transport). In relation to physical activity and sport, Josie suggests that levels of transport deprivation and the costs associated with participation and childcare fees limit the extent to which many parents can support their child's participation. As Steph reflects, West Hill is 'in quite a socially deprived area.' Many children come from poor backgrounds, with some of their parents being 'second/third generation unemployed' (Josie). Aside from financial constraints, the greatest barrier is the general *willingness* of parents to support their children.

As parents 'play a major role' in what their children do in and outside of school (Zoe), the school employs a family engagement officer to help improve parent-school relations. Various parent-child clubs are also offered. Despite the school's efforts;

> A school can work as hard as it wants to get parents involved, and we do. But if a parent doesn't want to give that time and effort to work in partnership with the school, then you are fighting a losing battle […] we can put everything there, but if they don't want to come in…
>
> (Josie).

Teachers worry about the levels of support given by many parents. Steph argues that 'on open evenings rarely any of their parents come.' The lack of engagement/ encouragement from some parents is evident in the following caption. A lot of children are;

> often late coming into school, and I'll be like 'Ahh, what have you done?' '*Oh, I didn't get to bed until late!*' They haven't had any breakfast. Some of them just get themselves out of bed and come to school. So I'll say; 'So, has your mum listened to you read?' 'Oh, she hasn't had time.' So […] if they don't even have time to listen to them read, I can't see how they'll be bothered to take them swimming…
>
> (Poppy).

Physical education: importance and purpose

At West Hill PE is a 'whole school thing.' The subject is taken 'very seriously [and] the whole staff are on board' (Catherine). Although literacy, numeracy and science are the core curricular subjects, PE is 'one of the priorities' (Josie), 'one of the top ones' (Jane). For all respondents the purpose of PE is closely aligned to health and fitness. PE should 'keep the children fit' (Steph); 'it's kind of to get it as part of their lifestyle; sort of educate them for the future on how important it is to stay fit and healthy' (Jane). Catherine states that 'it's very important because of the rates of obesity; certainly in our area, and the country as a whole.'

The health benefits are not the sole rationale given for PE however. All respondents identify more than a single factor, and several potential benefits are suggested. For Olivia, 'some people might excel at PE [who] don't excel in other areas.' Irene similarly suggests that 'a lot of them who are not academically able [may] blossom because they don't feel threatened.' Another oft-cited reason is the impact PE can have on teamwork. Jane notes how the children 'learn a lot of team building skills [through] working as part of a team.' For Grace, children are taught the importance of 'being patient' and have to learn to 'cooperate with each other.' A final factor was the impact physical activity can have on academic performance. Catherine uses the example of the 'Early Birds' club to demonstrate her point;

> it does make them more alert, I mean they'll come in on a Monday morning and they'll be like 'Can't be bothered! Not awake yet.' But after they've done Early Birds they're obviously a little bit more awake and alert.

The motivational climate of the school's PESS is largely inclusive, with the majority of curriculum and after school activities aimed at activity for all. In curriculum time 'the aim is to get everyone involved to the best of their ability (Irene). Regardless of the style in which lessons are taught, the most important thing is that 'they all feel involved and equal' (Grace). Reflecting on the present situation, Grace stresses that 'none of them feel like they can't take part because they're not as good as someone else.' When asked about the focus of after school clubs and inter-school events (activities primarily organised by the SSP), teachers were less sure of the motivational climate. Jake says the focus of the activity

'depends on what group of children we target.' Catherine concurs; it is not only the *children* who are participating that dictates the focus, but 'it [also] depends on the *sport*' (italics added). If competitions or inter-school events are approaching, the emphasis shifts to a more competitive focus. For instance;

> with the table tennis we're not headed towards a competition or anything like that so […] the kids go in, they warm up, and we let them get on with it themselves. So with that kind of sport they just work as a team, and they'll change themselves around […] But then if we have, like the rugby, it is more competitive and the kids will play to win, if we've got two teams in school playing against each other in a practice they'll play to win.

(Catherine).

Unfortunately the SSCo for West Hill had restricted me from observing any PE lessons, although the teachers did not oppose any observation.

A wide variety of physical activities are available for children, in and out of school hours.[75] After school clubs are run by a combination of SSP staff, external coaches and teachers. In relation to the latter, when new clubs are set up the SSCo tends to come in and lead 'maybe the first two or three [sessions], and then pass it on to the teacher to do' (Zoe). Most clubs are 'open to everyone, but of course there is only a certain limit to who can go to each club' (Irene). Although clubs are inclusive, it does 'tend to be the same children [that] go to them' (Zoe). This is often because 'it's just those kids whose parents will let them stay, or whose parents it's easier for' (Olivia). Jane adds that if parents have an interest in sport, then they are likely to encourage their children to attend certain clubs. After school clubs are primarily for enjoyment, but they do promote a competitive ethos when teams are preparing for competitions. The clubs for *all* still run, but there are additional clubs for more talented pupils. Olivia thinks that the 'children find [after school clubs] a bit more pleasurable […] because it's not too structured [and] it's not 'school' anymore.' Reflecting on the motivational climate of after school clubs, she;

> found the children to be a bit more competitive […] and some of them even try to grab and things […] They seem more enthusiastic in the out of school because obviously the interest is there to come in the first place.

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[75] Including gymnastics, table tennis, karate, tennis, football, cricket, tag rugby, golf, dance, swimming, salsa, street dancing, and an early birds scheme.

In relation to the identification of, and provision for, gifted and talented children, the school works in collaboration with the SSP and, to a lesser extent, external coaches. Whilst GT children *are* identified, there is no systematic method of identification. Jane and Joanne state that GT identification begins with teachers and their assistants. Josie argues that 'class teachers are more than capable of identifying gifted and talented children, and they will flag that up to the Co-ordinator.' In relation to supporting and developing GT children, there is '*nothing* in place' (Catherine). The school does have a mandatory GT register, and children are added to this for their physical/sporting ability. However, there is no formal system to develop the skills of those on the register. The SSP offers summer programmes for GT children, which is open to just four children from each school – selected by the SSP.

There are a number of after school and lunchtime clubs for GT children in other subject areas. These are designed to enable children to 'do extra on top of what everybody else is doing, to keep them [interested] and to push them' (Irene). The GT provision in other subjects appears to be more formalized than for PE. Joanne highlights the more developed GT pathways in other subjects;

> we have clubs that run after school; we have a maths club and a brain academy, and they're invited along to that. They get a special pass and they do extra activities for numeracy, and also in class if they are identified as gifted and talented, you'd have to make sure that the work that you were giving them was suitable for their level.

In contrast, she goes on to point out that;

> we do have gifted and talented children in PE, I think they're the ones who tend to take part in the activities after [school], like the football club, they'll go dancing and do gymnastics and things like that.

For other subjects, Joanne gives a more detailed account of the GT development process. The lack of detail in her description of GT in PESS suggests that the approach is poorly developed. Regardless of the reason for Joanne's lack of description, the difference between the statements indicates that the former is better integrated into the curriculum, with 'passes' for members and the teacher having knowledge of what exactly goes on. The latter is less certain and divulges few details.

Impacts of the SSP on PESS

The SSP has a significant impact on the PE curriculum in West Hill; 'it's just part of what we do' (Catherine). Echoing the opinions of *all* respondents, Josie believes the Partnership has 'raised the profile of PE.' Senior management recognise the potential benefits of collaboration with the Partnership. For instance, Jake says that the school does 'very well out of the SSP, probably a lot better than some schools.' This is 'because some schools don't use it as much as they really should.' Josie, the current head, maintains this attitude;

> I think it works because the school's committed to the Partnership. If the school wasn't committed […] it wouldn't be effective. They can offer as much as they want, but if the school's not prepared to take it up… It's there and we can access it. We'd be silly not to.

Jane finds the SSP '*invaluable* to have in school,' and for Josie, 'all the benefits we've had over the years [have] been phenomenal.' A common view, that suggests the Partnership bring something new to the school, is captured in Grace's opinions of the Partnership;

> I think they're very important. Because if all teachers were like me, and not really into sport, I don't think children would get the coverage that they get. They come in and they're so enthusiastic; it's their thing!

All members of staff feel comfortable approaching the SSCo. Joanne jokes that 'I see him all the time, and I'm *always* asking him for stuff.' Overall, there is 'a nice balance' between the Partnership's and school's involvement in PE (Josie). The harmony is demonstrated in the school's curriculum planning; the SSP give 'plenty of notice' of forthcoming events. In September the PLT receives a detailed calendar of events, 'so we know when competitions are coming up' (Catherine). This allows the PLT to develop the PE curriculum in accordance with the Partnership's schedule of events.

Not only do children receive generic opportunities from the SSP, but teachers can also request further assistance in particular areas. For instance, Catherine recalls how last term some children asked if;

> there was something different they could do in PE […] and they asked for cheerleading. So I went and asked [the SSCo] 'Are there any specialised coaches in the Partnership that can do cheerleading?' And

then they had a half term of cheerleading [The SSCo] and *all* of them at the Partnership will do what they can to find some sort of help.

Another way in which the school benefits from the SSP's assistance is through teacher training. All respondents felt ill-equipped to teach PE upon completion of their PGCE. The newest member of staff, Olivia, states that there was 'definitely not enough training.' To compensate for this insufficiency, most teachers pursue further training opportunities; the majority of which are provided by the Partnership. Josie, who oversees staff training, suggests that 'having the School Sport Partnership link is developing staff confidence [and] it's certainly up-skilled teachers.' Mechanisms are now in place for newly qualified teachers, so that when they enter the school, SSP staff 'will come and support them in their teaching of PE' (Catherine).

A final example of how a child's experience of PESS is improved by the Partnership is through the inter-school events it organises. West Hill pupils regularly attend inter-school competitions. Jake stresses that the county-wide tournaments are 'a massive undertaking' and their frequency is 'all thanks to the SSP.' Indeed, Catherine argues that 'if it wasn't for the Partnership, teachers and schools wouldn't try to organise it themselves because it's such […] a mammoth thing to organise.' The school was involved in competitions prior to the SSP's introduction, however, the organisational workload has been incorporated into the Partnership's work. Grace suggests the that the SSP's assistance has helped to 'build relationships, not just with other agencies but also the schools in the area; promoting a bit of competition and getting the children involved in different leagues and things.'

Because there are a limited numbers of spaces allocated to each school, not all children have the opportunity to participate in competitions. There is some reticence regarding which children attend competitions, however, the general consensus is that the more talented individuals compete. Commenting on how children in her class were selected for a rugby event, Joanne notes that;

> It was the ones who volunteered first of all, and then their skills really, and their ability […] I think in terms of putting the team together, to be honest, it was the ones that make the best team. But we also gave out leaflets for a rugby club that anyone could join; it was open to anyone, regardless of ability.

Any logistical difficulties associated with transportation to events are largely bypassed thanks to the SSP. 'Most of the time, the School Sport Partnership will organise [the transport] for us […] we pay for it, but [the SSCo] organises it for us' (Steph).

'The links with secondary schools and with local clubs' was meant to be 'the whole ethos of SSP' (Jake). However, there are no formal links with other schools in PESS. Most interaction West Hill does have with other schools tends to be through the inter-school competitions organised by the SSP. In relation to club links, there have been links to local martial arts and cricket clubs, but as with the school links, 'it really could be more formalised' (Jake).

