In many countries in the Anglophone world, school-based physical education (PE) programmes have in recent years become an important policy conduit for emphasising the benefits of physically active lifestyles and for establishing wider connections with healthy behaviours and personal well-being (see, for example, Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2012; New Zealand Curriculum Online, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2006). This policy prioritization has frequently arisen due to concerns (both economic and social) about low participation levels and increases in the number of overweight children (World Health Organization, 2014). However, this position may not last indefinitely, and matters are complicated further by the tendency of policy nowadays to pronounce on aspirations and outcomes with very little elaboration on the in-between implementation details surrounding curriculum planning and pedagogical practices (Priestley & Biesta, 2013). Furthermore, policies, planning and practices in fitness and physical activity have often been poorly thought out; as evident by the overemphasis on performative cultures, energy expenditure metrics, health surveillance and physical fitness testing (Cale, Harris & Chen, 2012). This makes it necessary for those with a responsibility for developing connections between fitness and physical activity and PE to consider how better quality learning and teaching can be achieved, and of how specifically pupils can connect their school-based experiences with their out-of-school interests and active participation goals. In short, how can the qualities of pupils’ learning experiences achieve a wider range of outcomes which collectively contribute not only to fitness and physical activity gains but demonstrate as well that PE has a clear educational and societal relevance? Progress on this basis might go some way to overcoming one major concern, namely that as Kirk (2013, p. 974) notes, physical educators to date have “never achieved their most cherished aspiration, that young people would, as a result of their physical education experience, engage in lifelong physical activity”.

Achieving these ambitions is likely to be dependent upon recognising from the outset the tensions, complexities, contradictions and messiness that regularly accompany reviews of schooling arrangements, the pedagogical concerns of teachers and wider health and educational priorities (Ball & Junemann, 2012). In addition, government fears of increased childhood obesity levels often fail to acknowledge that pupils can be quite manipulative in their relationships with health and wellbeing, and physical activity knowledge and practices. For example, McDermott (2012) found in a fitness-based programme in Canada that young pupils sought to circumvent the intended instrumental focus on increased physical activity and replace it...
with an emphasis on the more intrinsic benefits of fun and enjoyment. Furthermore, there has been variable progress in PE's position within curriculum and teacher education arrangements worldwide. McKenzie and Lounsbery (2009) note the lack of time and impact in many United States of America (USA) programmes and Pope (2013) bemoans the rationalisation of teacher education programmes in New Zealand and the impact this is likely to have on pupils' learning experiences. Furthermore, Harris (2013) argues that teacher education programmes insufficiently prepare student teachers with the knowledge, perceptions and experiences necessary to promote healthy active lifestyles.

However, in other countries there have been good gains made since the turn of the twentieth century, e.g. in Scotland plans to markedly increase the number of teachers and the amount of curriculum time for PE for all pupils between 3 and 18 years have largely been met (Scottish Government, 2014). This enhanced policy position reflects an expectation that it is vital to recognise PE's contribution to a greater extent than previously as PE is central to a balanced education and for its capacity to be a key influence in bringing about the cultural change of attitude towards healthy living which is required. This has occurred despite policy ambitions generally advocating an increase in teacher autonomy and school-based decision-making. Thus, PE has recently moved from having a stable but rather peripheral curriculum role to occupying a position as the pivotal component of health and wellbeing. This position is supported by a Scottish Government pledge to double curriculum time (a minimum of two hours per week); the only specified timetable requirement which exists across the entirety of the curriculum (Thorburn, Jess & Atencio, 2011).

