

The physical education and sport premium: Social justice, autonomy and school sport policy in England

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Abstract

Since the global economic recession, public services in the UK have badly affected by austerity measures. However, whilst public services, including health, defence and the police faced significant cuts to their budgets, Primary Physical Education in England has actually received additional ring-fenced funding through the Physical Education and Sport Premium since 2013. This funding is provided directly to schools, and though the Department for Education provides guidance on how the Premium might be spent, schools effectively have autonomy to spend it in ways that they believe will best meet the needs of their learners and wider stakeholders. Utilising a mixed method approach involving analysing published material on school websites and semi-structured interviews with primary school and local authority staff, the aim of this article is to critically analyse how primary schools across a borough in the North West of England are spending the Premium. Our analysis is underpinned by principles of social justice, which we interpret as a marker for concerns to do with fairness, equality, exclusion, discrimination, power differentials and privilege. We argue that, in large part due to the autonomy of implementation, the Physical Education and Sport Premium has failed to realise its inherent social justice agenda, in large part because investment in PE and school sport is unequal and too heavily dependent on the value placed upon it by individual schools. It is our contention therefore, that equal opportunities will remain unobtainable if the central tenets of the reproduction of privilege are allowed to remain uncontested.

Keywords: (In)equality, Physical Education and Sport Premium, Primary Education, Social justice, sport policy

Introduction

The outcome of the 2010 general election in the United Kingdom (UK) which followed the global economic crash of 2008 was the formation of a coalition government between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties (henceforth 'the Coalition'). In the immediate periods following, the Coalition adopted a series of austerity measures (Parnell et al 2017), which were applied across the public sector. The rationale for policy change through economic constraint was that cuts to public services were required in order to reduce the burden of debt inherited from the previous Labour government (Widdop et al 2018).

However, whilst public services, including health, defence and the police faced significant cuts to their budgets, Primary Physical Education (PPE) in England has been provided with additional ring-fenced funding through the Physical Education and Sport Premium (PESP) since 2013¹. Through a decentralised approach to policy implementation, funding is provided directly to schools who have the autonomy to spend it in ways that they believe will best meet the needs of their learners and wider stakeholders (Lindsey 2018). The intention is that schools use the funding to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of Physical Education (PE) and school sport they provide (DfE 2018). Despite this autonomy, the Department for Education (DfE) has published suggestions on how this money ought to be invested. Suggestions include the hiring of sports coaches to work with teachers and provide existing staff with training or resources to help their delivery. Schools are also required to comply with guidelines from the DfE to ensure their spending is transparent. In addition, schools are expected to achieve a series of government indicators, which are:

1. The engagement of all pupils in regular physical activity – 60 minutes per day of which at least 30 minutes should be in school;
2. The profile of PE and sport is raised across the school as a tool for whole-school improvement;
3. Increased confidence, knowledge and skills of all staff in teaching PE and sport;
4. Broader experience of a range of sports and activities offered to all pupils;
5. Increased participation in competitive sport. (DfE, 2018)

The purpose of these indicators is to guide schools in how to enhance provision that is already offered, as well as developing a sustainable model that will build capacity and expertise in PE and sport-related activities within schools (DfE 2018).

It is worth highlighting some further detail on the context surrounding schools and their imperative to achieve these indicators. For instance, the PESP policy has been introduced at a time when there are three significant and connected developments in policy and practice within PPE in England. Firstly, a new curriculum was introduced in 2014 with the intention of simplifying content. This change means the curriculum is arguably less prescriptive; leaving teachers with greater agency to interpret content to best fit their areas of comfort and specialism. This development was largely due to many primary school teachers lacking specialist knowledge of PE (Ofsted 2013). Secondly, and aligned to this is the increasing tendency to outsource services, such as the use of external organisations to deliver both PE and extra curricula school sport

(Griggs 2016). Finally, there is ambiguity over the expectation of delivery hours of curriculum PE. In October 2010, the Coalition ended the requirements of the former Labour Government's Physical Education and Sport Strategy that aimed to increase the percentage of school children in England participating in two hours of PE each week. This included ending the requirement for schools to report how much time students spent doing PE. Schools were however, encouraged to maintain, as a minimum, the current levels of provision for PE and sport each week (DfE 2010). The lack of specific guidance over the new curriculum, staffing and delivery time expectations creates a set of circumstances where schools are expected to navigate a complex landscape, but in many instances, lacking the necessary knowledge and experience to do so autonomously. Inevitably, some schools are far better placed to undertake this successfully than others.

The aim of this article is to critically analyse how primary schools across a borough in the North West of England are spending the PESP and whether they are conforming to the above mentioned indicators. Taken together, the intention is to determine how this decentralised approach, through increased autonomy, is impacting how PE and school sport is delivered in primary schools. Our analysis is underpinned by a social justice lens. Indeed, we begin the paper by briefly outlining our conceptualisation of social justice. Next we provide some context of the current education system in England, recent policy developments and their impact. We then detail our methodology, before the results are presented, discussed and analysed.

Social justice in sport, physical activity and PE

In this paper we take social justice as a marker for concerns to do with fairness, equality, exclusion, discrimination, power differentials and privilege. Social justice research is more than simply assessing the existence of disadvantage, it is about embedding and assessing research influence and impact (Authors 2017). There may well be legislation in place (for example, The Equality Act (2010) in the UK) designed to redress certain 'imbalances' but there are persistent inequalities on the basis of sociocultural and economic difference. Clearly, conceptualisations of social justice differ, but what they share is a recognition of inequality and a belief that inequality fundamentally does matter and is not commensurate with a socially just society.