Teachers feel that children are more enthusiastic when they have 'sports specialists' lead their lesson. Zoe, for example, argues that when specialists come into school and 'show how enthusiastic they are about something, it passes on to the children.' She notes that 'when I see a PE lesson with a sports coordinator, and then [one] with me, their attitudes are different.' The school has a 'wide range of people coming in to cover all sorts of things' (Irene).[76] Irene goes on to suggest that external assistance is such that;

> the kids expect to get to do loads because they see that a lot goes on. And they get disappointed if we say 'Oh, nobody's coming in next week!' - 'Oh, so I'm stuck with you?' [laughter] […] Because I don't think they class it as a PE lesson if it's a different teacher, whereas if it's just me it's 'Oh, it's just a PE lesson!'

Reasons for investment in PESS

All respondents suggested that PESS has received increased investment due to poor health and increasing rates of obesity amongst children. Irene argues that;

> a lot of it is 'cus they think kids [are] unhealthy. So, thinking of obesity and things like that, 'cus they sit in front of the computers rather than do PE, and this might be the only time when [children] actually do some kind of physical exercise.

Jane claims that 'we've all seen the news and everything, and it all talks about health and fitness in young people, and sort of changing their way of life.' Olivia believes that schools are called upon due to a lack of physical activity outside of school hours; the investment is to

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[76] Coaches have led courses in street dancing, tennis, rugby, try-golf, cricket, football, cheerleading, and multi-sports events.

'make sure that children get enough sport during the week, because at home a lot of them don't go outside and play now.' The only additional reasoning behind an increased focus on PESS was to improve primary school teachers' skills and abilities in delivering high quality PESS (Grace and Joanne). Overwhelmingly, however, with all respondents mentioning 'obesity,' teachers felt the primary purpose of the government's expenditure on PESS was to reduce levels of overweight and promote healthy lifestyles.

When respondents were asked if the issue they identified were a problem in West Hill, Olivia was the only respondent to answer affirmatively, claiming that 'yeah, it is yeah. Younger children sometimes are. But it's got to do with their diets and things as well.' No other teacher identified any such problems within the school; Grace, for example, 'wouldn't say it's an issue through the school; I don't think you'd notice it coming in.' Jane also 'can't say so much the thing like obesity in children and stuff.' Irene felt that obesity and poor health were 'not so much [of a problem] in the school; I think overall, in general, throughout the country, yes.' Josie and Catherine also claimed that it is not a problem in West Hill but they believe 'the government is trying to tackle it through school.'

A common concern related to sedentary activity in children's home lives. Olivia suggests that children will 'say they just went home, did their homework, watched TV or played on the PlayStation or Wii. They won't say 'Oh, I went out and played with my friend in the street.'' Jane also notes this degree of sedentary activity, she contends that; 'when you talk to the children, listen to the sort of things they do, there's a lot of children who will be honest and they'll say that they don't play out anymore; they play on computers.' Olivia and Irene suggest the problem stems from the idea, posited by Olivia, that 'a lot of parents are afraid of safety outside with children.'

Summary

Children 'just love PE on a whole, no matter what it is' (Irene), 'children across the whole school *love* PE' (Josie). The admiration of PE is best encapsulated by two booster teachers, Poppy and Steph (who work with underachieving children). Poppy remarks that 'it doesn't matter which group I have, they'll moan at me; '*Ah, Miss, I'm missing PE!*'' Steph's experience is much the same; she says, 'I do know that they enjoy PE because [...] if I'm scheduled to have them in their PE time, it can be quite distracting because they want to be out doing PE.' When asked if there is a similar reaction to other lessons, Poppy responded; 'Oh no, it's just with PE. Sometimes they like coming out of certain subjects but no, no, not the PE one.'

The school has a beneficial relationship with the SSP. The teacher training provided by the SSCo is seen as improving the capacities of teachers and thus the quality of lessons. Inter-school events are also seen to improve the experience of children. Although the Partnership makes a positive contribution overall, there is still little in place to systematically identify and develop GT children. Also, there are poor links to other schools, and the club links could be formalised and diversified. Teachers link the government's increased expenditure on PESS as an attempt to reduce levels of obesity and sedentary activity. However, except for the comments of one teacher, there was general consensus that these were not problems in West Hill.

Chapter 7

Analysis

This thesis set out to evaluate the impact SSPs have had in primary schools. The previous chapter provided a case-based description of the impact Partnerships have had in the three case-study schools. The discussion demonstrated the different effects and implicitly explored the contexts and mechanisms that produced the outcomes (the impact) in the schools. This chapter aims to make explicit the impact of SSPs and, in particular, the importance of considering the CMO configurations when evaluating the programme's impact. Reference will be made to the literature that was discussed in the first half of the thesis.

The increasing important of PESS

In each of the case study schools the status of PE has increased over recent years. Whilst the primary concern of each school is the core curricular subjects of English, maths, and science, PE has come to occupy a position of greater centrality in the respective curricula. It is difficult to determine whether this is the result of the SSP's involvement or due to other factors. This difficulty in assigning causality is noted in a previous Loughborough Partnership (2008: 24) evaluation. For example, there is reason to suggest that as concerns over sedentary behaviour and childhood obesity have grown in society, so too have teachers' perceptions of these issues. As Gard and Wright (2001: 536) note, the 'exercise= fitness=health' triplex is often uncritically adopted, in this case by teaching staff. PESS is thus elevated in importance to help remedy wider health 'problems' – this is indisputable in the remarks made by teachers, as explored throughout the previous chapter. Of all the interviewees, only four did *not* cite obesity as the primary reason for the increased investment in PESS. However, when asked if obesity was a concern within the respective schools, just one teacher suggested it was. Teachers' responses imply that there is widespread concern with sedentary lifestyles and levels of childhood obesity, but the phenomenon is *not* problematic in any of the case study schools. Media and political

discourses surrounding healthy lifestyles appear to have been uncritically adopted by teaching staff; this, as discussed in Chapter Three, is representative of technologies of government at their most effective. Messages proclaiming the need for 'healthy diets' and 'more physical activity' - alongside a requirement that such issues form *'a core part of children's experience in schools'* (DoH and NHS, 2004a: 41) - have been instilled in teachers' views. This issue will receive greater attention in the latter part of this chapter.

West Hill was the only school in which the SSP played a pivotal role in the delivery of PESS. Here, teachers found the initiative 'invaluable' and the benefits accruing from the Partnership's involvement were described as 'phenomenal.' In both Carraway and Tweedale the impact of the SSP was marginal, and had become increasingly problematic; teachers in both schools believed the emphasis on providing inter-school activities (mostly competitions) has gradually taken precedence over the input SSP staff provide within school (i.e., the delivery of lessons, coaching and teacher training). This is an issue of great concern for staff at Carraway and Tweedale because only some - not *all* - pupils are provided with opportunities. The views of these staff members resonate with the opinion of a PLT in Griggs and Ward's (2010: 4) research, who suggests that primary schools 'are given [directives] from the Partnership rather than [the Partnership] allowing us [the schools] to choose.'

The ethos of many inter-school events is often seen to be at odds with the schools own philosophies. Each school claims to provide a *task*-focused motivational climate, aimed at effort, skill development and task mastery (Treasure and Roberts, 2001: 172). However, according to teaching staff, the competitive nature of the SSP events often rates success above effort and development. It is difficult, for example, for Partnership staff to judge an individual's development over a half-day event. The philosophy promoted in such events is counterproductive to what teaching staff endorse in PESS in school. Evans and Penney (2008: 33) argue that this focus on 'measurable performance' – winning an event or beating the opponent(s), in the case of inter-school events – is evident across the school curriculum, and is 'in major part a reflection of the deeply rationalist, Cartesian approach to education inherent in neo-liberalism.' Evans and Penney conclude by suggesting that performative codes dominate contemporary PE, and as 'performance' is increasingly measured objectively, there are less opportunities 'for all children to express their potential 'ability' (2008: 44-45).

The impact of the initiative in the case study schools has not been as positive as the nationwide evaluations – conducted by Ofsted, LP, and the PESSCL/PESSYP surveys - report. Whilst SSPs have helped to raise the profile of PESS, many of the core goals have not been realised. On the other hand, however, some aims have not only been achieved, but greatly surpassed. The following discussions will consider the core goals of the programme - which have underlined the content of the previous chapters - and explore how the CMO configurations affect the impact of SSPs in schools.

The impact of SSPs on activity provision

Perhaps the fundamental aim of the SSP programme has been to increase the number of children regularly participating in physical activity and sport. All case study schools believe the number and range of physical activities available to pupils – inside and outside of school hours - has increased since the introduction of the SSP. Flintoff (2008: 407) also found 'no doubt' amongst her participants that the introduction of SSPs had led to 'more opportunities for children […] to be physically active, within and beyond the curriculum.' However, again mirroring the findings from the case study schools, Flintoff goes on to report that the 'scope and range of opportunities developed was limited by a competitive sport discourse' (2008: 407). In the case-study schools, the greatest impact has undoubtedly been on the increased number of inter-school activities on offer. Griggs and Ward's (2010: 4) short report also suggests that the key focus of SSPs' work in primary schools is increasing the number of pupils engaged in inter-school competitions. For one of Griggs and Ward's respondents, the increase in inter-school activity is because 'We are trying to raise our numbers on the PESSYP strategy' (2010: 4). In the case-study schools, the activities on offer consist of a mixture of traditional PESS activities (football, hockey, rugby, netball, cricket, gymnastics, swimming and athletics) and more contemporary options (skipping, cheerleading, martial arts, rock climbing, salsa, and street dance). However, competitive team games were predominant, and in the observed lessons, such activities dominated.

Pupils in all the three schools do now receive 2 hours of PESS in the curriculum timetable. However, the actual duration of observed lessons ranged from 25 to 70 minutes, with an average duration of 52 minutes (when accounting for the time children spent changing, the

average lesson duration was reduced to 43.5 minutes). Taking into account the period(s) in which children were idle or receiving instructions, the time they were engaged in moderate or vigorous activity was an average of 24.2 minutes per lesson. Although low, this is a relatively positive finding when compared to Waring *et al*.'s (2007: 28) earlier study, which found children were moderately or vigorously active for only 3.7 and 1.2 minutes respectively.[77] Although the precise method that was adopted in the present study was not scientifically rigorous, these cursory observations are sufficient evidence that two hours timetabled PE does not equate to two hours of physical activity. This implies that government claims regarding levels of physical activity in PE lessons, and therefore in schools generally, are inaccurate.

Although there has been an increase in the number and range of PESS opportunities available to children, this is not seen to be an entirely positive trend. Numerous teachers identified a shift in the focus of SSPs. In particular, a gradual replacement of teacher training with an increased emphasis on fulfilling the '5 hour offer.' The implications of this shift in focus will now be considered.

The changing nature of the work of SSPs

As the SSP initiative has matured and come to occupy a central position in the delivery of PESS nationwide, the YST has adapted its organisational focus to remain relevant to wider educational aspirations. YST and county council staff have been focused on delivering high quality physical education, and this has remained the primary objective since the inception of the SSP initiative. However, as Evans (2004: 95-96) points out, PE often has to 'justify its existence discursively.' As a result, YST staff have had to manoeuvre PESS to address myriad concerns, often simultaneously. This is captured to an extent in the wealth of policy that has been produced relating to SSPs and PESS over the last decade (see Chapter One). To ensure continued government funding, a core goal of senior YST staff has been to monitor wider educational policy and realign the organisation's work in schools with the government's

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[77] The average lesson length Waring *et al*. (2007) observed was only 31.8 minutes. However, there is a significant difference between the present study and Waring *et al*.'s, in relation to the length of time children spent engaged in activity. Due to the rigour of Waring *et al*.'s study, it is likely that the longer gap taken between observational notations in the research for this thesis resulted in an over-estimation of the amount of activity children engaged in.

priorities (for example, there has been an explicit focus on volunteering, leadership, GT development, and community engagement at various points in time). At a local level, county council staff adapt their focus to fit national educational priorities, too, and 'work on how [they] can adapt PE to fit in with the whole school needs' (County Council respondent). This insight adds a contemporary dimension to the discussion in the first half of Chapter One. Definitions as to what the content of PE lessons should be have changed in-line with the wider educational agenda, thus demonstrating the subject's capacity for servicing the wider political agenda (Waring and Warburton, 2000: 159).