**Aims of the chapter**

Given these multi-various influences, the chapter aims to review various theoretical and practical issues that academics and teachers (as active curriculum decision-makers) might wish to review. If successful, the chapter might play a small part in informing future theory and practice, and also overcome some of the problems of being reliant on taken for granted assumptions and/or narrowly drawn empirical evidence. Accordingly, the chapter aims to offer a forward thinking account of the possibilities for fitness and physical activity; one that gets beyond being burdened by a deficit model of curriculum planning where PE is considered as being something of a corrective for alleviating modern societal excesses. As such, the chapter is designed around considering what fitness and physical activity gains it is possible to realistically achieve as part of a liberal minded PE. The context of fitness and physical activity discussed is one which encourages integrated and holistic learning, and is also one where there is a commitment to pupils' participation being voluntary (or at least voluntary in spirit). Thus, even though ‘compulsory’ curriculum arrangements are the norm in many countries this should not constrain the ways in which pupils’ learning experiences are designed and taught. Consequently, there is an expectation in what follows that through high quality learning and teaching, pupils will be able to take on increased responsibility for their activity futures and build a perspective on participation that considers fitness and physical activity as part of PE to be an essentially valuable endeavour which is worthy of sustained commitment.

**Current challenges for physical education**

It is well-documented that PE has often been beset by conceptually confused aims and relatively unadventurous policy making (Penney, 2008). This can result in inflexible practices based
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around yearly repetitions of multi-activity programmes where frequent changes of activity are used to try to secure and retain pupils’ interest (Kirk, 2013). Kirk’s (2010) futures critique also indicates a series of pedagogical self-inflicted mistakes; most notably an over-reliance on dislocated introductory-level teaching approaches which do little to nurture pupils’ growth as teaching is based on limited technique-led approaches rather than on holistic and integrated approaches. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the contribution of PE continues to be open to some doubt and uncertainty with questions continuing over how subject aims and values connect with various health, sport and educational priorities. From a health perspective, Gard (2008) considers that obesity concerns are in danger of distorting educational values and similarly Penney (2008) advises that for PE to align itself too closely with a health-based remit may prove ill-advised. From a sporting perspective, there is also an expectation that major events (e.g. the Olympic Games) will yield a participation dividend among school-age pupils. However, political sentiments and policy connections have often been vague and confused on this matter, and have at times insensitively criticised certain activities and cultural contexts (Thorburn, 2014). Furthermore, fears continue about the relative educational value of PE, e.g. Barrow (2008, pp. 274–275) in a preliminary discussion of education and the body argues that:

Faced with limited resources, for example, a case might be made for appointing a history teacher rather than a PE teacher. For it is at least arguable that in practice most children will not receive an education without the formal apparatus of schooling, whereas bodily fitness, bodily participation in sport and the like could be relatively easily attained and maintained with or without a school system.

As will be discussed later, the main point raised by Barrow (2008) about lack of educational worthiness is of considerable concern at present given the increasingly mixed market schooling arrangements which now support PE provision (Evans & Davies, 2014, see also Penney & Mitchell, Chapter 11). At this stage however the sum of the concerns raised in this brief overview highlight the need to ensure that being physically educated involves being experienced in practical learning, which is filled with clear personal and educational relevance and where improved levels of fitness and physical activity are one among many of the benefits of active participation (Wellard, 2012).

**Conceptual possibilities for fitness and physical activity**

Despite the concerns raised there may be less need than anticipated for academics and teachers to be unduly gloomy about PE futures; most notably because in many countries holistic and child-centred curriculum imperatives offer promising conceptual and methodological opportunities for PE. On this basis, different framework (or models-based) ideas are later reviewed: all of which aim to discuss conceptualisations of PE that particularly emphasise fitness and physical activity in the context of a holistic and child-centred focused curriculum, where personalised (and often reflective) experiences are a key contributor to the realisation of educational aims. This latter point matters a great deal when considering the positioning of fitness and physical activity in education. For while most academics and teachers agree that schools should have some form of concern for physical activity this is a long way short of agreeing that fitness and physical activity is of educational value and worthy of a curriculum place relative to other activities and subjects. In fact, it could be argued (as some have, e.g. Barrow, 2008) that fitness and physical activity is just one in a long line of life skills and aspects of socialising that can contribute to schooling but are not worthy of being considered
educational; as fitness and physical activity do not sufficiently contribute to the development of understanding. Faced with these concerns there are really three main responses possible: first, accept that practical-based fitness and physical activity lessons are only ever likely to be of peripheral importance in schools (i.e. minimal time; modest status). There has in the past been some recognition (if not advocacy) that this position may not be as bad as anticipated for PE (see, for example, Carr, 1997). However, in light of the current fissure between high levels of public and political support for PE but low levels of support at national, state and local government level (McCullick, 2013) this seems an unwise course to recommend. Second, courses could be designed which specifically highlight the areas of knowledge in fitness and physical activity that pupils need to understand more about. However, as evidence from examinations awards in PE has highlighted, understanding the key concepts of fitness and physical activity has frequently led to PE being studied rather than experienced. As Casey and O’Donovan (2013, p. 17) note “in positioning PE as a legitimate sibling of other academic subjects … physical educators dismissed the pedagogical approaches that worked well in practical PE lessons and instead embraced a traditional approach to teaching pupils in classrooms”. Therefore, the knowledge-led approach, tainted as it is often by the adverse effects of a high-stakes testing mindset (McCullick, 2013), is problematic as well. Thorburn (2007) found, for example, in senior school examination awards in England and Wales that the emphasis on theoretical propositional knowledge was much greater than that afforded to practical knowledge. This added to the difficulties of teachers blending theory and practice when trying to create rich learning environments. Lastly, lessons, courses or programmes could be designed in fitness and physical activity which combine high levels of practical learning which merge a first-person perspective on experiences with engagement with knowledge-led imperatives which focus on understanding better how the body works and moves. It is developments based on this option which are now considered.

