Doctor in Education (EdD Programme)

The voices of Year 6 children: their views on Physical Education, and the implications for Policy, Practice and Research

by

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Supporting Statement

I start at the beginning, by going back to September 2001 when I was first registered on the EdD programme, and then trace how my learning in the early taught modules has impacted upon my doctoral thesis. I will also discuss the submission of my Portfolio in March 2004, resulting in the Institution Focussed Study (IFS) in June 2005, and my experiences leading up to the acceptance of my proposal for this thesis in March 2007. Finally, I review my overall learning on the Ed D programme, the writing up of this thesis in the spring and early summer of 2009, and the subsequent rewriting of it post viva in 2010, and in the spring of 2011. The chronological order is important to me, as my experiences continue to feel like a very real journey, where time has always been a key factor.

I believe that my interest and enjoyment of Physical Education (PE), my driving force throughout the journey, has been instrumental in helping me through the difficult times. I have experienced genuine high levels of excitement at results and low points where I have despaired when things have not gone well. I have finally got answers to some of the questions that have been with me since I first began teaching over 20 years ago. I have kept PE at the heart of the entire EdD programme for no other reason than because I wanted to. It is what I do and the core of my academic, teaching and social identity. I also offer the observation that no researcher is immune from their own history and social location (Apple, 1995), and all of my work is intrinsically linked with my history and the area where I grew up and still teach part-time. Assignment 1, in the Foundations of Professionalism in Education was titled 'Physical Education in Curriculum 2000 and the marginalisation of the professional facilitator'. The feedback on this work identified a need to detach myself from the issues that I

was seeking to investigate in order to provide a more objective analysis. As a result of this feedback I have endeavoured to be as detached as I possibly can be in all subsequent assignments.

Assignment 2, in Methods of Enquiry One, the question asked was 'How does a large inner-city state primary school achieve the requirements of Curriculum 2000 for Physical Education? A case study' The key learning point from this assignment was the high degree of specificity needed in research. For example, I discovered that even the term PE was problematic as it could cover a very large area of learning and could mean different things to different audiences and stakeholder groups. This assignment heightened my awareness with regard to the vastness of what I was trying to do, and as a result I had to modify my research focus. What requirements of Curriculum 2000 was I referring to in particular? What age group or key stage was I going to use for the research? What did I mean by the term PE? This feedback led me to focus on the views of year 6 children only, and taught me the discipline of defining the terms I use throughout my work.

In assignment 3, in the module Methods of Enquiry Two, I presented 'An analysis of how the requirements of Curriculum 2000 for Physical Education are addressed in a large inner-city state primary school. Are the practitioners teaching what they say they are teaching? A pilot study' Here the experience and feedback was so impactful that I changed the format of my research approach. In this study I used video as a means of recording data, but discovered that whilst it was a very useful research tool, it also led to problems regarding data collection. I discovered, for example, that the children played to the camera, as did the adults including the teachers, and therefore the data lacked authenticity. In outlining the weaknesses in my methods, the feedback from this assignment helped me realise the difficulties I would encounter if I pursued this

particular methodology. I also found the interpretation of video data and observations particularly difficult, and discovered a range of moral and ethical difficulties with filming children – all of which I had never really considered in any depth before embarking on this research. I therefore moved away from filming children taking part in PE lessons, and used questionnaires instead, with follow-up interviews being added at a later point for my first data set in 2007. In 2010, I added a second data set using a simple questionnaire to complement the data gained in 2007. This approach was not unlike that adopted by Keys (1995), where the researcher examined children's attitudes to school at primary school and at first year secondary school. I did of course still obtain informed consent from all the children and their parents / carers before undertaking any data collection.

Assignment 4, in Curriculum Pedagogy and Assessment explored 'The role of Physical Education in the early 21st century. A question of entitlement?' This was my most pleasing assignment as not only did I make progress with my academic presentation, but I genuinely liked the assignment itself. The assignment was also externally approved by the British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in PE (BAALPE), who agreed to publish the work in their journal 'The Bulletin of Physical Education' (Costas, 2003).

These four assignments were presented in my Portfolio to enable me to proceed to the next stage of the EdD.

Looking back over the assignments there is a clear progression in terms of development of academic writing style and development of discipline, rigour and thinking. The style in which the final assignment was presented is the one that I have taken forwards through the rest of the EdD, and developed further still, and I can now see a certain immaturity in the earlier work.

The IFS was, then, a pilot study for this thesis and was entitled 'Still My Favourite Subject? A child's perception of Physical Education provision and a question of entitlement in the early 21st century. A comparative study within the state sector'. It was on completing this piece of work that I finally started to believe in myself as being capable of completing the EdD. I took on board the advice given in my feedback and worked on my thesis proposal for submission to the Advisory Panel. I did not know really what to expect before going into the meeting with the Advisory Panel. It was a difficult meeting and I had to argue and stand my ground on a range of issues. I was left with plenty to think about during the Christmas holidays in 2006. Gradually I moved towards resubmitting my thesis proposal taking on board some of the recommendations suggested by the panel, but there were areas where I held my ground as there were parts of the work that I desperately wanted to keep. For example, I wanted to keep 'My Favourite Subject' in the thesis title, because it was such an inspirational document for me. On reflection, I was displaying the same lack of awareness that was reflected in the feedback to assignment one. I was too close to my research. One of the recommendations from my first viva was to change the title before resubmission and re-viva as I had not actually asked the children whether PE was still their favourite subject or not. The issues surrounding the use of 'My Favourite Subject' in the title would need revisiting again.

I was also convinced, based on nearly 20 years of teaching in the field that my questionnaires would yield sufficient data for my thesis as it had been piloted earlier, and I knew the response rate would be high. On further reflection, some of the points raised by the panel were fair and just recommendations, and to this end the thesis did differ significantly from the IFS and the work expanded to include 120 children in year 6 from four different schools, with follow-up interviews also being conducted.

This allowed me to gain greater depth and breadth in understanding the children's voices which remain central to this thesis. I also extended my literature base to include the work of Lawton (1996, 2000), Fielding (2004, 2008), Simons (1987, 1999), and White (2004, 2007), and included a discussion of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, which was interwoven into the text. Finally I added a question relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games as they would be hosted in east London in 2012, where I was conducting the research. This seemed like an opportunity that it would be foolish to overlook, although it is not now core to the thesis in its final format.

In March 2007, I outlined my proposed amendments to the re-sat Advisory Panel and was given permission to proceed. I learnt from this that it was part of the process of becoming a confident researcher to accept constructive criticism yet also to defend one's position. It would have been easy to walk away from the challenge, and although at first sight I disagreed with some of the points raised by the panel, I could on reflection appreciate that others were just.

In the autumn of 2009 I faced a similar situation. The first submission of my thesis and viva was unsuccessful and have led to my having to make considerable changes – not least of which is revisiting the title and the use of 'My Favourite Subject'. Again I found this feedback difficult to take as the journey has seemed never ending, through the process of writing the thesis; but I can see in what I hope is this final submission, that the resubmitting of this work has further developed my approach to research with regard to discipline, rigour, attention to detail and focus. While I did not appreciate the outcome at the time of the first submission, and I was extremely disappointed, my development since that time both as a researcher and writer of this thesis, has been invaluable. In October 2010, I represented my thesis and re-sat the viva. I was

delighted to have been 'passed' with minor amendments to be completed within six months.

Undertaking the EdD has generally given me the opportunity to look at education from a distance and also to explore other curriculums from around the world. The taught modules coincided with the work I was doing at my own university which involved me working on educational projects in The Gambia and Malaysia. The EdD also gave me the opportunity and permission to think again about education itself, and what it might be used for and what should or could go into a national curriculum. Making the time to do this was refreshing as a teacher and added depth to the conversations I was having with other teachers and related professionals. In particular, I have remained in contact with two of my original cohort group members and they have become firm friends of mine.

In July 2009, I presented an overview of my research at the 16th International Conference on Learning in Barcelona (Costas, 2009), and this was my first international conference presentation of this kind. The paper was well received and a number of professional relationships have stemmed from this dissemination of my thesis. While I continue to teach part-time at school through choice, I am now developing an academic identity within my university.

This thesis uses pupil voice through PE to inform future policy, practice and research through broadening the debate surrounding curriculum aims and content to include the children in a meaningful way, in order to gain a greater understanding of what it looks and feels like from the recipient's point of view. My thesis adds to the scant knowledge about primary school children's views on PE, and also seeks to democratise the process by including the pupil voice. The broadening and democratisation of the process then feeds into a post-modernist view on curriculum

design. This view considers the inclusion of children's views as imperative in order to enable policy makers to understand better what the curriculum looks and feels like for the child and thus work towards a greater consensus regarding curriculum aims. A curriculum fit for the 21st century which reflects modern society needs to embrace pupil voice if democracy is to be valued.

To all the boys and girls and their teachers in Clapton, London Fields, Stoke Newington and Islington in 2007, and 2010 who took part in this research, a very big and very warm

'Thank You'

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Barry Paraskevas Costas 30th May 2011

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Abstract

Taking a constructivist-interpretivist stance, this mixed methods case study gives a voice to 236 children from east London between 2007 and 2010 through the use of questionnaires and interviews. The aim was to explore what the children thought about Physical Education, with a view to illuminating and informing current policy, practice and research in relation to the aims which under-pin the national curriculum. The children's voices, conspicuously absent from discussions about their physical education, over the last twenty years, give a view of the curriculum from the recipient's perspective. Through the vibrancy of their voices, the current status quo in primary PE is examined, and ways forward are offered as recurring themes throughout the thesis. In addition to valuing children's voices this thesis shows that through democratising the discussion, the children were more than just 'empty vessels', and were able to offer informed views. The children largely enjoyed Physical Education, valued their health and had ideas on curriculum content, timetabling, fund raising, and asked for a greater range of physical activities to be made available them.

