

The Teacher-As-Researcher and the Future Survival of Physical Education

Araştırmacı Öğretmen ve Beden Eğitiminin Gelecekte Hayatta Kalışı

Review Article (Derleme Makale)

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ÖZ

Birçok araştırmacı, sınıflar öğretimi modelinin (yani yıllar boyu 'eğitilmiş' öğrenciler üzerine yoğunlaşan modelin) sanayi sonrası eğitim sistemi için artık uygun olmadığını ileri sürmüştür. Bu düşünceyi ve Kirk'ün (2010) Physical Education Futures adlı kitabında tanımladığı üç muhtemel geleceği göz önüne alan bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin beden eğitiminin gelecekte de devam etmesi konusunda kilit rol oynadıklarını ileri sürmektedir. Beden eğitiminin sınıflar modeli, öğretmenlik için spor tekniklerinin (en çok da takım oyunlarının) anlama ve akıllı performans pahasına gelişmesini ön planda tutan bir yaklaşım oluşmasına neden olmuştur. Muhtemel geleceklerden biri (ve şu anda en muhtemel gözükene) Kirk'ün 'sürekli aynı' olarak tanımladığı gelecektir. Bu cevapla beden eğitimi, oyunları ve oyun tekniklerini ön plana çıkaracak ve bu yaklaşım için gittikçe artan memnuniyetsizliği de göz ardı edecektir. Hiç bir şeyi değiştirmemeye yönelik böylesine kesin bir karar, er ya da geç Kirk'ün (2010) ikinci gelecek tahminiyle sonuçlanacaktır: yok olma. Böyle bir son, konumuzun eğitimci profesyoneller tarafından belki de Wii gibi bilgisayar konsolları aracılığıyla yönetilen günlük fiziksel aktivitelerin yerini aldığına ya da konunun tekrar gündeme geldiğine şahit olabiliriz. Üçüncü gelecek 'radikal reform'dur ve bu ça-

ABSTRACT

Many have suggested that the industrial model of schooling (i.e. one that concentrates on the year-on-year production of 'educated' students) is no longer suitable for a post-industrial education system. With this in mind, and in considering the three possible futures described by Kirk (2010) in his book Physical Education Futures, this paper suggests that teachers hold the key to the future survival of physical education. The industrial model of physical education has led to the evolution of an approach to teaching that foregrounds the development of sport-techniques (most especially in team games) at the expense of understanding and intelligent performance. One possible future (and the one that looks most likely at this time) is what Kirk called 'more of the same.' With this response physical education will continue to foreground games and their techniques and ignore the growing dissatisfaction around this approach. Such a resolute decision to change nothing will lead - either quickly or slowly - to the second of Kirk's (2010) futures: extinction. Such an end might see our subject replaced with daily physical activity overseen by untrained professionals, perhaps on computer consoles such as the wii, or the eradica-

lıřma, böyle bir deęişimin sınıflarda öğretmenlerin uzmanlığında yürütülmesi gerektiğini ileri sürmektedir. Böylece, beden eğitimini kurtarıp canlandırmak için gerekli olan deęişikliklerin uygulanabilmesini saęlayan bir araç olarak, eylem araştırması adı altında uygulama araştırması yapılmasını tavsiye ediyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Uygulama araştırması, Deęişiklik, Sürekli profesyonel gelişim

In his recent book *Physical Education Futures* Kirk (2010) predicted three possible futures for physical education: 1) more of the same, 2) extinction or 3) radical reform. Furthermore he warned that the consequence of 'more of the same' would most likely be extinction anyway. His argument, which is supported by many of the leading authors in physical education (See for example Locke, 1992; Siedentop, 2002; Lawson, 2009), is that the schools of today were created to serve the needs of the industrial age and are therefore not suitable places, in their current incarnations, for educating young people. This statement is strongly supported by the notable biologist John Medina who wrote "if you wanted to create an education environment that was directly opposed to what the brain was good at doing, you would probably design something like a classroom" (Medina, 2008, p. 5). Similar beliefs promoted Lawson (2009) to suggest that schools are not capable of educating the students of the 21st century and Locke (1992) to state that nothing short of a major rethink of physical education provision required.