According to Miller (2005) social justice is about ensuring that 'each person gets a fair share of the benefits, and carries a fair share of the responsibilities, of living together in a community ... Social justice tells us how different types of goods and bads should be distributed across a society' (pp.3-5). Giving people what is due to them is a matter of giving them what they are entitled to. Therefore, 'in the round, social justice concerns the duties that the members of society owe to each other' (Wetherly et al 2017, p.16). The mechanism for securing the rights entailed by social justice is the state, which 'is justified in making sure that people carry out their duties to one another' (Swift 2014, p.15). Related to this, Barry (2005, p.17) supposes social justice to be concerned with 'life chances' as a question of 'the distribution of rights, opportunities and resources'. Indeed, for Sandel (2009, p.19), 'to ask whether a society is just is to ask how it distributes the things we prize – income and wealth, duties and rights, powers

and opportunities, offices and honours'. Hence, social justice may also be referred to as distributive justice (Fraser 1998).

In particular, we find Rawls' *A theory of justice* (2009[1971]) a useful lens for understanding the extent to which PESP policy is promoting fundamental ideas of social justice. Rawls claims we all have a rational interest in 'primary goods' (liberties, opportunities, wealth, income, self-respect) since these are the basis for individuals to participate in society and pursue any conception of the 'good life'. Rawls' conception of social justice seeks to remedy disadvantage through advocating for fairer distribution of opportunities and resources. It also seeks to define what is *both* just and unjust. Indeed, it is important to stress that a focus on social justice must be coupled with the belief in the existence of 'injustice', before change can occur.

Rawls (1993) identified two propositions that incorporate three principles of justice:

1. Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties. In this scheme, the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: (a) They are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and (b) they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. (pp.5-6)

Rawls' two principles of justice are aligned with egalitarian conceptions of justice where the intention is to advocate, promote and eventually resolve inequality. The first principle supposes that social justice is concerned with equality in human rights. The second principle applies to the distribution of wealth and the way organisations and institutions are designed to reinforce authority and responsibility. Principle 2b is often referred to independently as the 'difference principle'. The difference principle balances equity and efficiency insofar as inequality is justified only to the extent that higher rewards for those at the top provide incentives for greater efficiency that makes the poorest better off. Rawls' approach has dominated subsequent discussions of social justice. For example, Miller (2005) proposes four principles of social justice that partly echo Rawls: equal citizenship; the social minimum; equality of opportunity; and fair distribution. Conceived in this way, a just society is one in which: people are free to live as they choose; have equal opportunities to compete for advantage, through attaining positions that confer unequal rewards; and, unequal rewards are permitted, only to the extent that they comply with a principle of fair distribution (Fraser 1998).

Crucially therefore, social institutions and systems, such as education and education policy, need to be designed to ensure that access to knowledge, skills and resources is both enabling and inclusive. If we accept these positions, the social system is not beyond human interference. Thus, through designing and implementing policy that creates conditions for reciprocity, the principle of mutual benefit is achievable.

Context

The English education 'system'

Historically the education 'system' in England has been disparate, in that it involves the commingling of a number of different organisations, including organised religion, the state, individuals and independent ('private') schools. This disparity remains today, with a variety of different schools across the education system including grammar schools, free schools and academies (Ball, 2018). The variety of schooling options available, to some extent, creates choice for parents/guardians and pupils (Allen et al 2014), which similarly creates the condition for schools to operate with de-regulated autonomy. This approach to education has been a conscious and progressive decision made by the previous Labour (1997-2010) and Coalition (2010-2015) governments, and has been carried on under the current Conservative government. The most significant outcome of this approach has been the way in which education policy has become progressively centralised and controlled through national government (Ball 2018). A good illustration of this centralisation was evident in the recent education White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, which stated that all schools were required to be converted into academies by 2022 (DFE 2016). The management of schools will be, and in many instances, has already been shifted from local authorities² to centrally-funded Multi Academy Trusts.³ The PESP is a reflection of the current approach to education within England. It is centrally-funded, promotes increased choice and provides autonomy; largely in order to reduce bureaucracy. Having provided a background to the current English education landscape we now intend to critically explore how PE and school sport policy has evolved within this complex and disparate system since the election of the Labour Government in 1997.

Primary Physical Education Policy 1997-2018

The role and purpose of PE and school sport in England evolved substantially under the Labour government (1997-2005). Of particular note was the introduction of a hierarchical, top down and centralised approach to policy development (Goodwin and Grix 2011) in which, via considerable investment from central government, a new and extensive infrastructure for PE and school sport was created (Jung et al 2016). During this time, numerous policy initiatives were implemented that made PE and school sport a key aspect of policy across government departments of health, education and sport. Moreover, in an attempt to build stronger links across communities, during their time in power, Labour developed a number of partnerships between schools, local businesses, charities and voluntary groups (Wright 2012). This approach received support from officials at the highest level of government who advocated that PE and school sport would play a significant role in helping government to achieve its broader (non-sport) social policy goals, such as increased educational attainment, enhanced social cohesion and, to a lesser extent, health (Lindsey 2018; Authors 2018).

Numerous policy documents, including *A Sporting Future for All* (2000) were introduced and applied over a relatively short period of time, prompting significant changes across PE and school sport. Of note, *A Sporting Future for All* introduced the role of School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCo)

with the appointment of 600 nationwide in communities of greatest need. Among other things, it was the role of the SCo to create opportunities for young people to compete regularly for their school and to take part in a wide range of sports and physical activities, both within schools and through external opportunities, for example, through building links and partnerships with local sports clubs. This was reinforced through the 2003 Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy and the introduction of School Sport Partnerships (SSP). According to Lindsey (2018) the SSP were identified as the key universal and standardised organisational model for implementation of Labour's PE and school sport policy. The PESSCL strategy was established to implement a national infrastructure and to set up a series of partnerships between primary and secondary schools, with the ultimate intention of increasing the quality and quantity of PE and sport opportunities for young people nationally (Mackintosh 2012; Foster 2015). The key objectives were strategic planning, school and community links, promoting competitive sport and raising standards (Lindsey, 2018). Further to this was the expectation that the number of 5-16-year-olds who spend a minimum of two hours per week attending high-quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum would increase to 75% (Ofsted 2004).