Strengths-based approaches

Recently, there has been a move across a range of public health services to utilise asset (or strengths)-based approaches as a more effective way of helping people to identify the factors which enhance their lives (Scottish Government, 2012). Strengths in this respect are not considered as an aspect of fitness (e.g. muscular endurance) but rather as part of something which is connected and informed by salutogenic health theory (Antonovsky, 1996). Strengths-based approaches are a pivotal part (along with health literacy; educative outcomes; learning in, about and through movement and critical inquiry) of the rationale for health and PE in the draft Australian curriculum proposals (ACARA, 2012). In a PE context, the emphasis with strength-based approaches is on highlighting positive messages about healthy lifestyles rather than dwelling on deficit (or biomedical or pathogenic) influences (McCuaig, Quennerstedt & Macdonald, 2013). As such, policy in the current Australian context aims to move beyond a restrictive focus on health as something which you either have or have not to varying degrees to a futures-focus where fitness and physical activity is a helpful contributor to achieving a range of life goals. Pedagogically, strength-based approaches would be reflected in lessons which emphasise pupil’s self-confidence, self-awareness and empathy for others (Quennerstedt, 2011). However, as McCuaig et al. (2013) note, achieving your goals does not involve reaching a fixed end point; rather it is part of something which is much more dynamic: a lifelong learning process or journey.

Going forward on this basis requires considering how health-informed strength-based ideas could articulate with learner-centred holistic priorities such as developing personal growth
and improving social interaction. In this respect, revisiting the theorising of John Dewey might help given the prominence of Dewey’s writings in discussions on the child and the curriculum (Dewey, 1902), democracy and social justice in education (Dewey, 1916) and experiential learning approaches (Dewey, 1938). Dewey’s writings offer valuable insights into how curriculum can help cultivate the habits, skills, values and knowledge which support active lifelong participation. For example, Ennis (2006) notes how in the late 1920s in the USA a new holistic-informed PE curriculum, inspired by the ideas of Dewey, was developed in order to foster democratic citizenship and move the subject on beyond the restrictions of various systems of gymnastics teaching. These programmes remained popular until the 1950s through demonstrating their relevance to motor development and by being grounded in theories of social relationships. However, these types of programmes have become less evident in recent decades with much more attention being focused on developments in sport education, games teaching and programmes designed to improve pupils’ sense of personal and social responsibility. As such, there may well be a need for a Dewey-informed reappraisal of how fitness and physical activity learning and teaching could be constructed in ways which enhance personal growth (Thorburn & MacAllister, 2013).