Current schooling is far from 'modern' and is in fact a product of centuries of tradition. Originally a profession of individual tutors, teaching became localised in a single building that we now recognise as a school, but teaching, as we know it today is a concept born in the industrial age (Hamilton, 1990). Foucault (1977) provides a detailed account of the eighteenth century school. Consider how much of this description from almost 350 years ago survives into the schooling of the early twenty-first century:

tion of the subject altogether. The third future is 'radical reform' and this paper suggests that such change needs to be driven by teachers with their expertise in classrooms. In doing this we recommend practitioner research, under the guise of action research, as the means through which to discover and then enact the changes needed to save and rejuvenate physical education.

Key Words

Practitioner research, Change, Continued professional development

" 'rank' begins to define the great form of distribution of individuals in the educational order: rows or ranks of pupils in each class, corridors, courtyards; rank attributed to each pupil at the end of each class and each examination; the rank he obtains from week to week, month to month, year to year; an alignment of age groups, one after another; a succession of subjects taught and questions treated, according to an order of increasing difficulty" (p. 147).

In selecting this quote, I am not suggesting that the educational space described in Foucault's book endures unchanged, but there are substantial and fundamental similarities that have survived for nearly three hundred and fifty years. What is manifest in this "industrial-age" perception of school is a traditional approach to teaching, ergo a traditional teacher.

Yet, as Kirk (2010) argued, this archetypal teacher did not simply appear but was 'bred' over successive generations. In the fifth chapter of his book Kirk examines the reason why physical education has striven so hard for continuity of purpose and practice and why it has remained so obdurately resistant to change. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these matters in detail and I direct the reader to Kirk's book for a much fuller dialogue around these issues. However, in summary Kirk argued that 'modern' physical education has undergone two significant content changes since its birth through militarism in the late 19th century. The first saw physical education being defined by its almost total gymnastics content. This was a major change for a subject area that had entered schools through the employment of drill ser-

geants who toured the schools and 'exercised' the children. From 1909 to 1933 Swedish gymnastics was adopted by Government schools as the approved course for physical education. The dominance of this form of gymnastics was later challenged by Rudolf Laban's modern educational dance. Indeed these two forms of gymnastics, and the later form of Olympic (now artistic) gymnastics, vied for precedence until the early 1960s.

However, since the end of World War I alternative forms of physical education were emerging and the dominance of gymnastic, while still highly evident, was being slowly eroded by the emergence of alternative activities (predominantly games) in physical education teacher education programmes and in school curricular. By the 1960s a seismic shift in school-based physical education had been completed and physical education was now focused on the teaching of games. Yet it was not the games themselves that were taught but "a generalised physical capability" or technique (Kirk, 2010) that became the basis for physical education. The dependence on technical proficiency engendered the third (and currently) incarnation of physical-education-as-sport-techniques (Kirk, 2010) in which pupils learnt isolated skills way from "the particular field of action" (or game) where the technique gained meaning and significance.

Unfortunately, the change in content did not precipitate a change in pedagogy. Swedish gymnastics was defined by a series of step-by-step developments that led the students' forwards in simple and pre-established linear progressions. Many have argued since that the same step-by-step progressions are the most effective teaching techniques. This belief has created a 'way' of teaching physical education (Casey, 2010c) that has been globally accepted as best practice. This social processing of practice and the acceptability that it has obtained ensures the continuity of how teachers teach as, in the words of Brookfield (1997) "we teach what we like to learn. Most people end up as teachers of subjects and skills that they were good at as students and that they took pleasure in learning" (p. 21).

It is worth noting that I have based this presentation heavily on Britain. However, by in speaking to physical education teachers over the last eight months in both Spain and Ireland I am aware that many of the concerns I express here are common themes in these two countries. Furthermore, by talking to teachers in Australia, Canada and the USA through the social media tool 'twitter' I have been made further aware that the similarities between countries far outweigh the differences and that the matters on which I am talking appear to be common around the world. Therefore we - as teachers of physical education - need to take responsibility for the evolution of practice in the way in which we teach our subject. We can't talk about physical education's future unless we engender change in the teachers and schools of today and for that to happen "extraordinary action" is required (Kirk, 2010). The move towards the teachers for the post-industrial, digital age will require new ways of thinking about and doing teaching.

If we aspire that the teacher of tomorrow will work in a school that invests in the talents of every young person within an infrastructure beholden to individual children then we need to change. John Dewey (1897) suggested that school "should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form" (p.19). Yet the embryo that we still nurture is one that has passed into history. To teach in the future we must shake off the shackles of our obsolete culture (Elliot, 1991) and allow teachers to do what the best of them came into the profession to do: enthuse and inspire children. We must design new ways of teaching that allow the teacher of tomorrow to facilitate learning in the boundless world which exists outside every learning environment.