In 2008 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published *Playing to Win: a New Era for Sport*. This involved the transition from the PESSCL strategy to the new PE and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP). This required the SSPs to develop new administrative and structural arrangements to create opportunities for young people to engage in a further three hours of PE and sporting activity per week (Phillpots 2013). Whilst there was the intention that PE and school sport would enable the government to address broader social aims, sport (and specifically, competitive sport) was the dominant discourse within PESSCL and PESSYP respectively. The belief was that focusing on competitive sport (rather than participation and physical activity per se) would lead to improved health, citizenship, increased (and lifelong) participation and moreover, contribute to the Olympic legacy from London 2012 (Jung et al 2016).

Ultimately however, despite noble objectives, a change in Government ensured the strategy struggled to gain traction. These existing policies were criticised as overly bureaucratic and were swiftly removed by the Coalition government. The cost of these partnerships - £2.4 billion over seven years - was cited as the main rationale, with funding finally being removed in 2012. At any time, this would have been a controversial move by the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, but was all the more controversial given that this was an Olympic year, and England was the host. Indeed, the Olympics provided a context for much needed debate about the role and significance of school sport (see Lindsey 2018 for a detailed discussion). In 2013, an Office for Standards in Education review of PESS recommended that:

the Department for Education considers devising a new national strategy for PE and school sport that builds on the successes of school sport partnerships and enables schools to make a major contribution to the sporting legacy left by the 2012 Olympic Games. (Cited in Lindsey 2018, p.10)

The new strategy referred to, i.e., the PESP, was introduced in April 2013. This policy represented a significant shift in focus towards primary education, and funding was on a year-by-year basis. Initially, a lump sum of £150 million – spread across the Department for Education (£80m), Department for Health (£60m) and DCMS (£10m) - was ring-fenced. On average, this equated to £9250 per primary school with all funding provided directly from central government (Lindsey 2018). Following the 2015 general election, then-Prime Minister, David Cameron announced that funding would be available on a longer-term basis until 2020. In 2016, schools were given a further boost by the Conservative government which committed to double PESP funding for the 2017/18 school year. Under this proposal, schools would now receive between £17,000 and £21,000, depending on pupil numbers. This provided stability for schools for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrated a commitment from government that PE and sport are important; and secondly, funding was now higher, in actual cash terms at least, than for all but four years through Labour's period in government (ibid.).

However, the increase in funding, and a more coherent policy did not necessarily lead to consistent application of the policy. Indeed, while the focus of PESP on primary school was relatively uncontroversial, the devolution of spending decisions to individual primary schools was certainly more contentious because it left government with little central influence over its implementation (Lindsey 2018). To illustrate, Jones and Green (2017) stated that, as a result of the autonomy afforded to schools, PPE lessons are being taught by one or a combination of three different staffing approaches: via generalist classroom teachers; specialist PPE teachers; and/or sports coaches that are generally outsourced from commercial providers. This has created a situation where the traditional model of primary teaching, where the teacher delivers all subjects, has evolved, and the teaching of PPE has become an exception to the rule. Alongside this, Jess et al (2016) argue that primary school teachers lack the knowledge and skills associated with PE curriculum development. On the whole, primary school teachers in England are not subject specialists; they are generalists and there are significant concerns around the lack of professional development opportunities in PPE for teachers during their initial teacher training (Harris et al 2012).

This lack of experience and subject knowledge increases the likelihood of disparity and inequality between schools and their students. Such disparity impacts on pupil experiences through an unfair distribution of resources and a lack of access to knowledge and skills. Clearly, the complexity of local contexts and the factors that affect the identities, beliefs and practices of individual schools and teachers prevents the application of homogenous policy discourses (Wright 2012). Moreover, policy impact is highly contextual and depends on a variety of internal and external factors that policies are unlikely to account for (Bailey 2005). Thus, the development and application of PE and school sport remains complex (Jung et al., 2016). Taking these considerations into account the main challenge for schools, with regard to PESP policy, was whether their increased autonomy would enable them to challenge the disparate and inequitable elements of provision and experience, such as the staffing of PE, or whether existing inequalities were reinforced and/or even, exacerbated.

Methods

There have been some empirical studies on the consequences of PE and school sport policies (e.g., Griggs 2016, 2018; Jones and Green 2017; Lindsey 2018), however, the relative absence of studies using primary data weakens our overarching understanding of PE and school sport policies. The method employed in this paper is similar to that of Griggs (2016 2018). Griggs undertook a case study of the West Midlands of England to determine how primary schools were spending their PESP. Data were sourced directly from school websites. Schools are required to publish details of how they spend the PESP funding; details of which now must include the following:

- The amount of premium received;
- A full breakdown of how it has been spent (or will be spent);
- The impact the school has seen on pupils' PE and sport participation and attainment;
- How the improvements will be sustainable in the future. (DfE, 2018)

Following this initial quantitative study, Griggs (2018) undertook a further qualitative study focusing on collecting data through semi-structured interviews with school leaders in the same West Midlands location. This article has adopted the same mixed method approach involving an initial quantitative examination of what schools were spending their PESP on. Applying a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods offered creative possibilities for addressing the aim of the research without being tied down to a particular philosophical position. This ensures that the analysis is informed by multiple and diverse perspectives, strengthening the inferences that can be made from across the data (Sammons et al 2005).