Chapter One - An introduction to the research and contextual background

In this first chapter, I begin the thesis by discussing my use of the term physical education, and how it can mean different things to different groups of people. I define the term early on, as my use of it is significant throughout the thesis. I then locate my research by including an autobiographical account of my life experiences, and I then contextualise and discuss my research in relation to four key areas. These four contextual features draw upon a small amount of literature in addition to the texts discussed in my literature review. Moreover, they feed into the three themes that I use in the following chapter to critically analyse my selected literature. These themes are a) pupil voice, b) the status quo in primary physical education, and c) ways to make the curriculum work. I have also included a brief introduction to the schools which took part in the research. The key contextual areas discussed here are

1. The healthy living agenda

2. The Every Child Matters agenda

3. The Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to London in 2012 (an opportunistic contextual feature that links across my themes, but it is not core to the thesis)

4. Physical Education and the National Curriculum

In chapter three, I introduce the theoretical perspectives employed to inform the research, and I discuss the methodology that I have used to access the data. The data is presented and analysed in chapter four. In chapter five I discuss the data in relation to my theoretical positioning. In chapter six I offer my summary findings and the recommendations that have emanated from what the children have told me, and I detail the conclusions that I have drawn. I include some personal reflections, and look

at my own learning through the EdD, and review the implications of my research.

Defining Physical Education

As Kirk (1992), acknowledges, defining PE is notoriously difficult and it is a debate that has been going on for many years and continues to evolve. Whilst there are many definitions for example, Kirk (2010), the Youth Sport Trust (2010), and The Association for Physical Education (afPE), (2010), none appear to be any more authoritative than another. Perhaps we should not be surprised by this, because as Lawson (1991), argues:

> Subject fields or disciplines have been invented; they are socially constructed and constituted by humans. (p.286)

Penney and Chandler (2000), have argued that the most enduring and resistant characteristics of PE is the focus on physical activity, and the main issue is in relation to what people, that is teachers and coaches, do with these physical activities and how they are practised. Elsewhere, Proctor (1984), argued that PE was 'amorphous' and would quite naturally mean different things to different groups of human beings. So for example, the recently deposed government's position was largely at odds with that of the Youth Sport Trust's position, and indeed the aims and aspirations of the National Curriculum. The primary National Curriculum, (1988, 2000) states that the subject is made up of six different areas of activity. These are games, gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletic activities and outdoor and adventurous activities. Yet there appeared to be a very distinct clouding or blurring of clarity with regards to the recently deposed government's stance as to what constituted PE in the NC. In a statement made by the former Prime Minister, he clearly saw PE as sport. For in a press release from 10 Downing Street, the public were told:

> Gordon Brown has announced a £100 million campaign to give every child the chance of five hours sport every week. He called for a 'united team effort' from the government, schools,

parents, volunteers and the sporting world to make sport a part of every child's day in the run up to 2012. Mr Brown watched potential sports star, 11year old Igor Morais, play table tennis, and Dame Kelly Holmes told visitors 'This is a future talent. This is what schools sports are all about - getting the opportunity to see a star' (The Prime Minister's Office 13th July 2008)

This position appears very limited in fully appreciating what the NC for PE fully entails. PE is not just about sport and team games. The NC when taught well might include much wider and larger areas of learning including activities like dance, gymnastics, problem solving, diet, nutrition, citizenship, personal, social and emotional aspects of learning and also aspects of physiology and psychology. What was perhaps most worrying about the press release from the former Prime Minister's Office was that it failed to talk about an education of the physical – how to look after oneself, be safe and eat wisely for example. Even more disconcerting was the former government's notion that five hours of sport is desirable in the *run up* to the games in 2012. What is not clear is what will happen to primary school PE provision after the games have been and gone, even if the goal was achieved. What also causes concern is Dame Kelly Holmes's view that school sport is *'getting the opportunity to see a star.'* This is not what primary PE is advocating at all, and the former government stance was clearly at odds with what schools are trying to achieve. Unfortunately, as long as the emphasis remains on sport and elite sport alone, and resources like school playing fields continue to be sold, PE will continue to be a challenge for many children.

The Youth Sport Trust by contrast, have made a distinction between PE and Sport and separated the terms. In their focus they state:

> We encourage children to do more PE and sports by developing different ways of getting them interested and involved. (2010)

Likewise, through defining PE, the afPE (2010) has at its heart the desire that all

young learners should be involved in physical activity, and experience positive beneficial learning experiences. These experiences should include personal well-being, achievement for all learners, and an understanding of what makes a healthy life style. Moreover, Eileen Marchant the present Chair of the afPE in her response to the new Secretary of State for Education's proposals to reduce funding for Schools Sport Partnerships and colleges wrote:

> Physical education brings so much added value to the whole curriculum and afPE has always advocated that the subject is not just about 'learning to move' but also very much about 'moving to learn'. (2nd November 2010)

Within the PE establishment there are colleagues who work hard to make the NC work without really challenging the aims on which it is based or its aptness for young people. For example the work by Howells (2007), and Penney et al (2005), which are discussed in the following chapter, serve to demonstrate this point. My own understanding and defining of PE is eclectic in nature and brings together a number of views, not dissimilar to those already discussed. It is an inclusive term which can mean many things to many different people. Sport is part of PE and a significant part at that, but it is not the only significant aspect. I would argue that:

> PE is about giving children a broad range of physical experiences, presented in a positive way, where they can experience fun, enjoyment, and success at whatever level they access the physical activity, sport or game.

If this aspect of the process is executed well, then hopefully the children will continue to participate and be involved in their preferred activities, games or sports, thereby continuing to be physically active and involved at a variety of levels for the remainder of their lives. Moreover I would argue still further that:

> PE is also about helping young people to understand and value their physical selves, how the body works, and how to look after it for a lifetime.

Quite what the future holds at present is unclear, and it is probably too early to hazard a guess as to what lies ahead. However, following the General Election of 6th May 2010, the Conservatives were returned to Westminster with 305 seats won. Labour won 258 seats and the Liberal Democrats 57. The result meant a 'hung' Parliament with the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats forming a coalition government. Early indicators are that the NC will be reviewed again Oates (2010), and we will again see a return to the emphasis on subject content, with schools possibly having greater power on how they interpret the NC. In relation to PE itself, Michael Gove the new Secretary for Education told Nicky Campbell on Radio Five Live, that he would like to see a return to competitive sport, and he hoped games like 'rugby, hockey and netball' would again flourish. There was no mention of PE in its broader context or in the way that I have defined it. The emphasis was on 'school sport' and the term was used in a not dissimilar way to how the departed Labour government used the term. (Gove, 2010a)

Autobiographical account

I chose to embark on the EdD pathway because the intended outcomes highlighted that on successful completion of the programme my own professional development would be enhanced, and I would have offered a contribution to professional knowledge. As part of this process I now sketch an overview of my life and career to date.

I was born and grew up in Stoke Newington, an area in the London borough of Hackney which is to be one of the main host boroughs for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. I grew up in a large family not untypical of the times, where I have two brothers and four sisters and I am the eldest of the brothers. Hackney then, as now, is largely an impoverished district of London which continues to be home to

many immigrant communities. Within Hackney's boundaries there are still some areas which could comfortably be termed as affluent. Both the primary and secondary schools which I attended were also in the borough of Hackney. Perhaps it was as a result of attending schools which had PE as integral parts of the curriculum that I first learnt to enjoy and love physical activity. Being active was always encouraged by my late mother who was a county sprinter, hurdler and hockey player in the1950s. I grew up with proud aspirations, a love of football, athletics, cross country, and cycling and a love of the outdoors.

It was part of this love and enjoyment of physical activities that led me into a teaching career, where I wished to share with others the positive experiences that I had undertaken. I understood that although I was a competent sports player, I, like many thousands of other young people, was not good enough to play or compete professionally. So it was against this background that I went to teacher training college and studied PE as my specialist subject. I was offered a position as a classroom teacher during my final teaching practice and have remained largely in the primary sector ever since. At the time I held the view, and still do believe, that all children must be literate and numerate, yet also physically educated. I was lucky enough to have teachers who understood the value of a good physical education, where good practice in the primary school has the basis for creating a sound foundation for lifelong physical activity. This love and enjoyment of physical activity has stayed with me for over 45 years, and in the past six years I have cycled from London to Athens for the 2004 Olympics, London to Barcelona, and London to Nice. In the summer of 2009, I cycled with my nephew and friends to Edinburgh from London in six days, and I have recently returned from cycling to Santander from London, a round trip of over a thousand miles. Equally during the last twenty years I

have completed over 100 half marathons and 18 full marathons including those held in London, Athens and Paris. I have been involved in the teaching of PE for nearly twenty years in a variety of contexts. Initially a classroom teacher and primary PE specialist, I then became a 'float' PE teacher, whereby I taught PE across the whole primary age range, from nursery to year six. I now work in initial teacher education in a higher education institution, and have been doing so for eleven years. I teach PE amongst other areas of learning on a number of different courses. These include the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme, the Bachelor of Education (BEd) programme, and the school-based Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). I also still teach PE part-time for one day a week, in a north-east London primary school where I have taught for over twelve years. I have chosen to do this as I feel it keeps my own teaching in initial teacher education in line with the 'real' school environment. I have a strong personal attachment to the area, as it is the area of London where I grew up. My initial ideas as a basis for this thesis were, and continue to be, located within a broad context and based on four key themes.