Drawing a comparison between the work of the writer Barthes (1977) who announced the 'Death of the Author' in his book *Image, Music, and Text*, I suggest that we might soon witness a similar fate for the physical education teacher. When seeking the identity of the author in some texts Barthes (1977) suggested that:

"We shall never know [who she is], for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (p. 142).

Such loss of identity and every point of origin could well be the fate of the physical educationist. If we don't do something soon then the social demand for regular exercise and weight loss in the face of the escalating obesity crisis will exact a toll on physical education. The pace of modern technology is such that gaming systems could, potentially, replace the teacher as the main motivator behind the drive for physical activity. Since its launch on 19th November 2006 Nintendo have sold in excess of 75 million Wii - which is one and a bit Wii for every person in Turkey. If these were used to as a means to 'encourage' students to exercise then every school in the United Kingdom could purchase 100 Wii's with its fitness balance board for every newly qualified teacher it employed. That figure rises to 200 Wii for an experienced head of physical education in a large secondary school. Such figures could quickly see the 'death of the physical education teacher.' Eventually in this teacherless world the computer acts and performs to deliver its message but it is no longer about the real person: no longer is it about learning but is about doing.

It seems inevitable that change (or extinction) is on the horizon. Yet it is vital that any change that does occur in the teaching of physical education involves its teachers. Some of the earlier approaches to educational reform presented bottom up and top down strategies for change as distinct alternatives. Typically, arguments for and against each approach were ideologically loaded in the sense that left-leaning scholars supported bottom up change as a means of democratising schools, while right-leaning scholars supported top down approaches as a means of maintaining a degree of control over school systems (see eg. Hargreaves, 1982, 1994). More recent thinking (eg. Fullan, 1999) suggests that both bottom up and top down

initiatives are required in order to bring about genuine improvements in school practices. The fusion of top down and bottom up strategies suggests the need for partnerships in educational reform and some rethinking of the teacher's role within educational reform initiatives.

Research has shown that while system-wide initiatives do have the potential to deliver genuine reforms they must involve teachers. Teachers have been acknowledged by both top down and bottom up advocates to be key players in educational reform because they are the implementers of reform initiatives at the 'chalk face'. Research has convincingly shown that teachers must have some degree of ownership over reform. At the same time, partners must acknowledge the serious additional workloads that reform processes place upon teachers. There are further, more obdurate characteristics of the nature of teachers' work and schools as workplaces that must be considered in any reformulation of teachers' roles in educational reform. What I am suggesting in this presentation is that, in order to understand pedagogical change in physical education from the perspective of teachers we need to help teachers to engage in research - particularly practitioner research.

Practitioner Research

The primary aspect of all forms of practitioner research, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) suggested, is the notion that the practitioner himself or herself takes on the role of researcher. Secondly, practitioner research works on the premise that in order to comprehend, and therefore improve practice, the interplay of power relationships and the workplace have to be expressly understood in the context of daily work. Finally, the very same professional context is the site of any practitioner inquiry and the "problems and issues that arise from professional practice are taken up as topics of study" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2007, p. 26).

Lawrence Stenhouse worked in the vanguard of the teacher-as-researcher movement and believed that schools should be laboratories and teach-

hers' researchers who tirelessly strive to enhance the learning enjoyed by their students. In the late 1970s Stenhouse (1975) argued that:

"Educational ideas expressed in books are not easily taken into possession by teachers, whereas the expression of ideas as curricular specifications exposes them to testing by teachers and hence establishes an equality of discourse between the proposer and those who assess his proposal... the crucial point is that the proposal is not to be regarded as an unqualified recommendation but rather as a provisional specification claiming no more than to be worth putting to the test of practice" (p. 142).

Many (for example: Doyle, 2007; Elliott, 1983/2007; Zeichner, 2001) attribute the "introduction of radically different theory of knowledge teachers of the humanities" (Elliott, 1983/2007, p. 18) to Lawrence Stenhouse. Zeichner (2001) expands this list and identifies a number of key curriculum reform projects - most notably Lawrence Stenhouse's 'Humanities Curriculum Project' and the 'Ford Teaching Project' and the work of John Elliott - as key factors in the development of action research in UK education. It was through action research that these projects were able to move towards a pedagogically-driven rather than a standards or objectives-based curriculum, in which the process became dependent upon teachers' ability to reflect on their practice (Zeichner, 2001).