Data Collection

This paper is underpinned by data collected in Lancashire, a county located in the North West of England, and well known for its complex community landscape (Authors 2018). From an economic perspective, the borough providing the focus of this research was ranked 12th of all local authorities in England and Wales on the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation.⁴ At the time of writing, within the borough 13.6% of the population were in fuel poverty and wages were 18% lower than the national average. In total 10.3% of the population were unemployed, with 20.7% claiming some form of working age benefit, 31.2% of the population were economically inactive and 22% of children were living in low-income families. Furthermore, 21% of school-age children received free school meals and only 56% of children in the early year's foundation stage (ages 0-5) were deemed to have a 'good' level of development (the third lowest proportion in England). The health of people within the borough also lagged behind the England average on a range of indicators. In Year 6 (ages 10-11), 18.6% of children were classified as obese. The opposite was true in other year groups. The Reception class (ages 4-5) rate of 2.1% of children being underweight was the 8th highest out of 144 upper-tier local authorities in England, and the Year 6 rate of 3.1% was the highest of all (BwD 2013). The statistics highlighted above help to explain the social and economic issues faced by young people and their families and provide a rationale for the choice of borough for this research.

Within the borough there are 56 primary schools. Of these, 49 are still run by the local authority and of which 22 are non-denominational and 27 are faith schools. The remaining seven schools are academies. 46 schools provided data that were eligible for this study, with the other 10 not conforming to regulations about publishing data on their website. Data were collected to determine spending on the PESP for the year 2016/17. These data highlighted 15 different areas of expenditure, including the utilisation of external sport coaching companies, equipment, Continued Professional Development (CPD) and facilities. Alongside this an analysis of further indicators, including type of school (e.g., faith, non-denominational or academy/free) and location of school (based on National Decile Data) was undertaken.⁵ These further tests on national decile, type of school etc., highlighted that these indicators had no significant impact upon spending decisions within the schools. Whilst these data showed a number of differences in the approaches of schools over how funding was spent, the data could only go so far in terms of developing our understanding of the rationale behind the decision making on PESP spending in each school. There was therefore, a need for further, in-depth qualitative analysis to determine the reasons underpinning spending decisions.

Qualitative data were collected in two ways. Firstly, from written statements on school websites. This information is provided to meet the DfE requirement for schools to make public their spending of the PESP in relation to the Government's key indicators. A template document is provided for schools by the Association for Physical Education (AfPE)⁶ to ensure that schools provide information aligned to benchmarks and to the expected level of detail. Secondly, Physical Education Subject Leaders (PESL) from four schools within the borough, the School Games Organiser (SGO)⁷ and the Relationship Manager⁸ for the local county council were interviewed to gain a more holistic understanding of the impact of the PESP policy across the borough.

Out of the 46 schools publishing information on their website, eight were initially contacted (through their PESL) to participate in the qualitative research stage. The schools were chosen systematically through the initial analysis of the qualitative information available on the school website. Four schools were selected due to the high standard of their recording and presentation of data, while another four were selected based on their lack of recording or poor presentation. Following some toing and froing, four Physical Education Subject Leaders (two from each group) eventually agreed to take part in one-to-one qualitative interviews. The aim of these interviews was to develop a further understanding of how PESP was being spent and the impact of these choices on practice. Interviews revolved around the 15 areas of expenditure (see Table 1) identified through the findings of the quantitative analysis. Following data coding, the following key areas were identified as the most significant:

1. Areas of expenditure;
2. Use of external coaches for school sport;
3. Staffing physical education;
4. Continued professional development;
5. The development of competitive sport;
6. Engaging the least active.

Table 1 PESP areas of expenditure

| | Areas of School Expenditure |
|----|--|
| 1 | Formal Continued Professional Development |
| 2 | External sports coaches for the delivery school sport e.g. after school programmes |
| 3 | External sports coaches for the delivery of curriculum physical education |
| 4 | The purchase of new equipment for physical education/school sport |
| 5 | New Facilities e.g. upgrading playground space |
| 6 | Employment of a specialist physical education teacher to deliver curriculum physical education |
| 7 | Employment of a specialist Sports Coach/Apprentice to deliver physical education/school sport |
| 8 | School Games Organiser's Premium Service Level Agreement that provides access to over 44 different competitions in 18 different sports, including SEN festivals and competitions within the borough. |
| 9 | External agencies for school sport to deliver a specific session/programme |
| 10 | External agencies for physical education to deliver a specific session/programme |
| 11 | External agencies for health promotion to deliver a specific session/programme |
| 12 | Travel expenses e.g. trips to inter school competitions |
| 13 | After School clubs that do not require external provision |
| 14 | Technology |
| 15 | Teaching and Learning Resources e.g. Schemes of Work purchased from external organisations |

The remainder of this paper will evaluate these areas in relation to the government's key indicators cited earlier and will be analysed through a social justice lens.

Findings

Areas of Expenditure

Fifteen different areas of PESP funding expenditure were identified through information provided on school websites. The proportion of spending on each area of expenditure was calculated for both individual schools and across all schools. This will be explored in more detail in the discussion, but in order to get a broader picture of the spending across the borough, a more in-depth analysis was required. A Kruskal Wallace Test (Kruskal and Wallace 1952) was used to determine the difference between response and factor. Questions were compared for difference in National Decile: there was no significant difference found between the National Decile score of the school and the percentage of expenditure by question ($P=0.994$, $n=690$, $d.f.=8$). This suggests that National Decile had no impact upon the decision-making of the school to target areas for expenditure. There was also no significant difference found between the type of school and the percentage of expenditure ($P=0.939$, $n=690$, $d.f.=2$). The outcome of these preliminary enquiries suggests that the type of school had no impact upon the choice of expenditure. On the surface, this would suggest that the one size fits all funding approach of the PESP policy has the potential to reduce inequality through increasing opportunities for the least advantaged – i.e., the difference principle (Rawls 2009[1971]). Standardising PESP funding however, is not a silver bullet because it fails to account for other factors which impact upon the life opportunities of young people – e.g., social and family background (Authors, forthcoming). Moreover, even if standardised funding is provided, what is to say it will be implemented in a way that benefits everybody equally?