When SSPs were first introduced, primary teachers received a significant amount of PESS training from Partnership staff (primarily in the form of demonstration lessons). Up-skilling of primary school teaching staff has been an important part of the work of SSPs since their inception. Indeed, the increased support has, report teachers, improved the knowledge of many teachers and, as a result, it can be seen to have improved the overall quality of PESS. However, due to the emphasis now placed on the duration of engagement (a rise from two to five hours) and the numbers of children meeting these targets, SSPs have had to shift their attention to address these targets. Thus, from the school's point of view, the time SSP staff used to spend within school has been replaced with an offer of more inter-school activities. If schools are to receive (and maintain) Activemark or Healthy Schools status, they too must strive to ensure pupils reach the participation targets. Therefore, due to the manner in which the programme is assessed, SSPs *and* schools have had to shift their focus to satisfy the evaluative criteria. The prioritization of these 'politically favoured targets' is noted by Smith and Leech (2010: 336-337), who found that school and Partnership staff are overwhelmingly focused on achieving participation targets, as these are the most 'widely valued by government ministers.'

With the increased focus on reducing levels of childhood obesity and providing opportunities for GT children, high participation figures provide ministers with powerful evidence that suggests the 'problems' are being addressed. In a policy environment so concerned with *what works* (Sanderson, 2002: 3), the findings of the annual PESSYP surveys (with their linear

improvements)[78] provide the 'killer facts' that proclaim success (Smith and Leech, 2010: 338). The result is that more SSP resources are now focused at increasing the numbers of children engaged in inter- and after-school activities, to the detriment of teacher training. Many teachers consider this transition - from a largely quality-enhancing focus to a more performance-driven concern with quantifiable opportunities - to be harmful to PE. In the pursuit of achieving targets there is, in the words of one respondent, 'too much competition and not enough groundwork.' West Hill staff voice little concern over this shift in priority, and welcome the increase in inter-school competition. Carraway and Tweedale staff have serious reservations, though, due to the impact this has upon their school. The SSCo for West Hill has taken on most of the organisational duties associated with the inter-school activities, so there is little infringement on staff's workloads. For Carraway and Tweedale the change in focus is associated with a number of detrimental impacts. The CMO configurations in the individual schools help to explain the difference in opinions towards the organisational transition. It is to these mixed receptions that attention will now turn.

West Hill operates within a context that is supportive of partnership working. The support of the former and current head teacher demonstrates a sustained commitment to the SSP from senior management at the school. The school's PLT is a trained PE teacher and fully supports the SSP initiative and the work of the SSCo. As a former primary school PE teacher himself, the SSCo is seen as not only having the coaching expertise, but also the pedagogical and disciplinary skills necessary to lead primary PESS sessions. Due to the strong relations and the SSCo's expertise, school staff 'trust' the SSCo to provide high quality support (training, advice and convening clubs) and manage logistically problematic tasks, such as organising transportation to and from inter-school activities. The relationship between the two parties is characteristic of that which Huxham and Vangen (2000: 298) and Brinkerhoff (2000: 298) suggest is necessary for effective partnership working – there is trust, compatibility, and senior management support.

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[78] Participation rates are the first issue to be addressed in each of the surveys. The percentage of pupils spending at least two hours per week in high quality PESS went from 62 percent (2003/04) to 90 percent (2007/08), with annual increases. Due to the high attainment of the targets, the 'bar was raised' to measure three hours participation; between 2008/09 and 2009/10 the percentage of children engaged in three hours of high quality PESS rose from 51 to 55 percent.

Because the SSCo is employed full-time, the school receives a significant investment of his time. On top of this, the school also benefits from its suburban location and the clustering of schools in the local area – there are 14 primary/junior schools and five secondary schools/colleges within a two-mile radius of West Hill. This means that the SSCo is able to visit numerous schools in a single trip, thus increasing the frequency of visits to West Hill.

The context in which Carraway Juniors operates is significantly different to West Hill, and largely counterproductive *vis-à-vis* effective partnership working. Geographically isolated, the distance between the school and SSP restricts face-to-face interaction with the SSCo. Due to the distance and travel time, the SSCo rarely visits Carraway. Teachers understand the difficulties caused by the school's location, and have little grievance with this lack of input from the SSP. This echoes the pragmatic (if not cavalier) views of one YST board member, who suggested that schools in rural areas are used to the difficulties caused by their location, and went on to argue that the coping mechanisms adopted in relation to other aspects of life should be applied to PESS.

The lack of interaction with the SSP is made worse by the size of the staff-force. Because of the small staff force the head teacher is a class teacher and also the PLT. This demanding workload restricts the amount of time that can be dedicated to the PLT role. As a result, contact between the PLT and SSCo is infrequent and tends to consist largely of email invites to SSP-organised events. Indeed, the inter-school events have become the primary mode through which the school and SSP interact. Most staff members do not know the current SSCo, and would not know how to contact them. Although staff welcome the input of the Partnership (particularly when leading lessons), there is little overt support for the programme. This lack of enthusiasm from senior management makes collaboration between the SSP and school difficult (Lacey, 2001: 87). Without senior management support, partnerships between schools and SSPs (and with other schools) is difficult to maintain. The 'partnership' between Carraway and its SSP is weak and, arguably, only maintained because 'collaboration is made a requirement of government [funding]' (Miller and Ahmad, 2000: 14).

For Tweedale, the SSP base is a short drive away, however, and in a similar respect to Carraway, the SSCo visits the school infrequently. The relationship between the PLT (again the head teacher) and SSCo is good, and is cited as the main reason for the school's

continued engagement with the SSP's activities. Due to the workload of the PLT and SSCo (who is part-time), the majority of correspondence is via email; the frequency of which is seen as excessive (and contributed to the resignation of the previous PLT). Although interpersonal relations are strong, there is a distinct lack of communication between the school and Partnership. This is demonstrated and exacerbated in relation to Partnership cluster meetings, which the PLT is unable to attend due to commitments in school. The school is not represented at the cluster meetings and therefore misses out on the following key components of partnership working; knowledge of objectives, the short to mid-term schedule, and the opportunity to hear and raise concerns (Brinkerhoff, 2002: 225). The school has sufficient staff to send a representative to the meetings, but this is not deemed necessary. On the whole, Tweedale's teachers feel that the SSP causes more organisational problems than it does provide benefits for PESS. This is a fundamental concern, as a pre-requisite of partnership working is that the benefits of being a partner should exceed those possible through individual effort (Hughes and Carmichael, 1998: 209). However, the increased effort required by school staff to fulfil their partnership obligations – specifically, the completion of the PESSYP survey, and the logistical difficulties caused by inter-school activities – is seen to outweigh the gains associated with the SSP.

As can be seen from this discussion, West Hill has a strong relationship with the SSCo and SSP, whereas Carrway and Tweedale do not. Past research has found that where partnerships are successful, a core attribute of the intra-partnership dynamic is good interpersonal relations between agencies (Clegg and McNulty, 2002: 591). This appears to be central to the effective operation of SSPs. The contextual conditions that West Hill is bound to – the dense clustering of local schools, a full-time SSCo with primary teaching experience and a PLT who has a background in PE (and is also the deputy-head), good sports facilities, and a medium sized student body – allow for effective partnership between the SSP and school. Carraway and Tweedale, however, occupy a context that is, in some respects, similar to one another, and not very supportive of the SSP initiative. Both schools have a part-time PLT (who is also the school head teacher, and not a PE specialist) and SSCo, the schools have lower than average numbers of pupils, and both are relatively isolated from other schools. In West Hill, the context facilitates a set of mechanisms that allow for successful implementation of the SSP. The SSCo regularly visits the school and knows most staff

members on an informal basis. Due to the SSCo's primary teaching experience, teaching staff trust that he is able to maintain discipline and an appropriate pedagogical focus. Also, the school can enter pupils (of the same age or similar ability) into most inter-school events that the SSP facilitates, due to the number of pupils and the close proximity within which most events take place. Carraway and Tweedale, on the other hand, are rarely visited by their SSCo. The majority of contact, due to the demanding workloads of the PLTs and SSCos, is via email, and as a result many teachers are unfamiliar with the SSCo. The small number of pupils (relative to West Hill) makes it difficult for the schools to enter many inter-school events (for reasons outlined above). All of these conditions militate against effective partnership working. There is, however, one further contextual condition that may prove to be particularly relevant in explaining the lack of SSP assistance in Tweedale and Carraway.

West Hill is located in a socially deprived area. Teachers consider parental involvement in their children's education to be generally poor, and suggest that many children have insufficient access to sport and physical activity opportunities outside of school. This is largely due to the 'nexus of economical, physical and social factors' (Collins, 2003: 25). In contrast, such constraining factors are not perceived to be problematic (in general) in Carraway and Tweedale. The schools are located in affluent areas where parental involvement in schooling is considered exceptional. Many teachers comment on the 'wide range' of activities children have access to outside of school. In general, for the children's families the cost and location of such activities is unproblematic in both schools. West Hill provides children with more opportunities for PESS than both Carraway and Tweedale. Although it is not conclusive, it appears as if West Hill attempts to counteract the relative lack of opportunities available outside of school by providing wide ranging opportunities through school. A similar suggestion has been made by Wright *et al.* (2003: 30), who found that;

> Poverty, family commitments, including the negotiation of emotionally difficult family relationship all constrained what was possible even to imagine as a [physical activity/sport] 'choice.' In [one of the case study locations] , community facilities and resources were limited and the school [was] looked to as an important site for the provision of opportunities because of this.

On the other hand some pupils - at Carraway in particular - are provided with poor opportunities through school (in curriculum time and after school hours). Carraway staff

have little concern with this, as they claim that most children are engaged in a range of activities outside of school hours. Although the views of Tweedale staff are not so decisive, there is a general belief that children are provided with sufficient opportunities after school hours. The findings are unable to conclusively validate this issue, however the data suggests that there may be some substance in the claim that family circumstances influence the role school plays in facilitating activities for its pupils.

What *is* clear from this example is that the context in which the school-SSP relationship is played out has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the programme's implementation. The suggestions raised here can only be identified through an in-depth analysis of the CMO configurations in each school. Carraway and Tweedale have different experiences from each other, but due to the contrast between these schools and West Hill, they have been discussed together. In the following section attention moves on to consider other aspects of the SSPs work.

School sport, partnerships?

Since the publication of *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000), partnership working has been at the centre of the PESS agenda. School Sports Colleges were to act as the hub of a local family of primary and secondary schools, promoting a culture based on sharing resources, facilities and expertise. The belief that partnership working would improve the resources and expertise available to each school has, in the case study schools, proved misplaced. Not one school noted any improvement in relation to the links they share with other schools (primary or secondary). In relation to PESS, the only interaction schools have with one another is through the inter-school events organised by the respective Partnerships. The experience of the schools is at odds with the views of one YST board member who suggested that 'collaborative working between schools has probably been one of the greatest success stories' of the SSP initiative.