Firstly, there continues to be a number of current debates over what constitutes 'healthy living', a term I use generally to include a range of topical areas related to personal health. These topical areas at times include discussions about food and nutrition, weight loss, activity levels, childhood obesity and the increase in adult and child type two diabetes, binge drinking, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies and sex education in the primary school.

Secondly, *Every Child Matters* (2003), the previous government's initiative that asserts that every child really does matter, is continuing to be developed across a range of agencies in the United Kingdom, with varying degrees of success. These include for example, schools, education authorities and social services. As a means of

valuing children, the document urged that young people must be listened to. The ECM agenda sent a clear message to social services[1] and other agencies that this was to become law. Yet it is the views of young people, as opposed to adults, that are largely missing from a whole range of debates including discussions about healthy living. It is the children's thoughts and views that interest me, and moreover, how they can be used to inform policy, practice and research.

Thirdly, the Olympic and Paralympic Games were awarded to London for 2012 for the third time. London, of course, had also staged the Games in 1908 and 1948.This would mean that east London, in accordance with the Olympic legacy statutes, would benefit across a range of contexts. The children who took part in this research all attended primary schools in an area in close proximity to where the main Olympic stadium in Hackney - Stratford east London - is presently being built. Fourthly, I have explored some of the difficulties that teachers continue to face in teaching the NC requirements for PE to their children, and investigated some of the current debates on school sport and pedagogy. In this respect, this thesis could have focussed on a number of different areas, all worthy of exploration. For example, I could have explored how teachers achieved the NC requirements for PE, or asked parents for their views on PE curriculum provision, or investigated the role of PE and sport as an extra curriculum activity. However the space and scope of the thesis does not allow me to explore all of these avenues much though the outcomes would have interested me. For it was what the children had to say that interested me most. As long ago as 1988, the old Inner London Education Authority was asking children what they

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[1]The Every Child Matters agenda was initiated in 2003 following the tragic death of Victoria Climbie an 8 year old child who died whilst in the care of her aunt and under the supervision of Haringey social services. Every Child Matters was set up to avoid such tragedies happening again. In November 2008, another child 'Baby P' also died whist under the supervision of Haringey social services.

thought about PE as a means of understanding their views on this part of the curriculum. This seemed to me then, as it does now, a very good method for getting information about any given area of interest or concern, as the data in this case was coming directly from the children, the young people who were experiencing education first hand. This in turn led me to want to find answers to questions that had been with me whilst I had been teaching over the last twenty years.

I have always wanted to know what children liked and disliked about PE generally and specifically in the NC. I wanted to know what they enjoyed and did not enjoy, and why this was so, in order to broaden the debate but also to include them in their own learning, and to democratise the process. The *Every Child Matters* document presents the case that children must be listened to, if they are to be valued. Lodge (2005) argues that encouraging children to talk and share their ideas is largely dependent on who is actually listening and prepared to act on what has been discovered. As Fielding argued in 2004, learning to listen is an integral part of a civil democratic society. However it is an area being undermined by the imposition of market forces impacting on education, where financial figures and targets are all that appear to matter to some policy makers. As Fielding (2004) states:

> The need to re-articulate our aspirations for the renewal of education for civic society is at once urgent and exhilarating. It is urgent because the application of market models to the public realm not only fails to enhance the cause of democratic human flourishing, it also undermines the inter-personal foundations of our civic and communal practices and aspirations. (Fielding 2004:197)

At the time of finalising this thesis in the spring of 2011, I would contend (and I return to this theme later) that Fielding's notion of *'market models'* and Marquand's (2003) ideas of *'market measuring rods and market rhetoric'* continue to strangle civic services generally, and education in its present form continues to be governed by

severe financial constraints. Notwithstanding further difficulties articulated by

Fielding (2008) in endeavouring to understand what is meant by the term 'student

voice' and what it might be used for, and whose interests it best serves, this thesis in

the words of Fielding, acknowledges that:

> Whatever our disagreements and commonalities, the importance of listening to young people
> as part of the conversation between generations that is at the heart of education and schooling
> is likely to provide important common ground. (2008:2)

Over the course of my teaching career I have noticed a number of issues in practice

which have influenced me enough to want to carry out this research. Primarily, in my

work with children I have seen their fitness levels decrease for a variety of reasons,

and I have also seen PE marginalised as a curriculum area. I now introduce the four

key themes which contextualise my research.

1) The healthy living agenda

During the time that it has taken to put this thesis together a number of government

agencies, medical bodies and other interested parties have published their views on

what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. I have used the term as an all encompassing

phrase to include varying views, as they all impact to a greater or lesser extent and in

different ways. The debates about 'healthy living', diet, nutrition, adult and children's

decreasing activity levels and the apparent 'obesity epidemic' amongst many others

continues. For example, whilst working on this thesis, the furore continues where

another initiative or 'knee jerk' reaction has been introduced in response to concerns

about children's increasing body weight. Parents are to be informed about their

children's weight and height at ages 5 and 11 years of age. However the term *obese,*

it is stressed, must not be used. Dr Will Cavendish, director of Health and Wellbeing

at the Department of Health, denied the word had been banned, but said officials had

'chosen not to use it' because research showed that it *'shuts people down'.*

(Department of Health: 2008)

January 2009, saw the media launch of *Change 4 life,* yet another healthy living initiative. As an interested professional adult I have felt the need to explore what the children are saying as a basis for broadening the curriculum area. My concerns are that if PE is valued by the pupils, then there is a valid argument for greater provision. Equally if it is not valued by the pupils, then questions need to be asked about how education policy makers can include the pupils in valuing their overall health and fitness on the assumption that the child's view is seen as important. I am suggesting that if we were to discuss notions of curriculum entitlement and the inherent implication of rights and benefits to the informed learner, we might assume that the learner would wish to be healthy and live a comfortable life having able use of their body. Therefore an education in how to look after oneself, and how to adopt a healthy lifestyle, is crucial to any young person.

Further, educating avoidance of the dangers and consequences of poor health should not only be a right, but also an entitlement that will be of benefit to the individual learner. In terms of personal safety, it might also be argued that it is the professional duty of the teacher to ensure that the children in their care are cognisant of dangers both inside and outside of school.

2) The Every Child Matters agenda

At the time of writing, all Education Authorities have put into practice along with other professional agencies, the *Every Child Matters* (2003) initiative. This initiative has five clear objectives and they can all be linked to physical well-being. These outcomes for the programme are:

- Be healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- Stay safe: being protected from harm and abuse
- Enjoy and achieve: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood

- Make a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour

- Achieve economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life

Since the turn of the last century there has been much research and a wide number of reports and texts (NHS Survey 2006, Gard and Wright 2006, Hills, King and Byrne 2006), detailing concerns relating to children's deteriorating health and state of well-being. Sue Palmer in her work *Toxic Childhood* (2006) identified a number of factors that directly impact on childhood and learning. Palmer argues that the poor diet of the 21st century, and the lack of opportunity for many children to actually play, whether at school or outdoors, is harming our children. For example, the amount of traffic on the roads has increased dramatically over the last 30 years, and many school playing fields have been sold to property developers by both leading political parties. On related issues, Jamie Oliver (2004) of course expressed his concerns about school food and actively set about improving matters nearly five years ago. Oliver has been so successful that he now has another regular television programme, where he is actively encouraging the parents of children to learn to start cooking again, in order to emphasise what constitutes healthy eating.

Elsewhere serious worries in relation to children's health were commonplace. For example Steve Bundred, chief executive of the Audit Commission has stated that:

> The proportion of children who were overweight or obese rose from 22.7% in 1995 to 27.7% in 2003

He added:

> If the trend continues this generation of children will be the first for many decades that doesn't live as long as their parents. (Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps. The Report 28th Feb 2006)

Sir John Krebs (2003), former chairman of the Food Statistical Agency (FSA), described how we were sitting on a 'ticking time bomb' in relation to childhood

obesity. More recently, figures published by the National Health survey in April 2006 have shown that the trend is continuing to increase. Long term results show that child obesity has doubled in a decade (NHS 2006). More specifically and relating directly to Physical Education in the National Curriculum, The Council for Physical Recreation reported in the Times Educational Supplement (TES):

> Lives put at risk by neglect of swimming. As drowning increases, MPs add voices to calls for better tuition. (TES, 18th January 2002, p.12)

The TES and the Council for Physical Recreation, the two groups who commissioned the survey, found that one in twenty primary schools do not teach swimming at all. Thousands of 11 year olds cannot swim 25 metres or indeed swim at all when they start secondary school (TES 18th January 2002 p.12). Yet the National Curriculum states that all children must be able to swim at least 25 metres by the end of year six: i.e. at eleven years old. (I return to this point later in the thesis as it continues to be a worrying concern for me. In my second year of teaching a child in my class drowned and died during the summer holidays because he was unable to swim even 10 metres, which may have saved his life. This is something that has stayed with me for the whole of my teaching career.)