The 'Humanities Curriculum Project' was initiated by the Schools Council, a national body created in the 1960s to oversee curriculum and examination reform, and to improve the education of low ability students (Elliott, 1991). The key contribution of Lawrence Stenhouse was to articulate a theory of praxiology that would allow teachers to undertake the specific steps need to translate educational aims into teaching reality (Elliott, 1983/2007, 1991). From this project Stenhouse developed his idea of teacher-as-researcher as a means of articulating his wish that teachers would develop their pedagogies based upon their personal reflections about their pedagogical practices.

The 'Ford Teaching Project' grew out of concern that a gulf existed between "the hope and

the happening" (Lundgren, 1983) of inquiry/discovery approaches in classrooms (Elliott, 1976-1977/2007). Forty teachers in East Anglia were invited to join the project with the aim of uncovering common teaching problems with regard to the classroom actualisation of innovative pedagogies. Elliott (1991) recalled:

"[His] aspiration in designing the project was to explore the possibility of teachers' developing a common stock of professional knowledge about the problems of realizing an alternative to the traditional pedagogy which has so long prevailed in classrooms" (p. 29).

The project succeeded in its aim of theorising the common difficulties encountered in realising an imposed curriculum of innovative teaching (Elliott, 1991). Furthermore, it highlighted the impact that action research could have on teachers, especially when they were given the opportunity to reflect on their work. However, it also highlighted the need for teachers to reflect and critique not only their personal practice but also the established institutional structures that 'controlled' their working lives.

One of its originators of action research, John Collier (1944), extolled its ability to feed knowledge directly into action. Yet the knowledge he identifies is not simply the academically approved works of research but the layman's lived understandings and experiences. Indeed the key notion of practitioner research is actually doing something and then testing the outcomes. Carter (1998) believed that it allowed the researcher, namely the teachers in the case of educational action research, to develop personal meaning from current research within the context of their own classrooms. It is a paradigm that allows practitioners to explore new areas of pedagogical practice in which they set their own starting point and yet have no notion of their potential destination (Meyer et al., 2004). The ambiguity of the finishing point in action research is a key facet of the approach. It means that there are no preconceptions on the part of the practitioner with regard to the outcomes of the process. It is not a product but a

process. Consequently, it is through the course of action taken in response to a personal inquiry (rather than a hypothesis tested) that the practitioner develops.

The Action Research Cycle

In his seminal paper *Action Research and Minority Problems* Kurt Lewin (1946) carefully laid out his vision for the cyclical process of 'actioned' research:

"Planning starts usually with something like a general idea...If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, an "overall plan" of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea, pp. 37-38).

The next period is devoted to executing the first step of the overall plan.

In highly developed fields of social management, such as modern factory management or the execution of a war, this second step is followed by certain fact-findings. For example, in the bombing of Germany a certain factory may have been chosen as the first target after careful consideration of various priorities and of the best means and ways of dealing with this target. The attack is pressed home and immediately a reconnaissance plane follows with the one objective of determining as accurately and objectively as possible the new situation.

This reconnaissance or fact-finding has four functions. First it should evaluate the action. It shows whether what has been achieved is above or below expectation. Secondly, it gives the planners a chance to learn, that is, to gather new general insight, for instance, regarding the strength and weakness of certain weapons or techniques of action. Thirdly, this fact-finding should serve as the basis for correctly planning the next step. Finally, it serves as a basis for modifying the "overall plan."

The next step again is composed of a circle of planning, executing, and reconnaissance or fact-finding for the purpose of evaluating the results of

the second step, for preparing the rational basis for planning the third step, and for perhaps modifying again the overall plan."

The starting point for action research, in Lewin's initial conception of the paradigm, was therefore a general problem. Yet it was more than that: it was a problem that the instigator of the cycle wished to resolve. The resolution steps were, at this stage, unimportant and probably unconsidered. The key element was to decide upon an objective. Once this was complete the next step was to plan a possible route to achieving this goal which in turn might modify the objective itself.