Figure 1 shows the pooled mean and standard deviation in expenditure across the 15 areas by all 46 schools. A one-way ANOVA was performed to test for differences or discrepancies in the mean expenditure. The test confirmed that there was a significant difference in the mean percentage of expenditure across the areas ($F=9.31$, $P<0.005$, $d.f.=14$, $N=46$). Following this a Tukey's *post hoc* test (Tukey 1949) was performed. Whilst Figure 1 shows a difference in mean percentage of expenditure across the different areas, the error bars show that amongst the schools this expenditure was not uniform. The mean for each question, along with the standard deviation highlights significant differences between areas of expenditure. The greatest differences appear against staffing school sport/after school clubs (2); using external sports coaches/organisations to deliver PE (3); and the employment of specialist PE teachers (6).

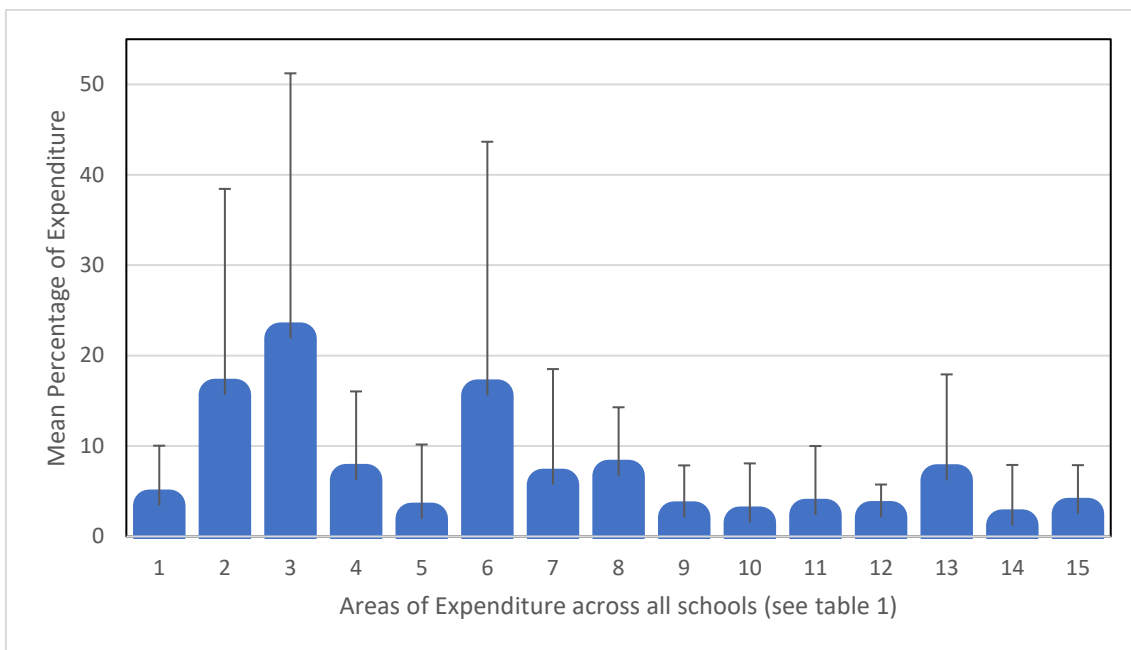


Figure 1: Mean percentage of expenditure with standard deviation error bars across different areas of expenditure

This disparity in spending is further evidenced by the way in which schools develop CPD through the PESP funding. Whilst CPD (1) does not represent a significant area of expenditure, it is exactly this lack of funding that makes it relevant to this study. Sustainable development is a fundamental objective within the DfE’s key indicator 3 with the intention that schools use their PESP funding to increase the confidence, knowledge and skills, and ultimately increase the likelihood of developing PE and school sport in a sustainable way through effective, appropriate and specific CPD.

The sustainable intentions of the PESP policy allows for connections to be made across sectors through partnership working and for schools to engage in creative approaches within a system of development, growth and exploration. The achievement of sustainability is not however, a simple process. Indeed, as highlighted in the 2015 DfE report, *The PE and Sport Premium: an investigation into primary schools*, schools are concerned with their capacity to be sustainable. Working together through successful collaboration is far more likely to create positive experiences of PE and school sport than if schools work individually. This issue is reinforced when there is limited knowledge and experience within a school regarding how to work, and who to work with, in a collaborative way. This lack of knowledge and experience limits a school’s capacity for exploratory growth and therefore reduces their capacity to develop in a sustainable way. This is particularly true of schools that lack the knowledge and experience of PE and school sport through existing resources (i.e., the teachers) at their disposal.

Autonomy can therefore, be a misnomer. It is full of possibilities, but success is dependent on whether or not schools have the required resources and receive appropriate advice, guidance and support. Moreover, in the case of PE, the level of support for it will be highly contingent on

the value placed on it by those overseeing the budget. These issues affect how the PESP policy is implemented in individual schools, as highlighted through the disparity in spending on areas such as the utilisation of external organisations for school sport and the staffing of PE across the borough. Therefore, autonomy contributes to clear differentiation between educational institutions (Hill 2006) which, in turn, impacts student experiences (Bailey 2005).

Use of external coaches for school sport

Beyond the formal PE curriculum, nearly 50% of schools provided evidence on their website that they were investing in the employment of qualified sport coaches to deliver after school clubs, lunchtime activities etc. Examples of this included employing private coaching companies, engaging with charitable trusts associated with a local professional football club, employing the services of the local authority (i.e., the School Games Organiser) and employing individuals in roles such as a School Sport Coordinator. As School 24 stated on its website:

A school sport co-ordinator has been employed to oversee running of all clubs in school, monitor and evaluate participation across school in terms of age, gender etc, organise inter and intra school competitions and support the work of the PESL.