Carraway and West Hill are not only aware of the lack of school-links, but they have also sought to develop these. Due to the small number of pupils - and the problems this causes *vis-à-vis* inter-school competitions – Carraway's head teacher has wanted to 'get a team from a *group* of small schools' together. This 'clustering' of small schools would allow

Carraway to enter more inter-school events, enable children to work alongside peers of a similar ability, save on resources, and ultimately enrich children's experiences (Ribchester and Edwards, 1999: 56). However, the school has been unable to take this idea forward, even though the head teacher has approached other schools. In West Hill, the former head teacher was also keen to forge links with the PE department at the local secondary school to ensure a smooth transition for children. Neither Carraway nor West Hill's desire to work with local schools has been developed, even though the desire is there. The SSCo, who in both of the above cases work with the 'other' schools in question, has not helped improve these links.

No teachers from any school recalled sharing resources, expertise or good practice with other schools (the only exception being West Hill, where the swimming pool is used by other schools). West Hill regularly borrows equipment from their SSP, but rarely has Carraway or Tweedale loaned equipment. Levels of partnership work are, in short, under-developed between primary schools. Due to the poor facilities and resources Carraway currently has, the sharing of resources would benefit the school a great deal. In the case of West Hill, on the other hand, PESS in neighbouring schools could be improved through accessing the excellent resources at the school's disposal.

Another central goal of SSPs has been the promotion of links between schools and clubs. Links to local sports and athletics clubs are considered necessary if schools are to fulfil their 'five hour offer' obligation, and in providing GT children with appropriate pathways to develop their ability (DCMS, 2000: 15-16). The most recent PESSYP survey found that schools share an average of 9.1 links with clubs. This figure is significantly higher than that recorded in any of the case study schools; Tweedale and West Hill identified links with two clubs each, and Carraway just one. These figures represent the number of club-links stated by teaching staff. However, for the 2008/09 School Sport Survey, Carraway reported having links with 11 clubs and Tweedale (in the most recent survey they could provide, 2007/08) reported 9 club-links.[79] This data suggests one of three things; a) the schools record inaccurate figures on the

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[79] Tweedale provided both the 2006/07 and 2007/08 Survey results. The composition of the club-links differ significantly between the two; in 2006/07 there were links to athletics, cricket, cycling, dance, fitness, football, gymnastics, netball, outdoor and adventurous activity, rounders, swimming, and tennis. In 2007/08 only five of these links remained; new additions included karate, rugby league, rugby union, squash. West Hill were unwilling to grant access to their PESSCL/PESSYP Survey returns.

annual surveys, b) the club-links are poorly developed (thus explaining teachers' reticence), or c) the club links were underplayed in the interviews. Logically, it would seem that either of the former two reasons are closest to the truth.

The former head teacher at West Hill acknowledges that club-links 'could be more formalised' and claims that 'that's where we need to step up to the plate.' For Carraway and Tweedale, however, there is little desire to forge additional links with clubs as the majority of pupils already attend other clubs - the link being facilitated by parents, rather than school. This ties in with the earlier discussion concerning the role of the school in facilitating opportunities for children. Again, West Hill is the school that is most concerned with providing children with links to sports clubs, whereas Tweedale and Carraway feel less inclined to promote such links. The importance of parental involvement, especially in relation to after school activities is recognised by YST board members, county council staff, and teachers. As discussed in Chapter Two, all longitudinal studies of talent development have found parental encouragement and support to be vital (Freeman, 2000). Between the three schools there is a clear disparity in opportunities. The differentiation in access to clubs ultimately impacts upon the chance a child has to develop their skills above a certain standard. West Hill staff frequently cite a lack of parental involvement in children's education as a concern. Teachers reason that if parents are unwilling to help their children with homework, then they are unlikely, for example, to 'be bothered to take them swimming.' At Carraway and Tweedale, parental involvement in education was significant. Staff at both schools suggested that the majority of children regularly attend after school clubs in the local towns. It should be noted that there are also, inevitably, differences *within* school, as each child's circumstance is different.

Another area in which the development of school and club-links was set to benefit pupils was in relation to GT identification and development. Although primary schools are only required to focus on year 5 and 6 pupils, the identification of these children at an early stage is important for ensuring that they fulfil their potential. Whilst no school has a systematic approach to GT in PESS, each does have children on their GT register for their abilities in PESS. Compared with other curricular subjects, GT identification in PESS is informal and, uniquely, it is largely the result of identification by 'others' (parents and sport coaches in

particular). Several teachers comment on the formalised GT procedure for other subject areas, but no respondent is able to outline a specific process for PESS. This is concerning as past research suggests that it is important for teachers to a) follow formal guidance on how to identify GT children, and b) know what actions should be taken when a child is identified (Bailey *et al.*, 2004: 145-146). Further, the YST (2010d) stresses that it is vital for each school to design their own policy on GT identification and development. In other subjects, staff report that such a formalised system operates. However, in PESS provision is largely *ad hoc* and subjective. The underdevelopment of GT in PESS is seen as a problem not only in the individual schools, but across the region. According to teachers, the procedures for GT children in PESS have improved little since the introduction of SSPs. Carraway and Tweedale provide their respective SSPs with details of GT children, but as one respondent argues (representing the experience of both schools), the Partnership staff 'don't ever come in and do anything with those children.'

In the 2007/08 PESSCL Survey, Tweedale reported that only one child was gifted and talented from year 5 and 6 (no children were identified as GT in 2006/07). Carraway had five children registered as GT in 2008/09. Although GT provision is also poorly developed in West Hill (no exact data available), the SSP does provide an opportunity for four GT pupils to attend a summer programme aimed at improving their skills. West Hill is the only school where teachers felt confident in identifying GT children in PESS. For Carraway and Tweedale, those who are identified as GT are so because of the input they receive outside of school, and the reporting of their talents by parents and coaches. This inevitably mitigates against the identification as GT those children who do not attend after-school clubs.

Partnership working in the case study schools – between schools, with clubs, and for GT identification and development - is a misnomer. The schools do 'interact' with other schools and clubs, however, whether this represents 'partnership working' is debateable. In relation to the discussion of partnership working in Chapter Two, there is little resemblance between Glendinning (2002: 117-118) and Brinkerhoff's (2002: 216) basic descriptions of partnerships and the interaction that the case study schools have with other schools and clubs. Not only are the links to other schools and clubs tenuous, but there also appears to be minimal interaction between case study schools and the hub of SSPs, Specialist Sports Colleges.

Interview data suggests that the only genuine partnerships to have been formed, as a result of the SSP initiative, are those between schools and their SSCo.

The importance of parental support

It is important that schools forge links to sports and athletics clubs because, outside of school hours, children are provided with unequal access to such opportunities. As Williams (2008: 20) suggests, school is the only setting in which *all* children can be provided with the same opportunities. Past research has highlighted the significant role parents play in providing children with access to after school clubs. In the extreme case of Rossi and Wright's (2002: 6) research, some parents were willing to take their children on 400 kilometre roundtrips to access expertise and resources. However, in West Hill for example, some parents are unwilling to transport their children to the local town, less than 1.5 miles away from the school. Whether it is parental views towards physical activity and sport (Yang *et al.*, 1996: 285-286) or financial and practical considerations (Matthews *et al.*, 2000: 151 and Evans and Davies, 2010: 771) that limit the degree of parental support, children have unequal access to opportunities outside of school. Additionally, the findings from the case study schools suggest that it is not only financial, logistical and general outlooks towards PESS that determine a child's opportunities, but also the parents/guardians' connection to place and perception of space.

The location of leisure facilities has little impact on the sports and physical activity opportunities granted to children at Carraway and Tweedale. Parents at these schools are generally willing to drive their children the necessary distance to access facilities and expertise. There are no concerns amongst teaching staff that children are denied access to after school activities. Teachers cite incidences of parents regularly travelling over 20 miles to provide their children with relevant opportunities for participation in certain activities. In West Hill, teachers feel that children are unable to access facilities and expertise due to an unwillingness, on the behalf of parents, to transport their children even short distances. The lack of parental involvement with formal education is seen to extend to the provision of opportunities outside of school, as one respondent argues; 'if they don't even have time to listen to them read, I can't see how they'll be bothered to take them swimming.'
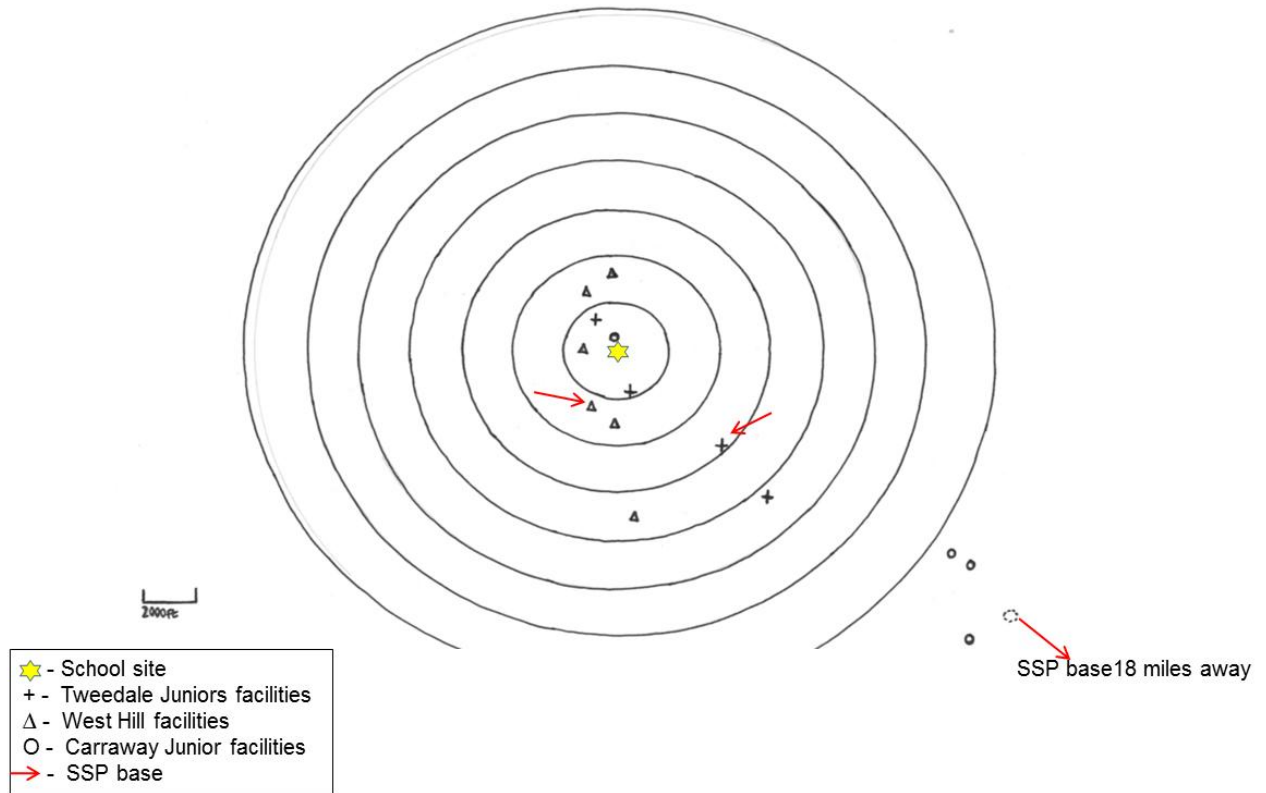
As discussed in Chapter Two, the work of Ball *et al*. (1995) may help understand this phenomenon. Although their original study relates to decision making process underpinning school choice, the general conclusions are applicable to the perceived 'choices' available for sport and leisure participation. Ball *et al*.'s findings link closely with issues related to cultural capital, however, due to the lack of investigation of capital in this thesis, this consideration will not be explored (although, as will be suggested in the final chapter, this is an important area in which future research should be conducted). When selecting a school for their children, Ball and colleagues found that some parents were willing to travel greater distances to provide their child with the appropriate education. The decision is partially explained by economic and logistical (transportation and parental working hours) considerations and parents' cultural capital, but another important element was a family's attachment to place. In general, working class families were found to have a greater attachment to the local area in which they lived than was the case for more affluent families (Ball *et al*., 1995: 63). Irrespective of travel time and cost, it was found that children from working class families were encouraged to go to the local school, irrespective of its suitability. The central consideration was its close proximity.