Dewey considered that his focus on the biology of learners made it easier to understand human activity, especially in terms of how deep satisfaction could be gained through effort (Carden, 2006). This led Dewey to argue that curriculum goals need to be informed by their (subjective) relevance to the lives and experiences of pupils as well as by their (objective) subject knowledge merits. Dewey (1938) considered that learning needs to be a rich, fluid and interactive process with teachers being challenged to survey the capacities and needs of their pupils when designing learning environments. Responding to Dewey’s call requires an emphasis on practical learning experiences that afford pupils responsibility and some measure of control over the pace and direction of learning. This promotes active deliberation, discernment and decision-making and enables pupils to become acquainted with how their new-found exercise habits and skills can be employed flexibly to the benefit of their active lifelong engagement. Pedagogically, it would be important to recognise however that strength-based thinking and Dewey’s focus on cycles of experiences and reflection should not become unduly onerous, repetitive or dull. Therefore, when pupils are working practically and in-the-moment, and when their skills and abilities are thoroughly on-task, there is a need for teachers to avoid interrupting such instances unnecessarily (Thorburn & MacAllister, 2013).

Curriculum and pedagogy

Strength-based approaches and Dewey’s theorising agree that there are no final end points to learning. Instead, learning is constantly evolving and dynamic rather than straightforward and linear. However, many current curriculum arrangements make direct (linear-type) connections between experiences and outcomes and second, as McCuaig et al. (2013, p. 119) report, in trials of strength-based approaches in three large secondary schools in Queensland Australia, many teachers found these practices challenging and were considering adaptations “that would reassert a more pathogenic, teacher-directed orientation”. Addressing these theory-practice concerns needs teachers to reflect on how they interpret policy advice when planning curriculum and designing pedagogical practices. From a curriculum perspective, there is a need for teachers to appreciate that curricula are not unchallengeable and neutral entities but are to various extents arrangements that teachers can adapt, shape and modify to suit their school circumstances (Thorburn & Horrell, 2014). From a pedagogical perspective, the success of school fitness and physical activity programmes will be enhanced if it is clear to pupils and parents how learning experiences (i.e. from across the domains of
learning – physical, social, emotional and cognitive) are interconnected and capable of over-taking formal outcome expectations.

Teachers and academics also need to respond to a number of external concerns at this time. Arguably the greatest of these is recognising how neoliberal influences, i.e. high stakes testing and measurement and outsourcing of teaching to private providers, may come to influence the ways in which teachers negotiate curriculum spaces and organise their teaching (Macdonald, 2011; Penney & Mitchell, Chapter 11). More widely, Evans and Davies (2014) advise that, due to the system-wide changes happening in the governance, organisation and delivery of education, greater attention needs to be paid to the relationship between PE and the political economy of education. This is especially important if commitments to improving social justice and reducing health inequalities through PE are to continue. And, while engaging with economic notions such as cost/benefits analysis might prove uncertain and de-stabilising in the short term, new governance protocols dictate that physical educationalists reset their sights on what can be viably achieved in various education-related contexts. For example, Ennis (2006) posits that due to the drain on resources, facilities and instructional time, PE would be better served by taking place in community centres as opposed to schools. And following Evans and Davies (2014), it is possible to see how continuing decentralisation of education in England could lead to teachers working more widely across school and community boundaries. In addition, McCullick (2013) notes that there is often a problem with parents’ perceptions of PE, as many of them consider that there is a strong link between PE and reducing obesity levels, even though it is widely accepted within the academic and teaching community that time spent on moderate to vigorous activity in lessons will not be sufficient to meet national targets (e.g. Cale et al., 2012). Taken together this brief review of current trends and issues highlights some of the challenges involved in pressing for an educational emphasis on personal growth during a period of relative economic austerity; in short, of arguing that a version of fitness and physical activity can be crafted in neoliberal terms as a ‘premium product’ which is worthy of investment. The remaining sections of the chapter address this pivotal issue.