3) The Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to London in 2012

Gordon Brown, the former Prime Minister and former Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his budget speech of 22nd March 2006 that millions of pounds were to be made available to fund young 'elite' sports people in the run up to the Olympics of 2012. However, it is not simply the provision of the run up to the Olympics of 2012 that concerns me, but rather what the Olympic legacy might achieve in terms of enriching local communities and schools if it is to be implemented in a way that is of benefit to local communities. Early indicators are not good, because where the funding is coming from is unclear. It is intimated that external sponsors were being

sought, and there continue to be 'grumblings' about the wider costs [2] of the Games following the closing ceremony at the Beijing Games in August 2008.

Gordon Brown the former Prime Minister also stated that:

> A new schools Olympics will be launched this summer, and they will be held every year in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics in London. (House of Commons Budget Day 22nd March 2006)

He added:

> We need our school sport back where it belongs, playing a central role in the school day. I was lucky enough to go to primary and secondary schools that had sport at the centre of their ethos. I want every child to have that opportunity to take part. (The Prime Minister's Office 13th July 2008)

Apparently the new funding would provide a new National School Sport Week, championed by Dame Kelly Holmes, and a network of 225 competition managers across the country to help schools increase the amount of competitive sport they offer. As part of the initiative, there are also plans for more coaches in schools and the community to deliver expert sporting advice to young people. Yet even this is problematic, because to organise and set up 'sport weeks' or community programmes, the most able teachers are often called away from teaching their pupils in their own schools. So a scant resource is stretched still further. This point was not lost on Professor Margaret Talbot formerly of the Association for Physical Education (afPE), an amalgamation of The British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education, (BAALPE) and The Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom (PEAUK), who commented:

> Although the investment is welcome, there seems to be a real lack of joined-up thinking by the

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[2] In October, November and December 2008, there were serious concerns expressed by a number of global financial institutions that the west was undergoing a financial recession or depression. This was commonly referred to as the 'credit crunch' and some leading brand names went broke during this period.

Government when it comes to youth sport, particularly as it has just cut PE teacher training numbers by 20%. (The Association for Physical Education Office [3] 22nd March 2006)

4) Physical Education and The National Curriculum

State schools have to teach the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum for PE, (NCPE) states in the programmes of study that pupils should gain an in depth understanding of, and make progress in relation to

acquiring and developing skills

selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas

evaluating and improving performance

knowledge and understanding of fitness and health

(NCPE 2000:6)

Moreover:

Teaching should ensure that when evaluating and improving performance, connections are made between developing, selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas, and fitness and health. (NCPE 2000:6)

PE is a foundation subject in the NC as opposed to a core subject. A core subject in the NC has greater importance than a foundation subject, for there is a very clear and acknowledged hierarchy present. English mathematics and science are core subjects and dominate the primary school curriculum particularly at Key Stage Two.

Even the terms used, 'core/foundation', make a distinction, based on value judgement. In a practical sense, core subjects are clearly timetabled and take up the greater part of most days, certainly in English state primary schools. By contrast, foundation subjects like PE often have to be fitted into whatever time is left available during the course of the week. There is an obligation for PE to be taught. It is now statutory that a

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[3] At their respective Annual General Meeting in July 2005, members of the PEAUK and BAALPE voted to merge the two agencies to form a single national association from 1st January 2006. This became the Association for Physical Education (afPE)

minimum of two hours per week is timetabled in curriculum time with extra-curricular activities as optional extras.

Sport, of course, can be very different from PE and is only a part of it. Sport tends to focus on traditional team games like football, rugby or hockey. It can also relate to athletics or swimming perhaps. However, PE is more than this. It is a subject which can involve activities like dance, gymnastics or keep fit. An education of the physical can also involve learning about how the body works, diet, nutrition, citizenship and even aspects of psychology. Many of the strategies now used to overcome an overloaded curriculum are not new to experienced primary school teachers, since many of these, given validation and encouragement by the Plowden Report as long ago as 1967, were reluctantly discarded by some teachers with the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) in 1988 which encouraged a subject-based as opposed to a child-centred approach. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, Mick Waters, former Director of The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority stated that pupils were *'turned off'* by the curriculum, and is currently encouraging views on what a future curriculum might look like.

As noted by Belshaw (2006), Waters stated:

> The national curriculum of 1988 was designed around a model of schooling which dated back to 1904, and had been too subject based

Waters also stated in Belshaw (2006), made the point that:

> pupils were people, not data sources

Early years and Key Stage 1 (KS1) teachers have long understood that young children do not learn best by 'subject' (see for example the Curriculum Guidance for the foundation stage by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000): indeed, vast areas of learning are inseparable and intrinsically linked in the young mind (see, e.g, Vygotsky's notion of the transferability of learning skills in Vygotsky, 1962, and

Bernstein's conceptualisation of 'weak classification' in Bernstein 1971). It is, rather, the adults who place boundaries as to when one subject starts and another one finishes. This is not unlike the concept advocated earlier by Lawson (1991), where I explored the difficulties in defining the term physical education. Notions of combining areas of learning, prioritising, and teaching through 'topics or themes' or addressing specific skills in different contexts (Bernstein's, 1971, 'weak classification' model) may be familiar to the foundation stage primary school teacher and indeed, until fairly recently, have long characterised UK primary school curricula and pedagogies. A topic like 'Our Body', for example, could be taught through Science, Language (English), Music, Art, Maths and of course PE amongst others. It is in this context that many schools embraced the Primary strategy which encourages teaching across *strands* as opposed to themes or topics. Nevertheless it is again possible to link and combine different curriculum areas.

Professor Robin Alexander of Cambridge University, director of the Primary Review (2009), noted in the first of the interim reports *Community Soundings* that primary schools generally were very good places to learn. The report stated in the overview that:

> Primary schools themselves provided unfailingly positive and dynamic settings for children's development and learning. This is not worthy so much of note but of celebration.
>
> (Primary Review 2:2007)

An introduction to the schools

The four schools from east London which took part in the project, using fictitious names here, are

Abney Park in north east London N16

Lea Park in east London E5

Central Park in east central London EC1

Green Park in east London E8

Abney Park in north east London is a large two form entry school located in the same inner-city borough as two of the other three schools, and which was formerly part of the old Inner London Education Authority. It has a nursery attached and is located in a relatively modern 1950s building. It is set in extensive grounds by inner-city school standards and a small multi-sport complex has just been built on one of the school's three playgrounds. The school consistently scores 'average' in the Key Stage Tests league tables in all core curriculum subjects. Abney Park is culturally very diverse and reflects very well the makeup of the local community.

Lea Park equally reflects the local community but scores significantly better than Abney Park in both local and national Key Stage Tests league tables. Lea Park is located to the far east of the borough and is also a two form entry school, but actually has more children registered at the school than Abney Park, and places at the school are highly sought after. The junior school is housed in a separate building from the infants and nursery, in a purpose built 'open-plan' school, built as recently as 1986. It has since reverted back to the use of formal classrooms. These first two schools are about two miles apart and are both set back from the major roads that traverse the borough. Languages spoken at both schools include Greek, Gujerati, Turkish, Kurdish, Bengali, Punjabi, Yiddish, Polish, French, Spanish, Croatian, Russian, and Yoruba amongst others.

Central Park is just inside a neighbouring borough which also used to be part of the old Inner London Education Authority. The school is also housed in a 1950s building. It is a large two form entry school and a new head teacher was recently appointed to improve 'standards' at the school, as these have been perceived to be below the local and national average. The children at Central Park reflect the very large Kurdish,

Asian and Afro-Caribbean make-up of the local community. One of the head teacher's biggest challenges, I was informed, would be to recruit and maintain a stable teaching staff.

Green Park, by way of comparison, has a stable teaching staff with at least four teachers having been there for over fifteen years. It is housed in a very large Victorian building having celebrated its 100th birthday late last century. It performs well in local and national standard attainment target tests, although not as well as Lea Park. Green Park is also a two form entry school and is located in the very heart of the same borough and as would be expected, it is very culturally diverse. It has a very rich sporting tradition and regularly contests local swimming galas, football matches and athletic meetings.

Summarising Comments

In this chapter I have outlined the format of this thesis. I have provided my definition of the term physical education and indicated that it is a key concept throughout this thesis.

I have also provided a brief introduction to the four schools which took part in the research as a means of adding further context and colour to the thesis.

I have provided an autobiographical account of my background and contextualised my research in relation to four key areas. I have also located my work within the remit of the EdD programme and begun to chart my own learning journey. The four key contextual areas discussed which lead into the my literature review in the next chapter are

- The healthy living agenda
- The Every Child Matters agenda
- The Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to London in 2012

- PE and the National Curriculum

In the following chapter, I examine key texts that have influenced my teaching, my thinking and therefore also helped to shape this thesis. I present these texts as part of a conceptual framework which charts my own learning and 'evolving of ideas,' including the areas that I have used to critique these texts. The concepts that evolved out of my review of the selected literature are then used to inform the remainder of this thesis

The Literature review should be read within the scope of my primary research questions, which emerged from my own teaching background. I wanted to find out

- What do the children think about PE?

- How might their views help inform current policy, practice and research?

Chapter Two - Literature review

In this chapter I argue that a greater use of pupil voice should contribute to discussions about future policy, practice and research in the primary setting. I critique current literature in this sector which is largely focussed around the 'core' subjects and notions of school improvement. In this unique piece of research, I develop this understanding of pupil voice still further by exploring the current gaps in literature and focussing on PE and the voices of year 6 children exclusively.

I also define in this chapter my use of the term 'pupil voice' as used in this thesis. I conclude by presenting a critique on the curriculum, market values, purpose and entitlement which emanates from this section of the thesis, and further contextualises my research. This analysis then leads into the following chapter where I introduce the theoretical perspectives used to inform this thesis and where I detail the methodology used to access both data sets.