With the initial planning and goal modification completed the third step that Lewin was envisioned was action itself. The instigator would execute the plan and then immediately engage in fact-finding to understand how the plan had affected the final objective. The information gained from this reconnaissance would allow the action itself to be monitored; gauge the strength and weakness of the action; facilitate improvements in future planning; and allow for modifications in the planned route to the objective. The next stage of the cycle was a continual sequence of planning, action and reconnaissance that would eventually lead to the realisation of the objective (or at least the modified objective). Ultimately Lewin (1946) summarised action research as "a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (p. 38). Somekh and Zeichner (2009) very recently summarised Lewin's theory when they wrote:

"His vision of action research was as an alternative to the norms of decontextualized research; instead of focusing on surveys and statistical methods, action research's purpose was to improve social formations by involving participants in a cyclical process of fact finding, planning, exploratory action and evaluation" (p. 7).

Since Lewin's first conception of his model, the action research cycle has been written and rewritten until each routine or cycle is but one of a number of ways to envision (Stringer, 1996) this extended family of research methodologies. McNiff (2002) supports this notion and states that

<u>Basic Action Research Routine</u>	
Look	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather relevant information (Gather data) • Build a picture: Describe the situation (Define and describe)
Think	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and analyze: What is happening here? (Hypothesise) • Interpret and explain: How/why are things as they are? (Theorise)
Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan (report) • Implement • Evaluate
<p>The Action Research continually recycles this set of activities in subsequent cycles.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Adapted from Stringer (1996, p. 16)</p>	

there are a “number of models [which] are available in the literature. Most of them regard practice as non-linear, appreciating that people are unpredictable, and that their actions often do not follow a straightforward trajectory” (McNiff, 2002, p. 10). Although it would be impractical to explore each of these revisions, I have highlighted below a few of the ‘updates’ of the action research cycle.

McNiff’s (2002) action plan shows action research as a reflective cycle in which the practitioner identifies an area of practice to be investigated; imagines a solution; implements the solution; evaluates the solution; and changes practice in light of the evaluation. In his interpretation Stringer (1996) matches the simplicity of Lewin’s original model and defines the basic routine of action research as an interacting spiral of ‘look, think, act’. He suggests that while the routine is presented in a linear style, it should be seen as a continually recycling of a set of activities in the second and subsequent cycles. Each stage of the routine, Stringer (1996) suggested, should be looked at as a chance to analyse and evaluate the process (p. 16). (see above):

By contrast Elliott (1991), although acknowledging the excellence of Lewin’s original model, suggested that the model needed development (see Figure 3.1 over page). He firstly argued that the original ‘plan’ or ‘look’ at the situation should not produce an intransigent notion or ‘over-all plan’

but instead a flexible idea that could shift with the project. Secondly he suggested that reconnaissance should recur throughout the cycle rather than being used only at the beginning, and thirdly he warned that the implementation of an action is difficult to achieve and therefore evaluation of the action should only occur after the action researcher has monitored the success of the implementation itself. In the light of these suggestions he elaborates on Lewin’s model and allows for flexibility, reconnaissance and implementation evaluation:

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2005) suggest that practitioners use an “interactive cycle of problem identification (PI), reflection (R), actions (A), and problem reconceptualisation (PR)” (p. 3). Yet they also cautioned that this must not simply be by treating dilemmas, especially educational dilemmas, as technical problems to be solved through a rational exploration of gathered data. This approach to action research would allow no opportunity to critique any individual aspect of the dilemma, which in turn would mean that Elliott’s (1991) call for flexibility, reconnaissance and implementation evaluation would be ignored.

Action Research in Physical Education

Despite the attention action research has been given by some leading academics in physical education (Kirk, 1995; Graham, 1981; Martinek & Butt, 1988; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004;