**Implications for evidence-based practice**

Noting the McCuaig et al. (2013) evidence of a gap between policy aspirations and teachers’ practices should not necessarily be read as a criticism of teachers. For at a policy level policies often lack sufficient philosophical elaboration (Priestley & Biesta, 2013) and in practice, teachers highlight that they often face a plethora of day-to-day concerns (e.g. large class sizes, levels of disruption, poor facilities, limited resources, modest curriculum time, pupils with diverse learning needs), all of which adversely impact on teaching. Nevertheless, a concern of Alfrey and Gard (2014) is that fitness and physical activity time in school could be better utilised, as too much time is directed toward performance and fitness testing relative to highlighting how fitness and physical activity can equip pupils with the experiences, knowledge and skills to make more informed lifestyle decisions. Following Dewey, a main challenge in this regard is on reviewing how habits and skills can transfer from being attributes which can be acquired through training (with little thought or reflection) to something which when sufficiently adapted and extended is of educational value. Thus, what matters is how carefully exercise habits and the mastery of skills are framed in relation to the wider context and goals of PE, so that pupils’ personal growth is more obviously at the forefront of learning. To teach effectively in these contexts teachers need to possess high levels of content knowledge expertise (i.e. the ability to understand and demonstrate the basic skills of activities). They also need to possess a wider appreciation of how to extend learning and interact with pupils (pedagogical content knowledge) so that the
transformational benefits of sustained engagement in practical activities can be seen by pupils as a helpful and worthwhile endeavour. Meeting these requirements is consistent with Siedentop’s (2002) view that effective teaching is underpinned by teachers possessing a high level of content knowledge of activities as the basis for developing their knowledge of teaching and maximising pupils’ learning experiences. It chimes as well with McCullick’s (2013) exhortation that at its heart PE needs to remain true to its central focus on learning how the body works and moves. It also addresses concerns raised by Harris (2013) who found that student teachers’ teaching of health and physical activity largely consisted of discrete blocks (or units) of physiology with minimal attention being paid to how the teaching of physical activities could merge effectively with various health and educational imperatives. In short, the problems of PE being studied rather than experienced were again evident.

Linking fitness and physical activity learning and teaching to wider school and societal goals

As noted earlier curriculum implementation is a complex process which those advocating change rarely focus on sufficiently (Ennis, 2013a). In trying to address this shortfall, the final part of the chapter considers how the ideas associated with strength-based approaches and Dewey’s ideas on experiential learning might work in practice. In sympathy with MacIntyre (2007) it is argued that it is from inside practices that pupils and teachers can “encounter thick and distinctive notions about what it is worthwhile to participate in, excellent to achieve and admirable to become” (Higgins, 2011, p. 50). In this light, teachers need not only be effective and efficient in a technical sense but focus as well on the wider dimensions of education and with pupils flourishing. Once this mix is achieved, the goods internal to practice have transferable gains, as engaging in practice increases the ways in which pupils can make considered judgements about how they wish to lead and construct their lives. Progress in this way is largely consistent with Kretchmar’s (2006) view that PE can be a genuine turning point in pupils’ lives with challenging and situated learning environments creating opportunities for pupils to reference their activity-based habits against the achievement of clear standards of success. The examples below provide a brief outline of how teachers might take forward strength-based planning ideas in order to provide some insights into the types of gains we might expect to see in practice.

Two national curriculum examples: Scotland and Australia

In Scotland, Thorburn and Horrell (2014) identified how salutogenic approaches offered a broad and largely coherent perspective on health and wellbeing which could support efforts to enhance the centrality of PE as part of new educational ambitions. After reviewing the influences on policy closely the authors considered the methodological possibilities which existed. Key to progress was identifying where teachers are active curriculum decision-makers rather than passive receivers of policy expectations and prescribed outcomes. This highlighted the learning and teaching filter through which teaching interventions could reflect overarching curriculum aims. In turn, this revealed how a heightened emphasis on adopting a more holistic perspective on learning, where there is increased time available for reflection and decision-making, was pivotal to the realisation of policy goals. Teaching in these ways has the capacity to present knowledge in practices which are experienced by pupils as tangible, accessible and relevant to their lives. Through further deliberative practice the potential for links between experiences and associated knowledge (of skills, fitness, training and healthy living) can become increasingly sophisticated and refined, and help learning to become more deeply embedded and sustained. Such a first
person perspective on learning can achieve a middle ground between experiential learning, viz. the acquisition of knowledge, and equip pupils with the habits, skills and capacities to make more informed and educationally rounded fitness and physical activity decisions at school and in future years.