Ball *et al*. (1995: 62) found that working- and middle-class families had different perceptions of 'spatial horizons.' This was clear in the findings of the case-study schools. Teachers in Carraway and Tweedale believed that parents did not restrict the opportunities available to their children via reference to the location of facilities. West Hill teachers, however, had a strong belief that the only opportunities available to children were those that were on offer in the local town. In Carraway, for example, one teacher (whose child was also a current pupil at the school) suggested that an athletics club, located 20 miles from the school, 'isn't too far away.' Such distances were widely seen to be accessible for pupils at Carraway. However, in West Hill, when one child was identified as GT in tennis (an incident mentioned by several teachers), his parents could not facilitate the opportunity for him to pursue the sport. This decision was generally accepted by teachers because there were no 'local' opportunities for participation. Irrespective of cost, there are 34 tennis clubs within a 20 mile radius of West Hill, with the closest located 7 miles away. Although the cost may prohibit club membership, in this case it was not the cost that was identified as the exclusionary factor, but the accessibility. Although this is only one example, it does

demonstrate the differences in the perceptions of what opportunities are available to children.

Figure 7.1 shows the location of the case study schools in relation to the facilities that are used regularly by children (each was mentioned on multiple occasions by teaching staff). As can be seen from the diagram, the SSP and all but one of the facilities used by Carraway's pupils are based a significant distance (a car journey away) from the school site, with the majority of facilities located over 2.5 miles away (>14000ft, actual driving distance is 4.3 miles). Tweedale's facilities are clustered more conveniently, relative to the school site. For West Hill, all but one of the local sports facilities used by children falls within one mile (<4000ft) of the school site, as does the SSP base. In order to access facilities, therefore, less distance has to be travelled by West Hill pupils (the majority of whom live within a 500 metre radius of the school), and the greatest distance by Carraway pupils. Taken alone, the geographical context in which West Hill is based makes access to facilities easier. However, the economic and cultural context in which many of the pupils' parents are rooted, combined with their perceptions of space/attachment to place, and support given to children, results in a situation in which the location of facilities is *perceived* to be inaccessible. Carraway, by contrast, is located in an isolated context. The situation in which parents find themselves, however, produces a different outcome whereby distance is seen as unproblematic. The opportunities afforded to Tweedale's pupils are, generally, similar to Carraway's; the location of leisure facilities is not seen as restricting a child's participation.

Figure 7.1 Location of schools relative to local sports facilities and SSP

- ☆ - School site
- + - Tweedale Juniors facilities
- Δ - West Hill facilities
- O - Carraway Junior facilities
- → - SSP base

SSP base18 miles away

These findings are formative, and due to the small sample size there is not enough evidence to explore the issue in any greater depth here. However, based on the three cases it appears as though families in the rural areas, with greater financial resources are, in general, willing to take their children significant distances to access sport and leisure activities. Although there are few facilities locally, teaching staff claim that children have good access to resources and activities outside of school hours. In West Hill, although there are many leisure facilities within a close proximity to the school, teaching staff consider the children to have poor access to opportunities. This is an interesting dynamic that warrants further exploration in future research.

School Sport Partnerships as a technology of government

Chapter Three considered the influential work of Michel Foucault. This section will develop some of the ideas discussed in the earlier chapter to help better understand the findings from the case study schools. The analysis of PESS-related policy that has permeated the thesis focused only on the content of the policy texts, there was no attempt to unlock any 'silently intended meanings' (Foucault, 1991: 60). After reviewing the policy documentation surrounding PESS over the last decade, one is struck by the vast size of the 'discourse' surrounding the subject. Not only is it the various government departments that have contributed to this 'official' discourse, but also a range of quangos and non-governmental institutions. Many of the documents repeat the arguments and proclamations of previous publications, and for such reason there appears to be an unnecessarily large amount of legislation. Gillies' (2008: 418) work on 'spin' in the production of policy documents is helpful in understanding this inclination. Gillies argues that an increased stress on the 'spectacle of government' has led to a situation in which modern democratic governments are absorbed in the 'conduct of government' (2008: 418). Chapter Three discussed government as a process of 'the conduct of conduct,' however Gillies claims that contemporary government has become just as concerned with 'the conduct of the conduct of conduct' – conduct^3. Where the conduct of conduct looks to influence behaviour for convenient ends, conduct^3 focuses on the 'perception of these things and ends' (Gillies, 2008: 419). Both the concepts, the 'conduct of conduct' and 'conduct^3' helps to better understand of the findings.

The wealth of policy published over the last decade that relates to PESS is evidence of the government wanting to be seen to act on certain issues of concern, particularly overweight and obesity (Evans *et al*., 2008: 2). Both overweight and obesity have been subject to much media scrutiny, and concerns over the issues have been elevated to a status of near moral panic. The repetition of messages – that relate to obesity and overweight - contained within the PESS discourse is suggestive of policies being introduced largely for their symbolic value, rather than their inherent worth (Gillies, 2008: 422). There have been numerous policy documents that offer little new to the PESS discourse, often merely recapping existing

material or introducing minor adjustments. In one respect this can be seen as a waste of financial and material resources, however, from another angle this construction of a discourse - that reasserts the government's core objectives time and again – has arguably shaped the content of the subject and the opinions teaching staff have of its purpose. Through the repeated assertion of certain messages the government has instilled a mode of thinking into teaching staff. Faced with a continuous stream of policies aimed at addressing health issues, teachers come to understand the primary purpose of PESS as addressing the issues discussed in the policies.[80]

The findings of the research are testament to this argument. When asked why the government have invested in PESS, almost all teachers stated that the rationale stemmed from high levels of obesity and sedentary activity. The teachers felt it was a real problem in society and needed addressing. However this contradicts their lived experiences, and the situation they faced each day in school. Teachers appear to have uncritically adopted the obesity discourse, even though it contradicts the situation of the children with whom they spend so much time. Additionally, although the majority of teachers (all but four) cite obesity as the primary motivation for the government's increased investment in PESS, they identify no SSP-related events that are explicitly aimed at reducing levels of obesity; as discussed above, the Partnership's events are seen to focus on another of the government's core goals, the development of GT pupils and the promotion of inter-school competition. Therefore, whilst obesity and lifestyle-related issues are seen as the core problem that PESS is aimed at targeting, teachers do not recognise the issues as problematic within school *and* the SSP host few events that explicitly tackle such issues. Governmental rationalities concerning obesity and healthy lifestyles seem to be ingrained in staff's understanding of the purpose of PESS, to such an extent that SSPs do not have to target their work at such issues.

The concept of risk helps understanding this apparent paradox between the fears over obesity and the lack of obese children in schools. Fundamentally, children are seen to be 'at

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[80] Due to the number of publications related to PESS in recent years, it is unlikely that many teachers are familiar with the original documents and their content. It is possible that teachers gain their understanding from the school's PLT or head teacher. However, it is more likely that many of the opinions teaching staff have stem from the media coverage of the publications, rather than from first hand reading of the materials. It is possible, though, that most teachers are not even aware of many of the documents, due to the frequency of new publications.

risk' - in government policy *and* by school teachers – of becoming obese in later life. This is the central reason for the preventative measures targeted at children. Schools are being entrusted to solve a possible future problem – the research of Vanhala *et al.* (1998) and Sinaiko *et al.* (1999) suggests that childhood interventions may reduce the development of obesity in later life. There is, however, no inherent reason why *all* children should receive education for a risk that may not even affect them. In this particular case, the likelihood of the 'risk' materialising in the child's later life is not, arguably, worth the degree of educational investment. Risk needs to be viewed as a technology of government. In this circumstance the risk of obesity is a way through which future problems (medical and financial) are being framed and dealt with (O'Malley, 2008: 57).

In relation to the risk typology discussed by Boyne (2003) in Chapter Three, children are currently viewed by government as falling into one of three categories. The *central conformists* are those who are already engaged in sport and regular physical activity; the physically active, healthy eating, slim individuals. Those children in the *dissident enclave* are sedentary, disinterested in sports, and do not regulate their food intake. *Entrepreneurial children* fall somewhere between these two groups; children in this category are likely to enjoy sports but also spend a significant amount of time engaged in sedentary activities; they may enjoy binge eating, or have a sweet tooth. Entrepreneurial children do not necessarily exhibit risky behaviour at the minute, but aspects of their behaviour could be cause for concern in the future. Fewer children would be categorised as isolates (morbidly obese, anti-activity, and fatalistic).

The aim of current governmental initiatives is to ensure that all children grow into discerning adults, who are members of the central community or (at worst) the entrepreneurial frontier. By promoting certain ideal body images (Azzarito, 2009: 35), and associating particular images with inner 'laziness' or a 'moral inferiority' (Thorpe, 2003: 135; Evans *et al.*, 2002: 55, 61), neo-liberal governments strive to ensure children *want* to be associated with the central community. Just as other members of the 'isolate' category – heroin addicts and sex workers, for example – are stigmatized, so too are the morbidly obese. By framing children's views of weight and body image, government aims to shape their conduct in accordance to the wider rationality.

As with an increasing array of issues concerned with young people, schools are entrusted with tackling child health problems. To ensure the governmental rationality is filtered down to children effectively, parents have been largely bypassed and interventions are targeted increasingly within schools, where all children can be reached. No longer are parents, let alone children, trusted to manage their (children's) lifestyle appropriately. The extension of the school's function into after school hours confirms the increasing degree of control vested in the education system. SSPs - by being called upon to extend the range of activities available to children after school - can be seen as a vehicle through which the cultural and social landscape of childhood is being changed in accordance with governmental rationalities (Smith and Barker, 2000: 246 argue a similar point in relation to after school clubs run by schools). As a result of this extension of supervisory control and due to the centrality of the SSP initiative to PESS nationwide, the programme can be seen to govern the range of opportunities available to children.

The SSP initiative appears to devolve decision making power to the local level, to the individual SSPs - there is no explicit acknowledgement from any teaching staff that suggests the SSP programme is dictating the structure of PESS in their school. However, as Foucault suggests, at the heart of the liberal mode of government is the belief that 'one always governs too much' (2008: 319). In relation to the work of SSPs, schools are given the option to participate in the activities that are organised; the PLT receives information on the SSP's activities, and school staff make a decision as to whether or not pupils will attend. The power that SSPs have over schools does not necessarily subordinate schools, but, clearly, provides the school with the option of whether to participate or not. Yet because the SSP now dominates inter-school activities and, on paper at least, is key to improving club-links, the initiative can be seen to structure the field of possibilities for schools. Schools have the choice of whether or not they wish to enter pupils into an event, but the content of the event is defined by the SSP. So whilst schools do have a choice, the choice is limited to the range of activities chosen by the SSP. Thus, the field of potentialities is restricted by the SSP.