Other schools were utilising resources and expertise already at their disposal without the need to buy in external staff or to employ external agencies to deliver on their behalf. One school for example, noted having an ex-professional sportsman working as a teacher and an experienced coach working as a Teaching and Learning Assistant (TLA). Others were employing a PE apprentice at a substantially lower cost than that of a qualified PE teacher or external coach:

We have employed a sports apprentice in school this year who's in 4 days a week. He works with the staff team, teaching pretty much every afternoon. He is also running breakfast clubs for certain groups to improve the fitness of our children and some after school clubs that we're offering. (Physical Education Subject Leader 2)

Clear positives exist for schools which adopt this approach. As the quotation above attests, some schools were able to increase opportunities for school sport provision by bringing in outside 'help' to deliver a wider range of sports than they were able to provide independently. According to this Relationship Manager:

There is a lot more engagement with local community providers going into schools which then supports your exit routes to local clubs and other providers, the breadth of provision has been fantastic.

The utilisation of external providers is considered to be a suitable use of PESP funding by the DfE, as evident in key indicators 1 and 4 identified above. Whilst engagement with external providers can undoubtedly provide a wider variety of opportunities for pupils, there are concerns over the type of organisations providing this service. A number of interviewees revealed further concerns over who is accessing this provision, what activities are being provided and who is delivering it. The Relationship Manager identified a lack of experience and

concerns around how increased competition between external agencies has led to cost cutting and a decline in the quality of provision available:

It's a competitive market in terms of price. Schools are going to recruit and deploy probably the cheapest work force they can afford. More often than not you will probably see some 18-19 year old who is probably just a football coach. The school won't see that until they have signed a contract with them for a year.

These examples demonstrate that funding is being spent in a multitude of different ways and that decision-making in schools is *ad hoc*, individualised and clearly lacking governance. Further concerns about staffing were identified and it is to these that we now turn.

Staffing Physical Education

According to the quantitative data analysis, 25% of schools invested the PESP funding in the employment of a specialist PE teacher to plan and deliver PE and school sport within their schools. This would range from half a day to two full days a week and was justified on the basis of providing development and learning opportunities to existing teachers. This extract from School 19 was indicative:

We employ a specialist PE teacher to develop our teachers to plan and deliver PE with confidence and to improve their skills in a wide range of sports and activities.

The employment of a 'specialist' PE teacher was achieved either through employing someone externally or adapting someone's role from within the organisation who had a background in sport. Referring to the latter, this is not necessarily done in a formal way through, for example, upskilling staff through CPD or retraining, but through identifying and utilising the specific background and experiences of existing staff. School 41 highlighted their use of a TLA in this way:

The newly appointed TLA in Reception is a qualified FA coach, who coaches at a semi-professional level. She is also qualified to football, netball, tennis and athletics. She will work alongside staff across the school to up skill teachers in the coaching of games and involving girls in competitive sport.

There were also instances of primary schools working in partnership with other schools within their MAT to utilise the expertise of one another's staff. As School 12 illustrated:

We have a PE subject leader (along with PE Staff from our lead secondary school) to support staff including a strategy of team teaching across the school.

The DfE's key indicator 3 states that schools should be using the pupil premium to invest in building the confidence, knowledge and skills of all staff teaching PPE. The DfE identify that one of the ways in which schools can achieve this is through hiring qualified sports coaches to work with teachers. There is a caveat to this however, in that, it is explicitly stated that, when it comes to coaches, the PESP should only be spent on provision that is *in addition* to the minimum requirements of the national curriculum (DFE 2018). Research from this project identified that

50% of schools were operating contrary to this by investing PESP funding to employ external sports coaches to deliver the mandatory PE curriculum. For example, according to School 4:

*Coach *** delivers PE sessions to all of Foundation and Key Stage 1 over three afternoons. Each class receives a weekly PE session from coach *** over three half terms throughout the year.*

It is worth noting that where schools were adopting this approach they were also spending a significant percentage of their overall funding in this area. Indeed, in two instances, schools actually spent the entirety of their premium in this way. While these schools clearly bucked the trend, on average schools were spending around 35% of their overall premium paying external sports coaches to deliver only the minimum PE entitlement. The experience that a student receives at school therefore, is highly dependent on the school they attend and the priorities of those overseeing it. The disparate landscape of provision and indeed, *distribution* of provision highlighted above inevitably leads to differing experiences (Fraser 1998). We should not discount the impact of either positive or negative experiences of sport and PE. Evidence suggests that our early experiences of sport and PE can have a significant impact upon the likelihood of continued participation into adolescence and adulthood (Author, forthcoming).

It was highlighted earlier that the PESP policy has the potential to address issues of inequity through equal funding, but this assumes that each school begins on an equal kilter and therefore, the funding provides the same added value opportunities. However, this is not the case. Irrespective of the equitable distribution of the premium between all schools, inequality persists in terms of existing resources, staff experience, whether or not PE and school sport are a priority, among others within the school. This is an important consideration because principles of justice cannot be applied when the disadvantages of those in one position are outweighed by the greater advantages of those in another (Rawls 2009[1971]). Indeed, according to some in our research, the move towards making schools more autonomous actually led to widening inequality:

What is happening now with every school having their own individual budget and their own individual responsibility is a mismatch of quality, service and delivery across all the schools. (Relationship Manager)

Clearly, from a social justice point of view no one deserves to start their life from either a more favourable or less favourable position. Moreover, whatever our starting point, this should not determine our life chances (Miller 2005; Rawls 2009[1971]). And yet, the reality is that contemporary society continues to privilege some individuals and groups over others. Rawls' difference principle is helpful here. The difference principle is based upon ideas of reciprocity; i.e., a principle of mutual benefit. And from this perspective, education is meant to enable people to engage in and enjoy the culture of their society, and to take a full role within it. Therefore, in the case of PE, where delivery is undertaken by underqualified staff, or where time and opportunities are unequally distributed, the opportunity for enabling young people to take a full role in the culture of sport and physical activity will be limited. Moreover, the opposite is

also true – where some students are privileged - in contexts where there is investment in either buying in expertise or encouraging existing staff to undertake CPD in this area.