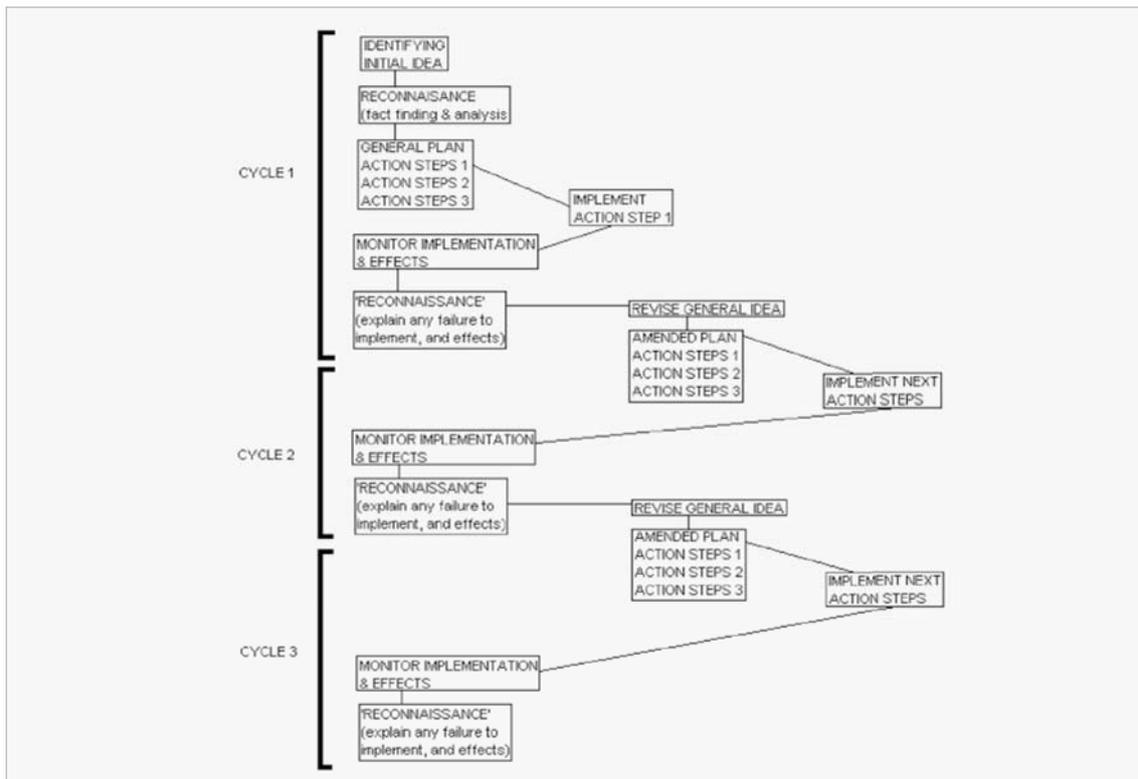


Figure 3.1. Elliott's (1991, p. 71) Expanded model of action research

Schempp, 1987; Tinning, 1987) it has made little impact in the field of research on teaching in physical education and in the recent Handbook of Physical Education (2006) it was unmentioned. Despite this absence, what had been previously written within the subject suggested that it could potentially have a big impact on the way we view teaching in physical education. Kirk (1995) indicated that "action research has begun to emerge as one strategy for improving teaching and learning in physical education" but then warned that it was still "in a very early stage of development." (p. 4). The reasons behind this, Kirk (1995) further suggested, might be the preparation that young physical education teachers receive at university:

"With only a few exceptions, many of our young physical education student teachers experience university programs which provide them with a high level of proficiency in sport and exercise sciences, but which do not develop [them] to be socially critical of the place of physical education in the lives of their students" (p. 5).

Similarly, Tinning (1987) suggested that teachers seldom explored the implications inherent in the ways in which they taught physical education. He described the unchallenged nature of task selection, teacher attention, sexism, and attainment as a small selection of characteristics in physical education that go unchallenged. In foregrounding the potential of action research to move physical education teachers beyond such a utilitarian approach to pedagogy, Tinning (1987) suggested that it would allow teachers to critique the social expectations of teaching in physical education. The unreflective nature of physical education pedagogy as seen by Kirk (1995) and Tinning (1987) seems antithetical to the very notion of education, especially at a time when governments expect students themselves to be reflective.

In suggesting that current research should put the teacher in the position of a creator rather than the acceptor of research, Martinek and Butt (1988) proffered up action research as an alternative in which the teacher is the researcher. They

conclude that because action research is grounded in the participants and their settings it is a “viable instrument for instructional improvement” (Martinek and Butt, 1988, p. 220). Yet they also warn that it will be viable only if everyone – even the most ardent traditionalist – exercises tolerance and allows it to develop as a research paradigm in its own right. The current dearth of published action research projects in the field of physical education suggests that this tolerance or acceptance of action research may not have been forthcoming.