This serves, in a Foucauldian sense, as a form of government; a method by which SSPs assist in promoting the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 2007: 193). Having taken over the organisational tasks associated with inter-school activities, rarely (in the case study schools)

do teaching staff work with their counterparts in local schools anymore to organise such events.

It is worth highlighting that a number of external agents are involved in the delivery of the government's strategy for the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools. One such initiative (funded by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT)) has led a series of ten sessions in each of the case study schools. The programme – which to ensure anonymity cannot be named – is explicitly premised on tackling rising levels of obesity. The ten sessions consist of a range of non-competitive activities and an educational element aimed at increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles. The programme screens children's growth over the duration of the project. 'Growth' is measured by reference to any changes in a child's BMI over the intervention's duration. This reduction of growth (and health) to a narrow focus on body size and weight corroborates the research of Evans *et al.* (2008: 33). Those who are identified as 'obese' or 'at risk' are provided with additional support from PCT staff. The 'support' provided to these children is delivered through a family intervention initiative. Health professionals make visits to children's homes and provide a 'programme of support.' The scheme has so far screened over 2100 children and identified 207 as obese. 10 percent of those identified as obese have 'received family support.' Presumably the remaining 90 percent of families did not think the support was appropriate for their child and declined assistance.

This scheme can be seen as a direct attempt to conduct the conduct of children. By encouraging primary school pupils to monitor their health and fitness, and providing them with information about the potential diseases and health risks associated to certain lifestyles, schools (and other agencies) are shaping children's views interpretation of 'health' and influencing their behaviour. Evans *et al.* (2008: 15) suggest that such mechanisms are widespread. Children are not coerced into monitoring their weight and health, but rather, through learning from 'expert' health practitioners children are subtly exposed 'to knowledge around 'obesity' related risks and issues and instructions as to how to eat healthily, stay active and lose weight' (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 15). It is not being argued here that this is an inherently negative concept, because indeed it is important that children do lead healthy lifestyles. What is problematic is the reduction of health to weight and body shape (as found in the above PCT intervention, and reported by Evans *et al.*, 2008: 130). As O'Dea

(2005: 259) has argued, if obesity prevention efforts are delivered in a 'misconstrued manner,' or the messages are 'misunderstood' by the target audience, the result may often be 'the inadvertent production of undesirable effects,' such as dieting and slimming among young people.

This is the central concern with the lifestyle-based interventions in schools. The agencies and individuals most often implementing such schemes do so with the best intentions in mind. However, there is a concern that when messages promoting healthy lifestyles - healthy eating, exercise, sports participation, etc. - confront children on a regular basis, they may force children to adapt their behaviour to such an extent that they run greater health risks associated with weight-loss or being underweight (Campos, 2004: 13).

Although this research was guided by the Foucauldian tradition, it was unable to examine the SSP initiative as fully as originally desired. The mode of evaluation did not allow for sufficient analysis of modes of self-government. Foucault's notion of governmentality was adopted as a central analytic tool for the thesis as it gave theoretical depth to my own understanding of contemporary forms of government. It was also believed that the concept could help explain the impacts that SSPs have had upon children's views and behaviour. Throughout, the objective was to apply the notion of governmentality to the implementation of SSPs in primary schools in order to determine if, how, and with what end goals the strategy was being used as a technology of government. It was believed that interviews with teaching staff would provide sufficient insight into the impact of SSPs on the school and its pupils. This, it was envisaged, would allow for a critical exploration of the messages (if any) that have been filtered down to children in the government's aspiration to shape the conduct of conduct.

However, the data that has been obtained towards addressing this end falls short of its intended purpose. Whilst the teaching staffs' comments provide useful evidence for what *they* believe the government have been attempting to achieve through the initiative and why, it says little about how children's behaviour and thinking has been affected. In future, it would be advisable to speak with the children who are on the receiving end of the initiative, to determine the impact it has had upon their behaviour and thoughts. Perhaps a more effective method through which such initiatives can be explored *vis-à-vis* the notion of

governmentality is the use of randomised control trials, with interviews and observation pre-, during-, and post-intervention. This would allow for a comparison between children who have received a particular intervention, and those who have not. For the present research this was impossible as SSPs had been working with each of the case study schools prior to the empirical work.

Chapter Summary

The impacts of SSPs differs between schools. Even within the small sample of schools explored in this research – which are located within 40 miles of one another – there are a variety of context-dependent affects. Quantitative analyses of the impacts of Partnerships fail to identify many of the issues raised in this section. Overall, the status of PE within schools has been improved. There are now more opportunities for sport and physical activity available to children. However, contrary to the explicit and underpinning emphasis on partnership working, the extent to which interaction between schools and clubs has been improved is notable only by its absence. The importance of good interpersonal relations has been highlighted, but, alone, such attributes are insufficient to foster effective cooperation between agencies. There a variety of contexts and underpinning mechanisms that ultimately determine the relationship between SSPs and schools.

This section has condensed the main findings from the case study schools to provide an overview of the impact SSPs have had in general. The literature that was considered in the first half of the thesis has been used to help develop an explanation for the data collected. In the final section of the thesis some concluding remarks will be made on the overall impact of SSPs. The implications of the findings point to issues that are in need of greater examination in future research. These will also be discussed. A final consideration will be to assess the potential and limitations of realist evaluation in assessing the impact of SSPs on schools.

Chapter 8

Concluding remarks

This brief chapter will offer little new to the preceding discussions. In this final section the main findings from the thesis will be recapped. The chapter will begin by considering the overall impact of SSPs in relation to their underlying goals. Following this, the usefulness of the realist evaluation method that has guided the empirical process will be explored, before attention considers SSPs as a governmental technology. An important contribution the thesis makes to the wider field is through the identification of future avenues for research. So, in drawing the thesis to its closure some recommendations for future research will be made.

Fulfilment of core goals

The introduction of SSPs has raised the status of PESS in primary schools. This research found that the number of activities on offer to children has increased, and the range of activities – whilst dominated by competitive team games – has also diversified. The majority of activities provided through the SSP are, currently, inter-school events. Without the assistance of the Partnerships in facilitating such activities, school staff could not dedicate the time and effort needed to arrange events in such frequency. Partnership staff are widely praised for the effort that is put into organising and staging inter-school events. However, the overwhelming focus on *sport* is considered problematic in several respects. The findings suggest that small schools may find this particularly problematic, as it can damage morale and deter children from wanting to participate. The motivational climate fostered on such occasions is clearly counterproductive *vis-à-vis* continued participation in the respective activities. Based on the findings of this thesis, that there has been a sportization process (Green, 2008: 227) in physical education is difficult to refute. The strategies that have underpinned PE over the last decade have given increasing emphasis to the place of sport in the PE children receive. The SSP programme has exacerbated the dependence on sport as a means for delivering the subject. The centrality of sport to contemporary PE has, as Capel (2000) noted over a decade ago, led to the subject being practically synonymous with sport.

The programme has had little impact on improving partnerships between schools. None of the case study schools work in cooperation with other schools. It is ironic that one of the key ways in which schools used to interact with one another - in the organisation and delivery of inter-school activities and leagues – has actually been diminished by the introduction of SSPs. Seen from this angle, the initiative has actually had a negative impact on partnership working between schools. Of the work and good practice that did predate the implementation of SSPs, much of this has now been consumed by the initiative. SSPs are, therefore, attributed with bringing about change that has often been done by school staff. Schools do, however, welcome the SSPs' adoption of many tasks, especially the difficult job of organising inter-school activities, as it frees up teachers' time. The sharing of resources, facilities and expertise that was so central to *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000) has also been largely unaffected. The only sharing of facilities that was noted by teachers actually predated the introduction of the SSP, and has not altered as a result of the initiative's introduction. No school reported any sharing of expertise or resources with other schools. In fact, the interaction with the hub school of the Partnership – the Specialist Sports College – was notable only for its absence.

A further issue that SSPs have sought to address is the identification of, and provision for, gifted and talented children. In the case study schools GT identification and development is poorly developed. The effect of the SSP on GT education has, in fact, been almost non-existent in Carraway and Tweedale. The difference in the provision that West Hill receives is that the SSCo has, in the past, identified children as GT, and the Partnership also provides pupils on the GT register with a short summer school. GT education provides a good example of the work of schools being attributed to government interventions. Excluding the assistance given by West Hill's SSCo, the only involvement that SSPs have in GT education is through requesting that schools provide information regarding the number of year 5 and 6 pupils currently on the GT register. This information is compiled in the PESSYP surveys, and acts as evidence of the SSP's work. However, this is a misrepresentation (at least in the case study schools) of the work of SSPs. As it currently stands, there is an over-reliance on external identification and therefore an inequality (*within* and between schools) in opportunity. The SSPs' involvement in GT, as with improving club- and inter-school-links, is minimal, and in need of development.

Regardless of a school's commitment to and/or endorsement of the School Sport Partnership initiative, the effects of the programme are, to some extent, unavoidable. SSPs play a central role in the organisation and delivery of PESS nationwide. Although the case-study schools have mixed views towards the initiative, few teachers would deny the importance of the scheme to the government's PESSYP strategy. Due to the centrality of the programme to PESS, SSPs structure the objectives and therefore content of PESS in all schools. Whether a school depends on the assistance of their SSP is largely irrelevant to the fundamental impact; the aims of government are built into the objectives and work of SSPs, which then become the guidelines by which PESS must be delivered in schools (whilst adhering to the NCPE framework).

The findings suggests that SSPs have improved the status of PESS in schools. This reflects the vast amount of financial and labour resources that have been invested in the subject over the last decade.

The importance of contexts and mechanisms

Indeed, there is little doubt that more activities are now available to children, especially in relation to the number of inter-school events organised by the SSP. The greatest impact SSPs have had upon the structure of PE in the individual schools has been in the increased number and range of inter-school activities. The majority of the activities on offer can be categorised as competitive sporting team games. Teachers welcome the SSPs taking over the organisational duties attached to staging inter-school activities, and believe that many of the activities provide children with an enjoyable experience and a good opportunity to develop their sporting and social skills. However, teachers from the two smaller schools (Carraway and Tweedale) were less satisfied with the range of events on offer. Staff in these schools argue that the competitive nature of the inter-school events, combined with the small pupil numbers in their school, can damage the confidence and enjoyment that pupils have. Small schools have smaller year groups, and therefore less children of the same age to enter into team-based events. As a result, the teams that are entered into competitions often consist of pupils from different year groups, with wide-ranging abilities. This results in a situation whereby children resign themselves to defeat prior to the actual event, and fear humiliation

for losing. Such a situation is clearly counterproductive in relation to encouraging lifelong engagement in the respective activities as it fosters a negative motivational climate.

In a sustained, and what appears to be unavoidable attempt to meet wider political targets concerned with quantitative increases in participation levels, SSPs are in danger of distancing their work from the needs of schools. There was no suggestion from any respondent that their schools could influence (individually or in collaboration with other schools) the overall focus of their Partnership. In particular, teachers at West Hill believed they could request that the SSP provide particular opportunities for their school's pupils (for example, specific after school clubs, teacher training, and coverage of new activities), but in relation to the Partnership's core work there was a general reticence. For Carraway, and to a lesser extent Tweedale, there was no suggestion that they could even approach their SSCo to request specific assistance. This largely unidirectional relationship means that SSPs are dictating what activities are available to schools without consultation with school staff or pupils. Although each SSP will adopt a unique approach to the issue of school engagement in organisational direction, for Carraway and Tweedale, there was little opportunity to engage in such a process.