Continued Professional Development

Currently, schools must provide evidence on how they are investing resources to increase the confidence, knowledge and skills of staff who have a responsibility for teaching PPE. The DfE's key indicator 3 states that schools should provide existing staff with training or resources to help them teach PE more effectively, yet evidence from our research shows that money being spent on formal CPD by schools in this local authority is often limited and, in some cases, almost non-existent. Indeed, there were only a small number of schools within the borough that could evidence specific development programmes that their teaching staff had attended. Instead, schools tended to make quite general statements about their approach to CPD. Schools 25 and 23 respectively, stated that CPD was offered:

To provide professional development for staff through attending courses, visiting other schools to meet with PE Subject Leaders and share good practice. (School 25)

To enable release time for teachers to work alongside specialist coaches to up-skill them and improve the quality of sport and PE lessons across school. (School 23)

This stated commitment, albeit vague, did not necessarily translate into action. Of the schools examined here less than 5% of their overall funding was spent on CPD. Moreover, only 16 schools identified having invested the PESP on external and accredited CPD. The highest percentage spend on CPD by a single school was 32%. To put this into perspective however, this school was one of only five that invested over 10% of their overall funding in this area. This lack of spending on CPD was highlighted by one of the Physical Education Subject Leaders:

We very rarely send teachers out of school on PE courses now because you don't spend the sports premium money on supply cover, supply cover is a massive cost even if the course is free or paid for. So, we tend to do our CPD in school either during staff meetings or as part of a team teaching focus with the sports coaches. (PESL 3)

Further informal CPD was also provided 'in house' by schools through a combination of peer observation, mentoring, and knowledge transfer. This was generally developed and implemented in partnership with external (though sometimes internal) individuals/organisations and was considered more sustainable than looking outside the school:

Teaching staff's expertise in teaching the subject of PE has been improved due to observing the sports coach within weekly sessions. This will ensure the impact of the funding is sustainable as staff are being up-skilled to lead high-quality PE sessions. (School 39)

Whilst it is potentially beneficial for teachers to observe how qualified sports coaches deliver their sessions, evidence from this study shows that this approach is *ad hoc* and rarely formalised. For example, interviews revealed that coaches do not generally acknowledge having a

responsibility for contributing to the development of teaching staff. Interestingly, according to this Physical Education Sport Leader, teachers do not necessarily consider coaches in this light either:

The teachers are always in the room, the teachers are always engaged in the lesson, the teachers are always part of the lesson, but I do very rarely see them leading the lesson with the coach to the side.

The claim from schools that staff are engaged in sustainable CPD through observing and learning from sports coaches does not therefore, appear to stand up to scrutiny. As this Relationship Manger confirmed:

We have seen a number of companies that are selling sustainability and the up skilling of teachers as a service but we have actually seen little evidence that they are actually doing that.

External partners, such as sports coaches were frequently seen as experts, due to their perceived higher level of sport-specific content knowledge, pedagogical practice and experience of developing specialised sporting performances (Griggs and Ward 2013). We do not dispute the suggestion that teachers may benefit from engaging with and observing sports coaches. However, our concern is that claims made about CPD at this level is very rarely formalised and therefore, any benefits are too heavily dependent upon the ability and the experience of the coach, not to mention the desire of the teacher to learn. In addition, as the accounts above suggest, such benefits may only be coincidental, and are by no means guaranteed because accountability is lacking. Therefore, there is evidently a need for clearer guidance with regard to peer learning between teachers and sports coaches. Defining the nature and expectations of peer learning, alongside an understanding of its limitations will increase the likelihood of teachers developing their knowledge, experience and skills within PE and school sport. The ultimate intention would be to utilise the appropriate elements of peer learning, as a complimentary tool to other more formal approaches, to support the development of CPD in a sustainable way. This issue is further substantiated by one of the Physical Education Subject Leaders:

The trickiest issue there is making sure the team teaching aspect happens in the most effective way it can. Everybody is happy for somebody to come in and teach their PE lesson, they will observe and they will hopefully pick up something but whether that actually turns into practice at the end I think relies on whether it's been team taught.

There was evidence therefore, that in instances where schools in the borough failed to interpret the complexity of the initial situation, and the potential problems caused by the changing funding model, socially unjust outcomes were a consequence. The development of clear and specific principles failed to materialise in a way that ensured equitable approaches to PE and school sport. This was further reinforced through a lack of understanding of the requirements needed to develop teachers' knowledge and competencies appropriately, and an over-reliance on external agencies for the delivery of PPE and the development of teachers. Consequently, we argue here that social justice was not prioritised through the implementation of rational and fair decisions.

The development of competitive sport

The emphasis being placed on increasing participation in competitive sport within schools through key indicator 5 has the potential to yield many benefits, especially for those young people who have the ability and interest in traditional sports currently taught and offered at school. There is a belief among Government and Ofsted that competitive sport helps young people develop into well rounded and successful individuals and that success in sport helps to build school culture and identity (Ofsted 2014). Former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Minister for the Olympics (2010-2012), Jeremy Hunt (2010) stated that:

Competitive sport - whether you win or lose – teaches young people great lessons for life. It encourages teamwork, dedication and striving to be the best that you can be.
(Cited in Collins 2010)

On the whole, evidence from our research suggested that schools were consistently investing in competitive sport. In actuality, 40 schools within the local authority had purchased a Premium Service Level Agreement⁹ through the SGO at the cost of £1800 per year. This investment allows the school access to over 44 different competitions in 18 different sports, including festivals and competitions specific for students with special educational needs. For many of these schools the PESP had enabled them to invest in competitive sport for the first time. As this Physical Education Subject Leader stated:

It has allowed us to take part in competitive sport because it's paid for transport to and from the event. It has enabled us to have access to networks and competitions that we wouldn't normally go to as we wouldn't have been able to afford it.