Nearly two decades ago McKay, Gore and Kirk (1990) suggested that physical education’s quest for secure academic credibility resulted in the subject privileging empirical-analytical forms of research. In much the same way as with general and educational action research this “technocratic physical education” (McKay et al., 1990, p. 52), has seen the use of the paradigm being shunned. The very fact that physical education, as a subject, has struggled to be seen as academic has meant that the need to be scientific is ‘doubly true’ within the academic writing of the subject. The findings of Smith, Thurston, Lamb and Green (2007), who noted that “there was a near-universal acceptance among pupils that PE served as a break from other ‘academic’ aspects of school life,” are transferable to the academic community (p. 54). Rolfe (2006) argued, around the issue of trustworthiness, that some areas of the academic community sought a rigorousness that conformed to the expectations of what they called ‘hard’ science. This demand for rigour has, I believe, meant that action research has been eschewed in physical education, rather than the community appraising each research paradigm or individual study on its own merits.

In contrast, my sustained use action research over nearly a decade (see Casey, et al., 2009; Casey and Dyson, 2009; Casey, 2010a, b, c) led to significant understanding of both traditional and innovative practice in physical education. More importantly in allowed me to understand what it meant to engage in research as a teacher and how teaching of physical education could be fundamen-

tally changed, and I believe enhanced. Research shows that physical education has been endemically resistant to change; indeed many have suggested that, as a subject, we have developed ‘the way’ of teaching which focuses explicitly on the development of sports-specific technique. Over time I have explored my desire to explain why the academic call to change the way physical education is taught in schools has been stonewalled by practitioners. Through my attempts to redefine and reconfigure both the pedagogy that I used and the curricula that I designed as a teacher of physical education I tried to show what such a change in practice might entail.

Employing a practitioner research methodology, I explore the previously under-considered processes of teacher change in the use of innovative, models-based practices, specifically around my teaching at a selective grammar school in England. To counter concerns around authenticity in teacher-led research I utilise Brookfield’s (1995) four lenses of reflective practice, my autobiography, my students’ eyes, my colleagues’ experiences, and the theoretical literature.

My findings can be collated into three areas. The first examined the deprivatisation of my teaching through the use of colleague and pupil observations, and highlights the manner in which I constructed a ‘changed’ pedagogy around both my observers’ and my own experiences. The second investigated the obstacles that school placed in the way of pedagogical change and the efforts required to overcome these hindrances. The third explored my position as a practitioner-researcher and how my interaction with theory and practice furthered both my willingness and ability to change. I concluded from these studies that the position of the teacher-as-researcher is relevant to understanding why alternative pedagogies have remained as innovations, and the factors that both help and hinder any actualisation of change.

Radical Reform in Physical Education

Charles Darwin believed that “it is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to chan-

ge." If the many academics in physical education are right and we are faced with three realistic alternative futures, then it would be unforgivable if we allowed indifference or misunderstanding to spell the end of our subject. Instead, we need to acknowledge that physical education, in its current form, is not achieving the aims we expect of it or the aims that its consumers (children, parents and governments) want from it.

Instead we need to consider a new vision for the future of physical education. This future cannot be allowed to come solely from those in government (or their agents) - because top-down initiatives are incapable of envisioning, delivering or sustaining meaningful curriculum reform. Instead it needs to come through collaboration between curriculum designers and teachers. These collaborations are vital if we are going to oversee the radical reforms needed if physical education is going to survive in our schools.

Many in physical education believe that models-based practices such as Sport Education, Cooperative Learning, and Teaching Games for Understanding are the future of physical education. However, we do not yet fully understand how these approaches are implemented in schools and the impact that they have on teachers, students and learning. A large (and ever growing) body of research suggests that teachers and students alike get a lot from these approaches to teaching but without the voices of teachers and their inclusion as 'key players' in curricular reform then these approaches seem destined to remain as innovations.

Practitioner research offers the opportunity for individual teachers to understand the impact

that their teaching has on their students. Furthermore, it allows them to gather evidence to support or discount the larger claims about curricula reform emerging in the literature base of our subject. Finally it allows them to take an idea and see what results their teaching achieves. At the University of Bedfordshire we have created a Practitioner Research Network for teachers (both local and overseas) at www.peprn.com in an effort to create a safe environment where physical education teachers can learn about, try out and discuss their own practitioner research endeavours. It is only at the point of fusion between top-down and bottom-up ideas (i.e. teacher-led and university supported) that meaningful and sustainable curriculum reform can occur. Practitioner research is a means of developing a physical education future that is both meaningful and recognisable and which includes teachers and students in each others' learning and development.

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