Broadly speaking, West Hill benefits from their relationship with the SSP; the provision and quality of PESS opportunities have improved dramatically for the pupils as a result of the Partnership's involvement. This has been of particular importance for the children at West Hill, as the extracurricular opportunities granted them (by their families) are restricted. School plays a *vital* role in ensuring these children are provided with access to activities, even outside of the school day. In Carraway, the SSP has had a relatively insignificant impact on PESS. Due to the context in which the school is located, the majority of parents are willing and able to provide children with the opportunities that they miss out on due to the relatively poor provision of physical activities and sports in school. Whereas the Partnership provides West Hill children with opportunities that are otherwise inaccessible, Carraway depends little on the SSP because of a reliance on parental support. The inter-school opportunities that are facilitated are logistically problematic due to the small number of pupils. This also has a detrimental impact on the experience that children have in such events. On a continuum, Tweedale sits somewhere between Carraway and West Hill. There

is neither an over-reliance on the SSP or parents. Tweedale provides access to a wide range of activities within and outside of school hours. External staff regularly deliver lessons to children, and opportunities are provided for outside of school hours.

Aside from the impact on inter-school activities and the provision of a wider range of activities, only West Hill appears to have received any significant benefits. The implications of partnership working for Carraway and Tweedale often far exceed any benefits that accrue from collaboration with the SSP. The Partnership initiative has had minimal effect on improving links between schools, and in the development of school-club links. Although occupying an important position in the related policy literature, GT identification and development for year 5 and 6 pupils has been practically unaffected by the introduction of the SSP.

The findings and analysis appear, in large part, to contradict many of the positive findings of past evaluations. The PESSYP survey measures and reports on the provision of PESS in schools. For example, the range of activities on offer, the amount of inter- and intra-school competition, and the number of club links a school has. These are reported in the evaluations as being indicative of the successes and failures of SSPs. However, when the impact is analysed in greater depth it becomes clear that the work of the respective Partnerships in helping schools improve on these measures varies in significance. Although SSPs are central to PESS nationally, some schools (such as Carraway) benefit little from the strategy, and many achievements in the quantitative measures are the result of the school's own efforts, *not* the SSP's work. However, any changes in PESS participation over the last decade appear to have been assigned to the work of School Sport Partnerships. Quantitative amendments to the provision of PESS are too often assigned to the SSP, and thus to the government's intervention. However, many of the improvements in physical activity (particularly in Carraway and Tweedale) are the result of the school's own efforts, and have little to do with the SSP initiative.

Relating to the specific attributes that promote effective SSP operation, one respondent – a former SSCo, and now county council employee – suggested that part-time SSCos are 'more limited in what [they] can offer.' Part-time SSCos are usually existing teachers, released by their school for two days per week to fulfil their Partnership obligations. Inevitably, less can

be achieved by part-time SSCos compared with their full-time counterparts. West Hill has a full-time SSCo, whereas Tweedale and Carraway's SSCos are part-time. As mentioned above, West Hill staff have exceptional relationships with their SSCo; the SSCo is regularly in school, knows members of staff (not just the PLT and/or head teacher), and is frequently contacted by teachers. At Tweedale, the PLT supports the Partnership's work and shares a good relationship with the SSCo; however the main limitation here is that the workload of the PLT (head teacher) and SSCo (part-time) is too great to allow for the development of strong relations. Due to the demanding workload of both individuals, communication is largely restricted to email. The result is that the school and Partnership are unable to synchronise activities, which means the school is often too late (or disrupted) to sign-up for SSP-organised events. The situation at Carraway is similar, in that the workload of the head teacher (PLT) and part-time SSCo hinders the degree of interaction. On reflection, and perhaps inevitably, it appears as though SSPs can operate more effectively with schools when the SSCo is full-time and the PLT has sufficient time to attend to the Partnership duties.

Another issue worth noting concerns the assignment of the PLT role in schools. When conducting the research it became apparent that the PLT for each school was a senior member of staff. Due to the small staff force at Tweedale and Carraway, the PLT at both schools is the head teacher. For West Hill, the PLT is a PE specialist, but this individual is also deputy head. It is interesting that the PLT for each school occupies an important and demanding organisational position in the respective schools. Due to the demands of the position, the role is better suited to more junior staff members with fewer organisational duties. Griggs and Ward (2010: 4) report that the PLTs in their study, whilst finding the SSP activities 'good for the pupils,' found 'it takes a lot of organising to get them [to the SSP organised events].' Like the comments of Tweedale's head teacher (and acting PLT) and previous PLT, the Primary Link Teacher role entails a significant degree of organisation and logistical effort, such that 'it is a real task on top of [the core] teaching duties' (Griggs and Ward, 2010: 4). At West Hill, the PLT role has been adopted by the most appropriate individual for the job, the school's PE specialist. At Tweedale and Carraway, the position seems to have been taken up by the head teachers as a last resort. Both find the role too demanding and are unable to effectively cope with the workload that the position entails.

This may be indicative of both schools' views towards the SSP initiative, and goes some way to help understand the poor impact of the programme.

Many of the issues identified in the findings have not been detected in the national evaluations. Due to the subjective nature of many of the issues, to fully assess the impact of SSPs in schools, the underlying context to which the school is bound must be considered. The work of a SSP in a given school is greatly affected by these contextual factors. The impact that Partnerships have had can be detected in the particular mechanisms that are triggered. The mechanisms combined with the context will either facilitate or restrict effective cooperation between the school and SSP. Whilst realist evaluation is useful in identifying the underlying issues that influence the outcome, the findings of realist evaluations must be read with caution.

The value of critical realist evaluation has been demonstrated throughout the findings and analysis sections. In order to enable the discussions to flow smoothly, the identification of each single CMO configuration was not made explicit. Stringent adherence to the CMO configurations would result in a rather formal and misleading, mechanistic, analysis. Realist evaluators should avoid presenting findings in a descriptive manner, such as C+M=O (see Appendix 2 for some examples. The weakness of such a method is easily discernible). It is difficult to determine the causal relationship between an intervention, the contextual conditions, and the mechanisms that are triggered. It is especially difficult to do this without a narrative account of the processes. The power of realist evaluation lies in its ontological depth; its ability to provide a detailed description of the observable, by reference to the underlying processes. However, it can be argued that high quality qualitative research would always examine the context and mechanisms within which social phenomena are rooted. The realist evaluation method, in some respects, seems to differ only because it makes this explicit.

The CMO configurations help deepen the understanding of the impact social policies have at a grassroots level, however, it is difficult to breakdown the *overall* context into the multitude of factors that make up that specific context. Attempting to breakdown the context into which a SSP is introduced is a subjective and complex task. Researchers have to determine what *they* perceive to be the most significant contextual conditions influencing the policy's

effectiveness, as each school is fixed within myriad 'contexts.' Even if evaluators were just to consider Pawson's (2006: 31) four essential contextual layers – individual capacities, interpersonal relations, institutional setting, and infra-structural system – the degree of complexity would be enormous. Whilst identifying as many contexts as possible deepens the understanding of the process of implementation and helps explain the outcomes, the true complexity of the situation cannot be fully captured. Caution must be taken in reading the results of realist, and indeed *any* evaluation. Because two schools share similar contextual conditions does not mean the impact of a policy will be the same, or even similar. There are infinite contextual conditions that produce the outcomes, and no two implementation sites will be the same.

SSPs and the conduct of conduct

Contemporary PESS is concerned with governing the behaviour of children. Significant effort has been invested in the development of an extensive PESS discourse that pivots around the promotion of physically active 'healthy' lifestyles. Gillies' (2008) notion of conduct[3] is useful in helping to make sense of the proliferation in PESS policy – government wants to be seen to be tackling the perceived 'obesity epidemic.' School, and particularly, PE have been used by government as the main site in which child health – and future adult health - concerns are being tackled. Much of the current focus of PESS centres on reducing levels of childhood obesity and preventing the development of excess body weight in adulthood. This emphasis is increased by the interventions of many external agencies that are concerned with further promoting healthy lifestyles. Many previous studies have found that children equate a healthy lifestyle with a narrow definition of health, often equated to an ideal body image. There is concern that children may adopt an uncritical conception of what 'health' means, and pursue an ideal body shape that centres on 'shape, size, appearance […] and muscularity' (Azzarito: 2009: 35). This, as discussed above, could actually be more harm to children than it is healthy.

The SSP initiative can be seen as a technology of government. The dominant role it plays in the delivery of PESS nationwide means that the programme structure the range of potential activities on offer to children. By structuring the range of activities schools offer, and

therefore the opportunities available to children – along with the focus on sport and decreasing levels of obesity – the SSP initiative can be seen as a method through which the conduct of children is being shaped. The effective government of children's conduct is further established via the shaping of teachers' conduct. The wider discourse surrounding child inactivity and obesity – which is prominent in media reporting and the PESS policy discourse – appears to have been uncritically adopted by teaching staff. Although few teachers in the case study school believed that excess body weight was a problem in their school, they felt that it was an issue that schools are justified in tackling. As previously discussed, the conclusions drawn in relation to the effectiveness of SSPs in shaping the conduct of conduct were not as strong as desired. Whilst it can be reasonably argued that SSPs are affecting the opportunities available to children, and also their views towards health, physical activity and lifestyle choices, the analysis lacks the depth necessary to explore how SSPs have directly influenced children's behaviour and the manner in which they regulate their behaviour.

Recommendations for future research

One of the main contributions of the thesis is its heuristic nature. A number of important avenues for further research have emerged from the findings. This section will briefly consider those issues that warrant further examination in future research into SSPs, and PESS more broadly.

This thesis examined the impact of SSPs from the primary school perspective. Previous studies consider the opinions of those work closely with SSPs (PDMs, SSCos, PLTs) (Flintoff, 2003 and 2008 and Smith and Leech, 2010), and the national evaluations are lacking in their qualitative depth. Although a complex and time-consuming task, research should be conducted into the intra-partnership dynamics of a single SSP (this is done, to an extent, in Flintoff's (2008) research, however the focus is on gender equity, and the interviews are restricted to PDMs, SSCos and PLTs). This task would entail in-depth research with the PDM, SSCos and PLTs, along with representatives (teachers and head teachers) from a number of schools and local sports clubs/facilities. Such a study could consider a range of issues related to which schools benefit most, and for what reasons. Focusing on one SSP would allow for an in-depth examination of the range of activities on offer, and the motivational climate these foster. Such a study would also allow for an analysis of inter-personal relations and the importance of the additional commitments that SSCos and PLTs have.

There needs to be more comparative analyses between different SSPs. The nationwide evaluations do consider the work of different SSPs, but there is little comparison between the work of individual Partnerships. The LP evaluations provide greater depth in relation to inter-partnership analysis, but this is still insufficient. Adopting the critical realist evaluation method, with its explicit focus on the contexts in which SSPs operate, researchers should probe the contextual conditions in which SSPs find themselves, and consider the relation between context and outcome. For example, do Partnerships operating in urban areas spend more time in schools than their rural counterparts? Does the accessibility of facilities (natural and commercial) influence the range and focus of activities that are provided by SSPs?

A key finding of the thesis is that, for several reasons, SSPs present rural schools with different obstacles than those faced by urban schools. Further analysis of the impact SSPs have in rural schools is necessary to critically assess the claims made here. Interviews with staff from a larger sample of rural schools, representing a diversity of geographical locations, should provide sufficient data to explore the concerns raised in greater depth. Widely dispatched surveys may also provide sufficient data. The accounts of SSCos and PLTs also warrant consideration. A more fundamental concern, however, is the very potential for partnership working in schools that are isolated or rurally located. Several teaching staff (in the two rural case-study schools) suggested that they would rather their school received direct cash injections, so as to reclaim full responsibility for the delivery of PESS. If rural schools are receiving inadequate in-school assistance from their SSP, this may also be the case in provision for other areas of the curriculum. A large scale examination of partnership working in rural schools is necessary to identify any recurring issues faced by such schools. It is unsatisfactory that the location of a school hinders the assistance it receives and, thus, the education it provides.