I now present a conceptual framework to show how my ideas and the literature review have informed each other, and how they both feed directly into the body of the thesis. My conceptual framework also demonstrates how and why I have included certain texts, yet felt it necessary to exclude others, as my choice of themes in the framework mirrors my own learning journey.

I readily acknowledge that there are a vast range of texts, initiatives, reports and reviews which could have been reviewed and discussed as part of this thesis. In compliance with the EdD student handbook, I have been as selective as possible and as concise as I could be, bearing in mind that the guidance suggests that:

> the literature reviewed will be considerably more circumscribed than for a PhD, and is likely to have a professional rather than an academic focus (EdD Student Handbook p.69)

This professional focus has been important to me as it has helped me to review and

reflect on my own development as a teacher and lecturer in education. In many respects this professional focus has helped to shape my critique of the literature in this chapter, as my own understanding has developed as my thesis began to come together. I have used three main themes as a means of grouping my chosen literature and this in turn informs the direction of my research and its articulation through my research questions.

My three themes are

1. Theme 1: Children's voices – Here I offer an examination of the literature around pupil voice and explore how my own agenda was influenced by my developing understanding of the literature.

2. Theme 2: The status quo in primary PE – Here I analyse texts and initiatives which have children's learning and well being including their fitness and health as primary objectives within the NC.

3. Theme 3: Curriculum Development – In this theme I appraise contemporary reports and ideas which offer differing approaches to curriculum structure, and endeavour to reflect modern society.

My Conceptual Framework

My Learning Journey as a teacher which mirrors the themes identified in this conceptual framework

↓

Inspirational and influential texts that showed me that pupil voice was a viable concept as a way forward	Texts which attempted to improve and make the NC work better for the pupils	Ways forward and alternative ideas as to what a curriculum might look like

↓ ↓ ↓

Pupil Voice

1) The Junior Schools Project – Sammons (1987)
2) My Favourite Subject – ILEA (1988)
3) The School I'd like – Burke and Grosvenor (2003)

↓ ↑

The 'Status Quo' in PE

1) A Critical Reflection – Howells (2007)
2) Sport Education in PE – Penney et al (2005)
3) YST – (1994)
4) PESSCL – (2003)
5) PESSYP – (2008)
6) PE: Primary Matters – Griggs (2007)

↓ ↑

Building the future together

1) The Rose Report - (2009)
2) The Cambridge Review – (2009)
3) Could do better – Oates (2010)

↓ ↑

Areas of Critique that I have used in my Literature Review and connections

which inform the thesis

1) Little or no dialogic aspect to the pupil voice literature except where noted	2) PE to focus on team sport and games as key	3) PE's position in the current NC frame work	4) Gradual and marginalisation of PE within the NC at present	5) Policy based evidence – Only use research that suits

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Concept 1: Lawton (2000) asked 'Is there a mismatch between the NC and what is now known about children's ability to be involved in their own learning?'	Concept 2: White (2007) stated 'the current NC is a relic of the 19th century and needs bringing up to date to reflect modern society.'	Concept 3: Mullan (2003) argued 'that an educational system, which focuses on the rights and responsibilities of the child will involve children in decision making processes in all aspects of school life.

Pupil Voice   Aims of a Curriculum   Democratic Processes

↘ ↓ ↙

Pupil's involved in their own learning. Done 'with' them not 'to' them.

Pupil voice & Democratic processes

A curriculum fit for the 21st century
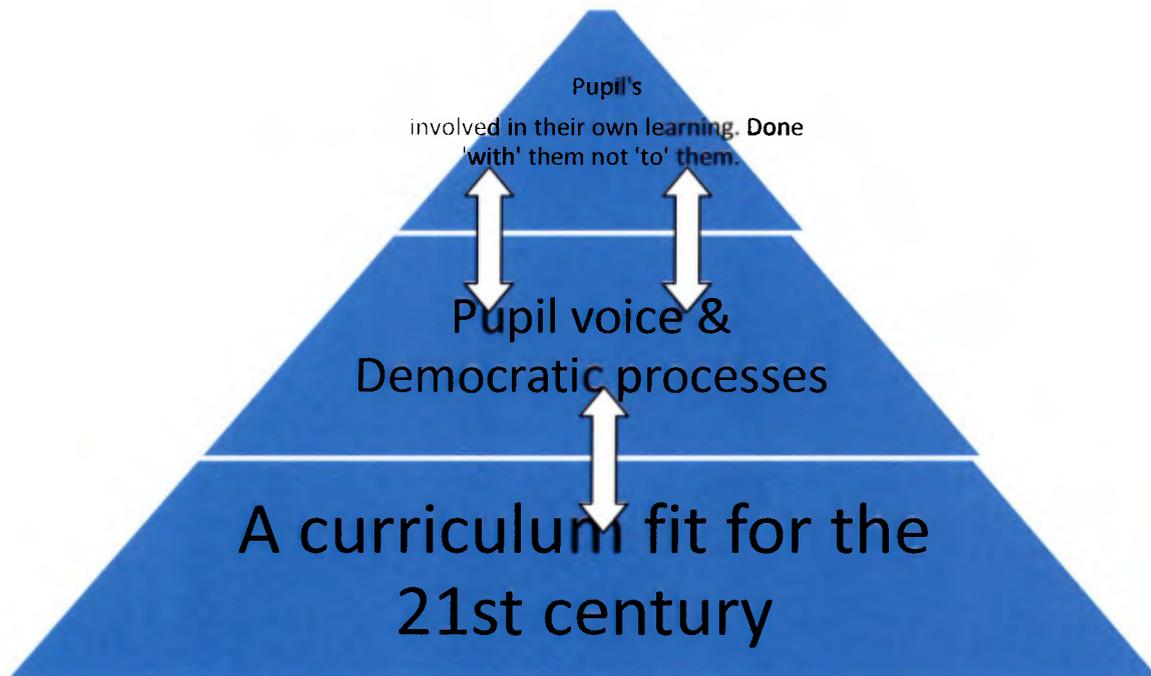
Pupil Voice

I use the term 'pupil voice' or 'children's voices' (often referred to in the literature also as 'student voice') in order to refer to a teaching environment where the children,

students or 'pupils' are actively encouraged to participate in the process of their own education and learning. The children are listened to, and action is taken or seriously considered, as a means of informing school practice which directly impacts upon them. In other words, pupil voice is of a dialogic nature. Rudduck and Fielding (2006), Roberts and Nash (2009). At a fundamental level humanistic methodologies like those advocated by Simons (1987, 1999) Apple (1995), and Fielding (2004, 2008) have people, in this case children, at the heart of any process. The child must come first ahead of any statistical or theoretical demands. Individuals understand their own position in their own learning process. Giving children a voice is an example of how they can be involved in their own learning, thereby gaining a fuller understanding of their own actions and behaviour. In researching this thesis I initially asked 115 children to share their views on PE and a further 121 children in 2010, were asked about the popularity of PE.

Theme 1: – Children's voices

In this section I examine key texts which have inspired me and in many respects have helped me to shape my research, and served as a metaphorical springboard. As Kirby et al have shown (2003), there are many reasons for involving children and young people in research. For example it could be argued that research is more meaningful or has greater validity if the children are actually involved in the research process and it is done with them as opposed to doing it, *to them* as demonstrated by Lewis and Porter (2004). When I first started teaching, a number of studies were carried out to explore junior school pupils' attitudes towards PE (and other subjects). *The Junior School Project*, Sammons (1987), was an example of one of these studies. As part of this project, pupils in their first, second and third years of junior school (years 3, 4 and 5 today), were asked to give their views about two aspects of PE– games and

apparatus work (gymnastics). This was an indication of what was possible by including children in aspects of learning that concerned them. As Lewis and Porter (2006), have also shown that another of the reasons why children might be included in research was in a belief:

> in the importance of democratic participation, and that children should contribute to the decision making process in the development of aspects of their lives that particularly concern them. (p.222)

Not all authors support this position. Indeed there are concerns in relation to how research with children is carried out. Hart (2002), and Dawkins cited in Mills and Keil (2005) and Felce (2002), made the observation that some children may genuinely not want to contribute to research and would prefer to stay silent. I offer the observation that silence can be a very potent statement. However silence was not an issue for the children I spoke with, as my research data will show in the following chapters. The study by Sammons found that:

> The percentage of children giving a positive response to games ranged from 78 per cent in the first year, to 80 per cent in the second year and 82 per cent in the third year; for Physical Education on the apparatus, the corresponding percentages were 79 per cent, 78 per cent and 77 per cent. (Inner London Education Authority 1988:105)

This was significant for me because it was the first time I had seen evidence of children's opinions being valued in their own right. That is to say that the researchers felt that the children's thoughts and views were worthy of recording. However what is not clear in this work by Sammons is how the schools who took part in the research were selected. Questions remain as whether the schools were specifically chosen to give a positive reflection on PE and other subjects, or whether they were chosen randomly from a broad data base. Notwithstanding these concerns, Sammons' conclusion that PE was a very popular subject with most children holds true. In

January 1988, shortly before it was abolished, the Inner London Education Authority

published *My Favourite Subject*. The report of the Working Party on PE and School

Sport, the group which researched the document, noted:

> Thirty-four percent of primary school pupils said that physical education was their favourite
>
> subject (ILEA 1988 p.ii)

This was the greatest percentage recorded for any subject. Similarly:

> Thirty-three percent of secondary school pupils said that physical education was their
>
> favourite subject at school (ILEA 1988, p.ii)

This again was the greatest percentage recorded for any curricular area. (However

there is no evidence that anything was actually done with the findings in this

document.) Not unlike the work of Sammons this is also evidence of policy makers

valuing the 'child's voice' to inform curriculum debate specifically on PE. However,

with the subsequent abolition of the ILEA it was as if the relevance of including the

child to inform the debate was suddenly abandoned, and the concept only began to re-

emerge in the mid to late 1990s as a worthwhile teaching and learning tool, namely

through the work of Jean Rudduck, Rudduck et al (1995), Rudduck and McIntyre

(1998). As Fielding (2004, 2008) acknowledges, and in line with the work initiated by

Sammons and the ILEA, student voice Fielding argues, is not a new phenomenon, but

rather we are seeing a *'New Wave'* of it, and witnessing the 're-emergence' of the

student voice with contemporary issues attached.