In Australia, submissions from across a range of professional sectors have endorsed the holistic strength-based ideas underpinning the draft Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum (McCuaig et al., 2013). Therefore, the challenge, as with Scotland, is to develop sound pedagogical ideas about how strength-based ideas could be put into effective practice. The focus on promoting healthy behaviours rather than preventing illness is evident in the draft policy documentation. However, as noted earlier, initial attempts at adopting these new approaches were not without their difficulties. So, at this stage, the emphasis is on supporting teachers to emphasise the wide-ranging benefits of fitness and physical activity, e.g. in terms of its social, psychological and cultural benefit, rather than more narrowly focusing on preventive behaviours (McCuaig et al., 2013).

**One activity example: exergaming**

In exergaming (video games that use technology to track body movements or reactions) how could this relatively new activity become a suitable learning context for the majority of pupils; where participation is voluntary and sustained, and where pupils strive for achieving personal growth and a depth of understanding about how the body functions and moves? This matters as current research shows that as participation in exergaming continues, pupils’ interest declines (Ennis, 2013b). So, how can teachers continue with their teaching of exergaming rather than roll out other new activities to try and combat pupils’ lack of interest? Ennis (2013b) highlights, in Deweyan-type terms, the holistic and integrated possibilities of merging the physical, affective and cognitive together in ways which are characterised by teaching containing enhanced opportunities for pupils to engage in constructive discussion, problem solve and make decisions. In these settings, skilled teachers would be able to continually challenge pupils across all domains of learning by, for example, altering the demand of tasks and by varying the types and difficulty of questions asked on an individual pupil basis. If successful, the physical benefits of being fitter would coincide with the social development benefits of being able to work constructively together with others on group tasks. It would also be allied to the emotional benefits of showing perseverance when continuing to exercise when fatigued and connect as well with an increased understanding of aspects of fitness and fitness training principles.

**Evidence of effectiveness**

Critics of the three examples might see the claims made for connecting more closely fitness and physical activity learning and teaching with the realisation of wider school and societal goals as lacking in substantive enough evidence of impact. In this light some indicators of what might count as evidence of effectiveness are provided. This review responds to a key point McCuaig et al. (2013) note, namely that a strengths-based approach can become overly individual and insular. Therefore, positively responding to this concern requires fitness and physical activity teaching to be of whole school relevance as well as being meaningful for pupils at an individual level. The key point in this respect is that the internal goods of fitness and physical activity practice need to merge coherently with the external (institutional) goals of schools. This can happen, it is argued, when there are extended opportunities for pupils to reflect and deliberate on their learning, where experiences are dynamic and interactive and where experiences can be shared.
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more widely across the school (e.g. when reported on in newsletters, school displays). Thus, in brief, as practice experiences become part of pupils’ wider social conversations, the school environment can become a context around which the goods of practice can be shared both internally and externally. If this happens in diverse ways which reflect the precise culture and ethos of individual schools, then the wider school community itself will attest to the benefits of continuing to support high quality learning and teaching in PE.

Further issues

However, progressing with examples such as exergaming within a wider strength-based conception of fitness and physical activity does raise some issues which are not easy to resolve or rule over. For example, as Quennerstedt (2011) notes (following salutogenic thinking), it is quite possible that PE could be a negative influence on pupils’ health more widely, especially if pupils are required to continue participating in the subject when they do not consider that it benefits their overall health. In this setting, how can teachers recognise the importance of pupils’ autonomy as well as nurture the concept of participation being voluntary, even when teaching arrangements dictate that PE is a must-do compulsory subject? Alternately, what would be the consequences if it were possible to make participation in PE optional at certain ages and stages of pupils’ development? What might policy stakeholders make of such decision-making, especially in countries where PE is seen as a key contributor to the realising of a series of health and wellbeing outcomes (Thorburn & Horrell, 2014)? Furthermore, what would parents make of such a response; especially as many parents consider that PE is an important contributor to health and academic attainment (McCullick, 2013)? If therefore the status quo is to remain (and pupils’ involvement in PE remains obligatory), there is an on-going need as Gao, Lee and Harrison (2008) note to review and better understand the types of learning experiences which motivate pupils towards regular physical activity and which connect with their wider reflections on how they wish to lead their lives in the future.