In evaluating the impact of policy is important that the end users are given a platform to express their opinions and concerns. This thesis has provided teaching staff with this opportunity, and it would benefit the research community and policy makers if further research explored the opinions of teachers. However, it is crucial that the voices of the additional group of end users, the school children for whom the SSP programme is targeted, are heard. As children are the 'service users,' it is pertinent (and potentially empowering) for their experiences to be explored. It would be useful to conduct in-depth research with school pupils to examine any difference in attitudes towards, and motivation for, teacher-led activities and those facilitated by the SSP (Which activities are enjoyed most?, What are children's opinions of competitive as opposed to non-competitive activities? Are activities more enjoyable when led by sports coaches or teachers?) Similarly, an examination of children's understandings of what the purpose of PE is, compared with their conception of the purpose of SSP-organised activities, may yield important results. Additionally, a series of comparative observations of in-house PESS juxtaposed with SSP-organised activities will allow experienced researchers to evaluate the different teaching methods and their impacts, and any changes in the motivational climate fostered in the lessons. Such an analysis of

opinions would give a deeper understanding of the modes of government used, and their effectiveness in shaping the conduct of conduct.

The comparative analysis suggests that some families may be more inclined to provide their children with opportunities outside of school hours than others. A large part of the explanation for this comes down to financial and time constraints, availability of resources, and general views towards the importance of physical activity and sport participation. However, an important consideration is the cultural capital of parents. Families from different classes have always invested heavily in different pursuits and activities. What determines the choice a parent makes *vis-à-vis* their child's participation in leisure activities is significantly linked to the physical and cultural capital that they want to invest in their children (Evans and Davies, 2010: 771). This important issue was given minimal consideration in the present thesis, however, in future research it is important for researchers to consider a family's cultural capital in relation to how this impacts upon the opportunities granted to children outside of school hours.

As a final point, although further research into the impact of SSPs is necessary, researchers must beware of the existing pressures facing SSP and, in particular, school teaching staff. A major complaint of some teachers was the additional workload that the SSP initiative has caused schools. The annual PESSCL/PESSYP returns – whilst no longer being distributed – have increased the workload of teaching staff. It is unethical, therefore, to further burden teacher with time-consuming research assessing the impact of the programme which provides the school with little reward.

Postscript

In October 2010 as part of the new coalition government's austerity measures, Education Secretary, Michael Gove, announced that the £162m annual government funding for School Sport Partnerships would be withdrawn. On December 1st 2010, after severe criticism from a wide range of people (teachers, Olympians, sports stars, opponents) and student protests, David Cameron ordered a rethink on the school sport plans. By December 20th the U-turn was complete; Michael Gove announced that he had 'found' £112m for the continuation of SSPs.

Senior Conservatives (David Cameron, Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt, and Boris Johnson) believe that competitive sport has declined in schools. As Gove put it in June 2010, 'We need to revive competitive sport in our schools.' Jeremy Hunt proposed the idea of a School Olympics, which was to be central to the coalition's school sport plans. However, little details have yet to be produced. What is for certain is that the School Olympics would focus on competitive team games, bringing about a 'revival of team sports.' Regardless of whether this exact model will be used, the Conservatives insist that competitive team sports will be at the heart of their plans for PE and school sport.

As the evidence from this thesis suggests, whilst teachers acknowledge the potential benefits of inter-school competition, it has several negative impacts (this is backed up by a wealth of literature). For small schools it is difficult to compile a team due to the small number of students. When teams are entered into competitions, many children from small schools feel they are unable to compete with larger schools that have a greater talent pool to choose from. The consequence is that children may be deterred from participating in competitive sport (or even certain physical activities) in the future. If the amount of inter school competition was to increase, as is planned, the financial strains on schools would also increase (due to transport and supply teachers).

It is also worth highlighting that a similar initiative to the School Olympics already exists. The Youth Sport trust has run a UK School Games since 2006. The event is an annual competition for elite young athletes and sports persons, attracting around 2000 contestants each year.

There is no reason why this, or a similar School Olympics, cannot run parallel to more inclusive sport/activity for all policies. If the government is serious about curbing the rising levels of sedentary activity and obesity, more impetus needs to be put on those who are most likely to be inactive. Policies aimed at elite performers are unlikely to alter the escalating concerns with sedentary activity because they are targeted at those children who are, if not most active, the most competent athletes.

Another concern is that the complete withdrawal of the SSP programme may significantly reduce the quality of PESS available to children. In each case-study school there was at least some degree of dependence on non-teaching staff to deliver PESS (in West Hill, for example, external involvement dominated the delivery of PESS). When the cuts in funding begin to be felt in schools, there will be less income available to hire this external assistance, thus having an adverse impact on the existing mode of delivery. As some teachers appear to now rely somewhat on external provision, the wholesale withdrawal of assistance will have knock on effects on their workload. Changes to the current system are immanent; however, caution should be exercised when making the transition from the current approach to its successor.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Blank observation schedule

Date		Staff	Num missing lesson		Year
Lesson title		Time	Total time		School
Location			What children		
Time	Activity(s)	Key words	Activity Level	Teacher involvement	In Activity?
			0=disruptive	1. instructing	1=in activity
			1=Static	2. Engaging with pupils	2=in activity/not active
			2=Moderate		
			3=Vigourous	3. Observes	3=not in activity
			4 = Seek instruction	4. Off-duty	
				5. Demonstrating	
				6. Preperation	
				7. Disciplining	
<5mins					
5-10m					
10-15m					
15-20					
20-25					
25-30					
30-35					
35-40					
40-45					
45-50					
50-55					
55-60					

Appendix 2. Examples of inflexibility and poor explanatory capacity of descriptive CMO configurations

CMO configurations in Tweedale Juniors

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
SSP infringes too much upon school. • Teachers find it difficult to select children to attend inter-school events. • Teachers have to make up for lost time due to inter-school events (school work is missed). • Supply teachers needed to cover for competitions. • Supply teacher is hired to complete PESSYP survey (financial burden). • PLT role too demanding for head • School gets short notice for SSP events	Head teacher is PLT.	Further heats that require additional time from school, greater expense and logistical problems. Some events have stages; local, county, then regional. SSP is seen to take no action regarding those children identified by the school as GT.
	School has weekly assembly on Friday, and SSP meets with schools on Friday.	Further heats that require additional time from school, greater expense and logistical problems. Some events have stages; local, county, then regional.
	6 full time teachers, head teacher and 3 TAs (10 overall).	External provision is random. It is no longer in the school, and is almost always in school time.
		Teachers are up-skilled from shadow lessons SSP staff deliver.
		SSP coaching has been replaced by inter-school events. Not all children benefit from current system.
		Transport to events is costly.
		Most communication with SSP is via email; the SSCo sends too much information.
		School ethos at odds with the assistance of SSP/Mismatch between school and SSP-motivational climates.

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
GT children identified by clubs/parents.	Located in 'fairly affluent area'	Teachers find it difficult to select children to attend inter-school events. School is only allowed to enter a limited number of pupils.
	Rural.	GT identification in PESS lacks behind other subjects.
	Supportive parents.	PE is important largely for physical reasons, and collaboration and teamwork
	SSCo is part time (IT teacher at secondary school too).	Involvement in clubs is dependent upon parents.
		SSP is seen to take no action regarding those children identified by the school as GT.

CMO configurations in West Hill

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
SSP has significant impact on PESS.	Socially deprived area.	PESS curriculum is designed in-sync with SSP calendar. School is aware of SSP events long in advance.
	No free physical/sport activities locally.	SSP provide training for staff when requested; teachers up-skilled, which has raised staff confidence.
	Excellent on-site facilities (including Zone Park and a swimming pool).	SSCo helps set up new clubs (teachers learn from what he does).
	PE taken very seriously.	Teachers and assistants flag up GT children to SSCo.
	Full-time SSCo.	Senior management strongly support SSP.
	PLT deputy-head and PE specialist.	No concerns with logistic and transport difficulties attached to inter-school events as SSP arranges it. Inter-school events are a huge logistical undertaking, and schools couldn't do it without SSP.
		Regularly invited (and attends) to inter-school competitions.
		All staff know SSP staff.

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
No systematic GT identification system. • Limited pathways for GT children to pursue. • Outside of school provision for GT children also said to be poor. • Restricted opportunities for children to develop skills.	No free physical/sport activities locally.	OSHL more competitive than curricular activities (aimed at GT children).
	High level of transport deprivation.	Parental support is necessary (but lacking) for GT provision.
	Excellent on-site facilities (including Zone Park and a swimming pool).	Limited numbers on competitions list mean only a certain number of children can attend inter-school events.
	Lots of GT clubs for other subject areas, but not PESS.	The more talented pupils, on the whole, attend inter-school events.
	Local town is seen as inaccessible for children (financially and travel).	Many parents do not help with homework or attend parent's evening. Parental support is generally poor.
		Regularly invited (and attends) to inter-school competitions.
		Teachers and assistants flag up GT children to SSCo.

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
Children more active as a result of SSP involvement. • Children would not get the coverage they do without SSP. • Children very active at lunch/ breaks, in organised activities. • School regularly attends inter-school competitions.	Socially deprived area.	PESS curriculum is designed in-sync with SSP calendar. School is aware of SSP events long in advance.
	No free physical/sport activities locally.	SSCo helps set up new clubs (teachers learn from what he does).
	Adequate facilities in local area.	Local town is seen as inaccessible for children (financially and travel).
	Full-time SSCo.	Many parents do not help with homework or attend parent's evening/ parental support is generally low.
	High levels of unemployment locally.	Inter-school events cause no problems.
		SSP provides opportunities that are otherwise unavailable to children.

CMO configurations in Carraway Juniors

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
Only one after school club • Primary reason for after school club is to help out parents. A critical mass of children is needed at existing club to ensure its survival. • GT children have little chance to work with peers of the same ability (*not* against people of same ability).	SSP is based 18.1 miles away (expensive, time consuming).	Due to affluence, parents are seen to be able to help out with extra-curricular activities. Parental support is often taken for granted. Parents are proactive and get involved in school life.
	3 f/t staff and head teacher.	Cost of SSCo visiting school is restrictive – financially and in relation to time. Same applies for sports coaches who could run OSHL.
	Very small premises.	Teachers have little free time. Head teacher has demanding workload due to part-time teaching duties.
	Schools in local area are dispersed – no opportunity for running shared activities with multiple schools.	Not enough children of the same age to enter into SSP events/after school activities.
		SSP staff rarely visit school.
		No sharing of expertise of resources between schools.

Outcome	Contexts	Mechanisms
SSP activities can have a detrimental impact on the school. • Very helpful when coaches do come into school. • All children have taken part in a SSP festival/event, and many enjoy the activities. • Some children are pressurised into attending events due to small numbers.	48 pupils; largest year group 11 children, smallest 5.	SSP adopts a competitive motivational climate, the school takes an inclusive approach.
	3 f/t staff and head teacher.	SSP events are based a considerable distance from school.
	SSP is based 18.1 miles away (expensive, time consuming).	Not enough children of the same age to enter into SSP events.
	Schools in area are dispersed.	School can't afford to enter children into all SSP-led activities.
		Many events take place over several occasions, at different venues.
		SSP does little with GT information.
		All SSP-led events are in school time.

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