Such was the power of *My Favourite Subject* and the breadth of the evidence

presented that it has impacted on my thinking to the present date. The reason that this

document is so important to me is that it showed me, through the 'pooling' and

sharing of ideas, expertise, research and resources across all the inner city London

boroughs, what could be achieved through a collective approach to education. This is

very different to the diverse and fragmented system which is now in place across

London, where some boroughs now purchase external expertise through 'buying in' consultants, and actively compete for teachers from neighbouring education authorities. More than ever I would contend, that we as adult researchers need to recognize that there is no universal 'right way' (ethical issues aside), to carry out research when working with children or a 'perfect methodology waiting out there to be discovered', Northway (2000), Nind et al (2005). There were several questions left unanswered in the work by Sammons and the ILEA, and in many respects their work lacked the warmth and colour of individual children's responses. This however was addressed in *The School I'd like* by Burke and Grosvenor [4] (2003) which added vibrancy to the research process. What stimulated me was that the material in the book was directly drawn from a competition run by *The Guardian*, and that the information was presented not just through the written word but also included children's sketches, drawings, plans and pictures.

It was inspirational for me, in that it confirmed for me that children were still able and willing to give their views about schools and the curriculum. The children did have their own views on education, they were able to offer balanced and logical arguments and they were keen to be heard as argued by Rudduck and her colleagues. (1995, 1998, 2004, 2007) As Lawton (1996, 2000) contended, here was hard empirical evidence that children could be involved in the their own learning, and this demonstrates a shift away from traditional views that contended that children were 'blank slates',[5] and should be 'seen and not heard'.[6] Unlike the ever increasing body

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[4] This was in many ways a reworking of the text 'The School that I'd like' by Edward Blishen, published in May 1969

[5] These traditionalist views may well have a root dating back to the 1690s when John Locke the English philosopher wrote in Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1697) that he believed a sound education began in early childhood, and he insisted that the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic be gradual and cumulative. A blank slate waiting to be inscribed by upbringing and cultural factors rather than innate attributes. (2007 Nu-vision publications. London).

of data that calls for a rethink in what we now know about how children can be involved in their own learning, as articulated by Fielding (2004, 2008), Rudduck and Flutter (2004), and O'Sullivan and MacPhail (2010) for example.

I would argue that actively encouraging the children to take part in the debate is crucial if we are to make advances in the 21st century. There is also, I would contend, a need to go beyond the NC and its subject-centredness. The text strikes at the very heart of democratic processes, and as White (2004, 2007) suggests, and I detail later in the following chapter, we really do need a debate about *What schools are for and why* if every child really is to matter. As this thesis clearly demonstrates the children are only too happy to talk to adults and want to be listened to, if given the opportunity. The Burke and Grosvenor book convinced me that I could place the views of the children at the centre of the debate and therein value their views and thought about PE. Physical Education is not discussed specifically, although Robert 12, from Crewe contributed and recorded:

> The only thing I like about going to school is PE and going to Bob (the school councillor). (p.81)

Mathew 13, from Bangor, Co. Down in Northern Ireland offered:

> The teachers would be easier to talk to, to explain things a lot better and be experts in their field. I would like Linford Christie for PE, Carol Vorderman for Maths, Tony Hart for Art, Bill Gates for I.T., Albert Einstein for Physics. (p.84)

Anna 10, from Derbyshire felt that names were very important:

> English-Mr Write, Mrs Margin, Mrs Read, Graphics-Mr Sketch, Tech-Mr Create, Music-Mrs Viola, PE- Mr Fit, Mrs Jog, Maths- Mrs Multiply and Mr Minus, Art- Mr Picasso, Mrs Rosetti Science-Mrs Explode, Mr Einstein, History- Mr Date and Mrs Fawkes and Geography-Mr

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[6] The earliest reference that I have found to 'children being seen and not heard' comes from John Quincy Adams the 6th President of the United States of America, who in his memoire published in 1875 recalls: " My dear mother's constant lesson in childhood, that children should be seen and not heard" (1875 : Vol V. xii) published by J.B. Lippincott & Co. Philadelphia)

Country (p.84)

What the book does particularly well apart from valuing what the children had to say is to keep teaching and learning democratic by:

- identifying consistencies in children's expressions of how they wish to learn:
- highlighting particular sites of 'disease' in the education system today:
- illustrating how the built environment is experienced by today's children:

  posing questions about the reconstruction of teaching and learning for the twenty-first century (inside front cover)

My criticism is that the texts analysed in this section all have the children as passive recipients of external research, and they are not really fully engaged with their own learning, I would argue that a more dialogic child-school relationship could have been even more productive and insightful. Not unlike Lodge (2005), I argue that a greater emphasis on the dialogic strand of pupil involvement would have enhanced these works still further. Much of the work on the pupil voice, with the exception of Lodge, and Fielding has tended at best to focus on the school improvement aspect, i.e. the usefulness of the pupil voice as feedback for schools and teachers (see much of Rudduck's work in the field). The work by writers like Burke and Grosvenor, whilst having a serious element, has often used humour to illustrate pupil's views on schools. This has sometimes had the effect of treating their views as somewhat lightweight and inconsequential. And then there has often been a faddishness or tokenism in the use of student voice, (see Rudduck and Fielding, 2006). In this theme the essence of my critique has shown that there has been very little or no dialogic aspect to the 'pupil voice literature' and especially in the primary school and in relation to PE as a curriculum area.

Theme 2: The status quo in Primary PE

In this section I now move from a general overview of how pupil voice can be used to

inform practice in PE, into a critique of literature that has the child at the centre of learning, but not specifically through the engagement of pupil voice to inform practice in PE.

The texts and initiatives discussed in this section connect to my first theme in the sense that they see the child as central to their own learning and are attempts to make the NC work in the interests of the child. Howells (2007) work focuses on and discusses the connections between the *Every Child Matters* agenda and the teaching of PE. This text was selected because it has the child at the centre of schooling and addresses PE related issues, children's health and safety, and seeks to ensure that the legal requirements identified in the *Every Child Matters* (2003) agenda are formally implemented into the teaching of PE. Howells' work was particularly enlightening because she sought to practically contextualise the recommendations detailed in *Every Child Matters,* and to bring them to life in a very authentic and believable school-based setting and to locate her honest and often frank reflections into the realms of teaching PE specifically. *Every Child Matters* is the vision for ensuring that every child reaches their full life potential through a multi-agency approach. The document demonstrates a shift in the previous government's thinking away from dealing with consequences towards preventing unwanted situations having occurred in the first place. One of the ways that the former government advocated achieving the document's five goals was through consultation with children, young people and families. This was certainly a change of direction in former government policy where the NC was still largely based on transmitting knowledge to the child. (Hughes 1996, Lawton 1996, 2000, and White 2004, 2007) What is not clear at present is whether children's views on the NC are to be encouraged or indeed to be welcomed by the new coalition government. However as Neil Puffett of Children and Young People

Now recorded:

> The newly formed Department for Education has moved to allay fears that a ban on the use of the phrase Every Child Matters in the new government signals a shift in policy for children and young people. Key changes to phrases include 'help children achieve more' in place of Every Child Matters or the five outcomes. (Puffet 2010).

As this research project has used dialogue with children to inform practice, it could be argued that giving them a voice is one significant step towards allowing children to really matter. Equally in the context of PE, and not unlike my own defining of PE, Howells argues:

> A change is also occurring to educate children about continuing to be healthy through physical activity, not only in the physical education lessons but by developing interests and experiences in school that lay the foundation for an active adult lifestyle from playing competitively to regularly participating in healthy activities and understanding the fundamental importance of exercise as a key determinant of longer term health and weight control (2007, p.ii)

Howells advocates a cross-curricular approach to teaching, where PE is successfully integrated into other lessons to improve physical and emotional well being, as well as concentration and academic performance. Quite how these outcomes are specifically achieved is not detailed by Howells. However, she does go on to raise the wider issue in that the objectives laid out in ECM can only be achieved through teachers being comfortable with cross-curricular approaches to teaching, and whilst this in itself, will be a challenge in teacher education as:

> the non Physical Education specialist will have to train in something that they may not be comfortable with and may be cynical about the value. (ibid)

Howells also argues that for every child to matter, the teaching profession faces another challenge, in the sense that a change in *teaching styles* in relation to PE will also necessary. Traditionally and prior to the ECM agenda, PE has tended to be dominated by team games, but as Howells succinctly states:

the ECM agenda produced the question of whether all children like to be in a peer pressurised

team situation. To ensure that all children are fulfilling their potential and have positive

physical well being, there is a need to include more individual sports such as swimming,

dance and gymnastics to a greater extent (Op. Cit.p.iii)

This is in stark contrast to the new coalition government's proposals which call for a

return to traditional competitive team sports, Gove (2010a).