In instances such as these the PESP is being utilised to stimulate parity among the schools and provide equal opportunities for engagement with competitive sport. Indeed, 35% of schools within the borough had not engaged with competitive sport; either by running competitions between neighbouring schools or increasing pupils' participation in internal competitions. Once again this highlights the unequal distribution of opportunity, in that, a pupil's experiences of competitive sport are ultimately dependent upon the school that they attend and the value placed on competitive sport by those overseeing its provision (Authors, forthcoming). Moreover, it should not be forgotten that not everyone is interested in competing in sport or in taking sport seriously. For some individuals and groups, the challenge is not in developing their skillsets, but in getting them active in the first place.

Engaging the least active

The borough has a significant issue with physical inactivity amongst its young people. Only 12.4% of those aged 5-18 are meeting the recommended levels of physical activity (PHE 2014). There is also a significantly larger proportion of inactive adults (26.2%) compared to the England average (22.2%) (Sport England, 2017). One way of sustainably addressing these issues is through providing opportunities to engage and support the least active by running or extending

school sports clubs, both inside and outside school hours, and formal term time. This would conform to the recommendation of the DfE's key indicator 2 which seeks to raise the profile of sport across individual schools. This school for example, which was among the most proactive in terms of promoting physical activity, referred to having set up a *Change4Life¹⁰ club*:

We have set up a Change4Life club in school for less active children in KS2, this has increased the number of hours of physical activity per week. (School 37)

The majority of schools had invested in the development of after school clubs, but only 7% stated that these clubs were specifically targeting the least active. This point should not be understated because providing opportunities is one thing, but providing targeted and specific opportunities is quite another. The lack of opportunities provided by schools to address those specific needs offers a counter point to the argument that providing schools with autonomy will enable concerns to be addressed at a local level. There was however, some evidence of schools offering subsidies for their after school clubs to help enable the most disadvantaged students within the school to participate in sport and physical activity:

We used a substantial amount of the funding to continue to subsidise after school sports clubs to make it more accessible and affordable to parents. It is intending to support children and parents who feel at a disadvantage. (School 27)

Here we can see the benefit of PESP funding being invested to help support the most disadvantaged who would not ordinarily have been able to participate in these clubs and activities. Within this context, PESP funding is helping to create a social system that is organic and which ensures that an individual's experience is not dependent on their original position within society; creating a conception of reciprocity and a principle of mutual benefit (Fraser 1998; Miller 2005; Rawls 2009[1971]).

Conclusion

Over the last twenty years PE and school sport in England has been granted a more prominent position within political discourse and educational policy. Its position however, remains vulnerable through political change and ideological shifts. Whilst the type of school and its geographical location is not an indicator of how the PESP is being spent there are concerns about how the policy is being applied by schools within the borough. Funding for PESP has never been higher and the focus that the current Conservative government has on provision is welcome. However, increased funding is no guarantee of success. The commitment of Conservative-led governments to decentralise across the education system has been reflected in the removal and weakening of policy instruments that were central to Labour's top-down governance of their universal and standardised PESS system (Lindsey 2018, p.12). Thus, it is argued here that, in large part due to the autonomy of implementation, the PESP policy has failed to realise its inherent social justice agenda, in large part because investment in PE and school sport is unequal and too heavily dependent on the value placed upon it by individual schools.

Evidence from this study shows that there are some schools where the policy has been embraced and where provision is championed, but there are also examples of where there is both a lack of understanding and awareness of how best to utilise it and, moreover, a lack of commitment to social justice principles underpinning the initiative. This is hardly surprising because schools are working within a complex political and multi-sector environment and, in many instances without the knowledge and understanding of how to navigate it successfully. The intention of PESP was to enable schools to be able to address shortfalls in their own provision, but in many instances schools see the funding as an additional problem; that is, creating additional accountability, financial concerns and structural demands. It is argued here that although there are undoubted pockets of good practice within the borough, the PESP has reinforced a postcode lottery, whereby the school you attend determines your experience. PESP has thus, failed to address the disparity of experience and in many instances has reinforced it (Fraser 1998; Miller 2005; Rawls 2009[1971]).

It is our contention therefore, that the goal of creating a socially inclusive world of sport and leisure cannot be simply a response to a particular problem at a particular time. Indeed, as Hylton and Long (2016, p.203) argue in relation to ethnicity, 'In an equal society policies should be devised and administered without recourse to considerations of ethnicity, but that condition will not be achieved without corrective action to remedy the current disadvantage of certain segments of society'. If inequalities are to cease to be of significance, and if promises of social justice, such as 'sport for all' are to be realised, then the analysis of policy needs to be related to broader relations of power in the culture of both sport and society. Equal opportunities will remain unobtainable if the central tenets of the reproduction of privilege are allowed to remain uncontested (Fraser 1998; Miller 2005; Rawls 2009[1971]). Policy requires one basic principle: that those who create it are prepared to live with the consequences of outcomes if it was they who were subject to the injustice.

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¹ This policy only applies to England due to different educational policies through devolved powers that exist within the three other countries of the UK.

² An administrative body in local government who traditionally had responsibility for running education services.

³ A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools. A group of schools form a single MAT which has overarching responsibility for their governance.

⁴ The *Index of Multiple Deprivation* 2015 is the official measure of relative *deprivation* for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England.

⁵ National deciles of area deprivation are created through ranking small geographical populations known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) based on their deprivation score.

⁶ The Association for Physical Education is the only representative PE Subject Association in the UK.

⁷ School Games Organisers support the delivery of three distinct levels of competition ranging from intra - inter school activity to county/national finals.

⁸ Based within the County Sport Partnership with a responsibility for building relationships with a variety of groups and organisations to try to increase the number of sport and physical activity opportunities.

⁹ School Games Organiser encourage schools to contribute the sum of £1800.00 into a pot. The SGO then develops competitions, CPD opportunities and tournaments for those schools to access.

¹⁰ Change4Life is a Public Health England initiative which aims to help family's lead healthier lives by eating well and moving more. The Change4Life Zone is an online resource designed for primary school teachers and provides curriculum linked materials and inspiration to help teach young people about healthy eating and staying active (Public Health England, no date).