Conclusion

Ennis (2013a) notes that among all these complexities we need to find ways to bring meaning and learning to many PE programmes worldwide. In Macdonald’s (2013, p. 100) terms to “lay a foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding that can be applied across ever-changing priorities and life-phases”. In agreement with these sentiments, this chapter has argued that greater conceptual clarity and a degree of methodological change is required if fitness and physical activity as part of PE is to make the most of the rather inexact and variable curriculum opportunities which exist in the Anglophone world.

Future research

Anticipating the future is inherently uncertain and whether the educationally driven ideas in this chapter are helpful in highlighting the main challenges which exist for teaching fitness and physical activity remains to be seen. For it might well be that bolder thinking was required. For example, it could be argued that the quest for active lifelong learning requires clearer and more nuanced links to be drawn between the body and the mind, where the whole person is considered in a holistic and synthesised way based on their feelings and thinking, and their sense of being-in-the-world (Stolz, 2014). By contrast, it could be argued that the chapter has under-acknowledged digitised health and PE developments, where software algorithms underpin
pedagogies and where wearable and mobile activity trackers, biosensors and personal analytics apps play an increasing part in how pupils learn about their own bodies and health (Williamson, 2015). These are areas of thinking you may also wish to critique and review in the future.

**Summary of key findings**

- PE is frequently viewed as an important policy conduit for emphasising the benefits of physically active lifestyles, and for establishing wider connections with healthy behaviours and personal wellbeing.
- Policies, programmes and practices in PE have often overemphasised performative cultures, energy expenditure metrics, health surveillance and physical fitness testing rather than how PE links to active lifelong learning.
- Policy to practice is rarely a straight line issue. It is often messy, complex and prone to contradictions and confusion.
- In terms of fitness and physical activity becoming a ‘premium product’, pupils need to be able to take increased control over their activity futures and build a perspective on their participation which considers PE as an essentially helpful and valuable endeavour which is worthy of sustained commitment.
- Historically, PE may well have contributed to its own difficulties through its over-reliance on undemanding multi activity programmes.
- The concept of high quality PE developed in this chapter is on where improved levels of fitness and physical activity is one among many of the benefits of active participation.
- Recently, public health services have often sought to utilise asset (or strengths)-based approaches as an effective way of helping people to identify the factors which can enhance their lives.
- John Dewey’s writings may be helpful to review in considering how health-informed strength-based ideas could articulate with learner-centred holistic educational priorities.
- Teachers need to be active curriculum decision-makers and recognise that curricula are not unchallengeable and neutral entities but can (to various degrees) be adapted, shaped and modified to suit their school circumstances.
- Academics and teachers need to think through how to constructively respond to the system-wide changes happening in the governance, organisation and delivery of education.
- Effective teaching is underpinned by teachers possessing a high level of content knowledge of activities. This enables teachers to develop their knowledge of teaching and maximise pupils’ learning experiences.
- School programmes should create motivational learning environments which strengthen pupils’ beliefs about the benefits of voluntarily engaging in high levels of physical activity.

**Reflective questions for discussion**

1. The central argument in this chapter is that strength-based approaches to fitness and physical activity which emphasise personal growth would best serve the longer term educational interests of PE.
   a. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this argument?
   b. To what extent are these ideas realistic or unrealistic in terms of PE futures in your area?
   c. Are the ideas presented in this chapter bold enough?
2. To what extent are the philosophical ideas of Barrow (2008) on PE teaching reflected in new neoliberal notions of outsourcing PE to private providers?
3. Do you see new forms of school governance arrangements as predominantly a help or a hindrance in promoting high levels of physical activity for personal growth?

4. In the view of some educators, fitness and physical activity is one in a long line of life skills that contribute to schooling but are not worthy of being considered as educational. How would you respond to this claim?

5. Should pupils do equal amounts of fitness and physical activity in schools?
   a. Should participation be compulsory or optional; and if optional at what age?
   b. Should fitness and physical activity be taught on a single sex or co-ed basis in high schools?

References