What this thesis does is to illuminate what children do enjoy and what they do not

enjoy, and what they understand about PE, curriculum content, and timetabling as a

means of demonstrating that they are willing and able to contribute to discussions, if

given the opportunity. Being safe is another key aspect of the ECM agenda both in

and out of school. Howells goes on to identify another raft of challenges including

ensuring that all staff, including parents and volunteer after school club workers or

Adults Other Than Teachers (AOTT)s possess full Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

checks. All schools, and after school clubs, now have to legally risk assess every

single learning environment to ensure the safety of the children in their care. However

although not mentioned by Howells in her paper under the section *Being Safe and*

Teaching Physical Education, there is no mention of the NC requirement that all

children must be able to swim at least twenty-five metres by the end of year six. How

this challenge might be met is still unclear, because at present many thousands of

children nationally are not reaching this target and this is largely because schools

cannot afford to send their children swimming, Chan (2007). Quite how any

government of the future envisages every child being safe in and out of curriculum

time, *in and around water* (my italics), when many are likely to be unable to swim

does not appear to be a realistic outcome. (This is discussed in greater detail later in

the thesis as a result of a point raised by the children.) Penney et al (2005) offer a

relatively novel approach to improve the teaching of PE within the confines of the

NC, and inherently is about making the NC work better. The text *Sport Education in Physical Education: Research Based Practice* is an informative text because it is concerned with taking Physical Education forward into the 21st century as a means of being inclusive to all, clearly linking a number of different areas of learning, not unlike the work of Howells (2007). It emphasises the richness of teaching PE through 'Sport Education', where students can be involved in a number of different ways. For example, students are encouraged to be loyal to each other and to contribute to a team or group's combined achievements over a given period, like a football or netball season. Perhaps significantly the culmination of the season is to celebrate sporting success through a sporting festival or Olympic type finale. Not unlike the work of Howells, this text also seeks to make the NC work effectively. The authors clearly value the school-based research method of enquiry as an instrument to facilitate practice. A number of key issues are discussed at length in the second section of the text and are directly related to issues that have arisen in my own research area. For example, *Sport Education* is not an attempt to replace PE, but offers a different teaching approach, and through this fresh approach it again raises awareness of how limiting a subject based or subject centred curriculum really is. I have also chosen to include this text in the literature review because, although the approach is based on secondary school teaching, it is linked to the primary school philosophy where subjects are blended and can be taught through topics or themes. This is a point I make explicit in chapter one where the work of Vygotsky (1962), Bernstein (1971), and Lawson (1991) examine some of the problems associated with classifying subject content and boundaries *Sport Education* is discussed in terms of inclusion, assessment, cross-curricular learning, citizenship and leadership, and perhaps poignantly for me, *lifelong learning,* all aspects which sit comfortably with my own

definition of PE. PE when taught well can be a positive life-long learning experience, where the learner is physically active throughout the whole of their life. Most appropriately the authors of the text make the observation that:

> It is not enough to say to someone, learn and you will increase your life chances. The learner needs to know that they have the power to apply their learning and to benefit from it (p.102)

The authors look to the future as a means of progress and where the child is central to the learning and valued. These ideas are particularly timely as they link to Lawton's ideas which are discussed in the next chapter, where he contends that there have been advances made in what we understand about children's learning. The authors of *Sport Education* state:

> The approach should be selective and reflect the learning needs of the particular students involved…The complexity of cross-curricular experiences will need to suit different learning capabilities and grow over time to reflect advances in learning. (p.75)

However a major weakness in the text lies in the fact that the authors make consistent and repeated references to the NC, and it is not challenged in *any* significant way. It is a very successful book at attempting to make the NC work, rather than contesting the notion, for example, that the existing subject based curriculum needs modernising, or a major overhaul of the aims that underpin it might be a worthwhile exercise in terms of modernising current practice. As we have completed the first ten years of the 21st century, the use of pupil voice and the need to question the basis of the aims of the curriculum becomes increasingly more significant if changes in practice are to take place in the 21st century.

The Youth Sport Trust is a registered charity that was set up in 1994, with a mission statement that seeks to build a brighter future for young people by enhancing the quality of their physical education and sporting opportunities. It states:

> We want to increase young people's participation and enjoyment of PE and school sport

We want young people to have the chance to experience and enjoy different types of activity at whatever level is right for them

We want to ensure that youngsters receive the best teaching, coaching and resources possible and have the chance to progress if they show talent

We want to help our young people to live healthy and active lives and to be the best they can be (Youth Sport Trust: homepage 2010)

The YST mission statement clearly acknowledges that there were, and there continue to be deep rooted problems associated with the NC, PE and school sport. For example, it calls for a brighter future for young people, with the clear implication that the experience of many young people was not so bright. In seeking to achieve the goals outlined in their mission statement, since 1994 the YST has had a great deal of outstanding success. For example, the developing of the 'TOP' resources, their implementation in schools and community clubs, and the training of teachers and coaches to deliver high quality PE and sport, has been unquestionable. The YST also secured from the previous government, notably the DfES / DCMS, a joint statement via a Public Services Agreement (PSA) that 75% of all children had to do two hours of high quality PE and school sport per week by 2006. As a means of achieving these goals the YST in partnership with outside agencies developed two key strategies, namely the PESSCL (PE and School Sport Clubs Link strategy), and the PESSYP (PE and Sport Strategy for Young People).

PESSCL was implemented and accessed by schools between 2003 and 2008, supported by a government commitment of £978 million and topped up by a further £686 million of lottery funding.

PESSYP by contrast was a relatively new strategy which builds on the work initiated through the earlier PESSCL strategy. PESSYP launched in January 2008, and outlined the outgoing government's commitment to improve the quantity and quality

of PE and school sport undertaken by young people aged 5 to 19 years old in England. The former government pledged a further £755 million via a second PSA to fund PESSYP the latest initiative. Not unlike PESSCL, PESSYP requires key roles in the infrastructure of specialist sports colleges, school sport partnerships, national governing bodies, and other community providers to ensure that all 5 to 16 year olds have access *to two hours of PE and three hours beyond the curriculum* and 16 to 19 year olds to have three hours of sport outside of the curriculum. Collectively this is referred to as *The Five Hour Offer.*

The YST emphasise that where PESSYP differs significantly from PESSCL is that it not only details the quantity of time that young people should get for their PE lessons and schools sport experiences, but in addition it underlines the expectation that what is being offered, must be of a certain standard.

I find the basis of the YST and subsequently the PESSCL and PESSYP strategies highly problematic. I question the use of a government using a charity to promote PE and sport for its young citizens. Most charities do outstanding and much needed work, both in terms of raising awareness of issues and collecting urgently needed funds. However as Klein (2207), Pilger (1998), and Monbiot (1990, 2003) might have argued, is it really the place of charities to do what government should be doing in the first place? Do charities at times mask further deeper lying problems? Perhaps pertinently, Monbiot makes the point that:

> The surest test of an agency's effectiveness is not that it sustains itself, but that it makes itself redundant. (*The Guardian* ,1990)

The YST continues to do an exceptional job across a wide range of contexts. Yet as noted by Margaret Talbot in my introductory chapter, teacher training places for PE specialists continue to fall. In the primary sector the teaching of PE to undergraduates also continues to decrease. At colleges like the Institute of Education, the teaching of

PE to Post Graduates working towards qualified teacher status is as little as one day for the year long course. As more and more teacher training resources go 'on line' it appears that this trend will continue. The point that I wish to emphasise here is that a greater investment by central government in the training of teachers to teach PE and school sport seems likely to be a more productive way to reach teachers. By increasing the quantity and quality of teacher training in relation to PE and sport at the point of entry into the profession, surely a far greater number of new teachers could be accessed? Experienced and long standing teachers could still access the training initiatives offered locally through, for example, the PESSYP initiative. One of the issues that I experienced in my own education authority when implementing the 'TOPS' programme as part of PESSCL was that three schools out of the authority's sixty-eight primary schools chose not to participate at all in the programme. Therefore the schools' teachers never had the opportunity to access the initiative, which was extremely disappointing from my perspective. Perhaps, on reflection, sixty-five schools out of sixty-eight schools was a fair indicator that in terms of numbers, PESSCL had been very successful.

Another facet of the PESSCL strategy achieving the desired outcomes was in relation to successful schools being awarded prestigious honours to note their achievements. Secondary schools could merit a *Sportsmark* award and primary schools the *Activemark* award. There was concern amongst some teachers, myself included, that ministers had diluted the criteria to gain the prestigious awards in order to enable more schools to hit targets more easily in the run up to 2012. My views were based on the fact that in 2007 only 500 secondary schools had merited the award, but by the autumn term of 2008, 2122 had achieved the award. In the primary sector, around 7000 primary schools held the award in 2007, yet this had doubled in 2008 to 14,603

schools. Perhaps the venture had been extremely successful, or teachers and School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCOs) and Primary Lead Trainers (PLTs), the personnel responsible for assessing their schools, had been liberal in their assessment of the criteria. However a closer look at the criteria reveals a little more. Prior to November 2007 the criteria to gain an *Activemark* in the primary school stated that 90 per cent of pupils across the school must be doing two hours of PE and sport, the school must hold a sports day, the school must have bettered the national average for the range of sports that it offered, and the percentage of pupils participating in sports clubs linked to their school or school sport partnership had to be high. After November 2007 for both primary and secondary schools the specific criteria were replaced by one statement, which stated that provided 90 per cent of pupils across the school were doing at least two hours of high quality PE and school sport a week, then this was sufficient to gain the award.

The other interesting point in analysing this part of the PESSCL strategy is that authorities are only obliged to inspect 10 per cent of their schools for the audit. (DCSF & DCMS: PESSCL September 2008) Although it is still a little too early to begin to analyse the long term effects of the PESSYP strategy, already it is becoming clear to me that the *five hour offer* is too optimistic. At local level in my own education authority in the run up to Christmas 2010, local schools have been barely doing one hour per week as a result of the severe weather sweeping the country, and the continual use of the school hall for nativity play rehearsals, choir practice and Christmas parties. Moreover, anecdotally, trainee teachers returning from teaching practice in the late spring of 2010 after their teaching practices are reporting back to me a very patchy account of PE provision in schools indeed. As part of both PESSCL and PESSYP, SSCO's, often the more able teachers of PE at both primary and

secondary levels, are often called away from their own schools to organise and set up 'sports weeks', festivals and competitions within their own authorities, and for their own 'clusters' of primary schools. Of course even this is problematic as a scant resource is stretched still further. As Griggs (2007) noted, this is just one of the many issues faced by primary schools, and these issues are likely to change of course with the new government taking office.

However, as already indicated, a reliance on the work of a charity to support curriculum delivery no matter how effective is going to be problematic. As intimated in chapter one, Michael Gove, the new Secretary of State for Education, in line with his new coalition government's public funding policy, has seen fit to restrict and alter the funding of the School Sport Partnerships and Colleges over the next twelve months. This is in spite of the fact that the School Sport Partnerships not only met the targets set by the previous government but exceeded every single one of them. Moreover, as optimistic as it was, the Secretary of State for Education in his letter to Baroness Sue Campbell, chair of the Youth Sport Trust, states very clearly that he is:

> removing the need for schools to plan and implement their part of a five hours offer
>
> (Department for Education, 2010b)

The significance of Griggs'(2007) work in outlining many of the difficulties faced by primary school teachers was that it highlighted real concerns across a range of areas, and detailed in my introductory chapter, were not just confined to my part of north-east London, indicating that there were problems in the teaching of primary school PE nationally.

Griggs details many of the difficulties faced by teachers in the primary sector. For example there continue to be issues surrounding the amount of PE actually taught in primary schools despite the statutory requirements of the NC. Some primary schools are also using outside agencies to teach PE lessons as a means of giving their teachers

planning and preparation time. Griggs argues that a *'top down'* (p.66) model of PE provision, where secondary schools support primary delivery, is flawed because the support arrives too late to really make a difference to the children, and a *'bottom up'* (my italics) model is much more desirable, where expert input is in place at the beginning of the educational process. Griggs states:

> Physical Education is in a state of neglect and that relatively little attention is being given to it. (p.60)

Moreover Griggs asserts that any model that has weak foundations, and in this case he is referring to primary PE provision, is doomed to fail. The outgoing government by contrast would argue that PE and sport is categorically *not* in a state of neglect nor that little attention is being paid to it. The former government might easily have referred the reader to look at the number of medals, including gold medals, brought back from Beijing in the summer of 2008, (although very few were for track and field events), or direct them to explore the number of sporting initiatives on offer to schools. But herein lies one of the problems: sport, as discussed earlier, is only one part of PE and the previous government tended to look at sport as the be all and end all of PE. (See, for example, the comments made by the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown in the previous chapter and earlier in this section.) Pertinently, Griggs concludes by making the point that:

> Current policy, though intending to help, arguably does more harm than good by embracing the sporting community within a system that they do not understand. If Physical Education and in turn sport want to advance in the UK and if politicians want Olympic gold medals and to tackle childhood obesity and sedentary lifestyles, then what needs to happen is a shifting of priorities (p.66)

In theme two I have explored what PE looks like essentially in the primary sector and I have critiqued texts and initiatives which have attempted to improve primary

provision. In essence my critique through this theme has demonstrated that the positioning of PE and attempts to make it work more effectively for many children in the existing NC framework is still largely problematic. My critique in essence also raises the issue that restricting PE to traditional team sport is not helpful to many children.

In my third theme I analyse recent and very different reviews on how to improve the NC as it stands.

Theme 3: Curriculum Development

In this section I initially discuss two contemporary reports both of which have reviewed primary education provision generally, and both of which have implications for the teaching and delivery of PE and school sport specifically. I also discuss the recently published paper by Oates (2010) of the Local Examination Syndicate (LES) at the University of Cambridge. The new Secretary of State for Education stated in a press release from his office that:

> This fascinating and insightful paper offers a concise analysis of some of the problems with our current National Curriculum and helps explain why so many other nations are outpacing us in educational performance (Department for Education, 2010c)

I have included this paper as it may give us an early indication of the new coalition government's position on education policy. This paper also appears at first hand to be cloaked in misleading and unhelpful language. For example it will depend on what criteria is used to assess 'educational performance' and how exactly is the perceived 'outpacing' actually measured and what time period is used to make such an analysis? However I begin this section by discussing the,

a) Rose Report – *The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (2009),* and the so-called

b) Alexander Review – *The Cambridge Primary Review: children, their world, their work, their education* (2009).

In examining these reviews, I will also compare and contrast across both documents and refer to them from here on in their shortened forms of The Rose Report and The Cambridge Review respectively. I begin with The Rose Report.

In the spring of 2009, The Rose Report was published by The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), now called The Department for Education. The challenge that Sir Jim Rose faced in his remit from the DCSF was in shaping a curriculum, yet offer change and stability at the same time. Rose had to streamline what already existed in the primary curriculum to appease the teaching unions who argued that its members had to teach too much already, yet also incorporate two additional areas – Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) – as well as sex education, which is to become compulsory.

At first glance not much appears to have changed with Rose's formula, but a closer inspection reveals more. The Report recommends that the curriculum is arranged into six areas of learning (or understanding). For each area of learning, the essential knowledge, key skills, and breadth of learning are specified. So for example *Physical development* in the early years becomes *Understanding physical health and wellbeing* at key stages one and two. This area of learning then becomes *Physical education and Personal, social, health and economic education* at key stages three and four. The Rose Review is an attempt at encouraging a move away from teaching specific subjects in the primary sector. Of course the Rose Review is not without its critics and perhaps unsurprisingly, Robin Alexander director of the Cambridge Review challenged the Rose Review in his keynote lecture in June 2009 stating that Rose was only ever given a narrow remit in which to work by the DCSF. He stated:

> If he (Rose) is talking about a new model of curriculum operated in the same way as the
>
> present one, in the same political culture and with all the organisations doing the same jobs, I
>
> think the same complaints and problems will persist – and that the two tier curriculum that had
>
> dogged primary education since Victorian times will continue.
>
> (Westminster Education Forum, 2009)

Many head teachers also considered the Rose Report to be a ploy by the former government to be a spoiler to the more in depth and thorough Alexander Review. Elsewhere the afPE have expressed grave concerns regarding the way that the Rose Review has de-prioritised PE still further (2009). Foremost are the concerns that it will be possible for some teachers to actually teach PE without any physical activity in the PE lesson. This may certainly appear as an 'easy option' to the inexperienced teacher, the NQT who has received insufficient training at college, or the teacher who is afraid of teaching PE or plainly uncomfortable. In producing the final version of the Rose Review advice given by a range of agencies promoting PE and school sport has gone unheeded.

Margaret Talbot in response to the Rose Review argued on behalf of most physical educationalists that:

> Sadly for physical education both Sir Jim and the Secretary of State have chosen to ignore the
>
> expert advice given by the lead officers of afPE, the Youth Sport Trust, and the (then)
>
> Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. (The Rose Primary Review, 2009)

What I found surprising in the Rose Review was that there was no mention of the PESSYP strategy, yet the exiting government had pledged £755 million towards the project. There is no mention of the National Dance Strategy, and dance has even been moved to the group of subjects *Understanding the Arts*. This is not the first time that we have seen the eroding of the subject matter, as it was only in the last decade that athletic activities and outdoor adventurous activities disappeared from the Key Stage One PE curriculum. Perhaps the biggest worry of all is that the notion of physically

moving and being active during PE lessons is not emphasised. This is surprising considering the former government's concerns regarding children's health, activity levels and the ECM agenda. Quite how much of either report, will be finally implemented, if any, remains to be seen, as historically this is not always the case and not all reports and recommendations are acted upon. (See for example, the Thomas Report of 1985 which looked at the primary curriculum or the Tomlinson Report of 2004 where the author urgently calls for administrative reform with regards to examinations, and how problems continued for a number of years afterwards.) The Conservatives went on record to state that should they win the next General Election they would not be implementing the Rose Report. This was confirmed by the new Secretary for Education Michael Gove shortly after taking office, when he confirmed this in a press release from his office on the 8th June 2010. However, as the TES reported, some schools had indicated before the summer holidays began that if they were given the choice by Michael Gove, they would still implement the Rose recommendations, as they had already started work on implementing it. (TES 16th July 2010, p.12)

Prior to the election, the education select committee of MPs reported back on their findings in relation to the Rose Report and the final draft of the Cambridge Review. The Rose Report was criticised because its proposals were seen as unnecessarily complex. The committee also criticised the Cambridge Review for saying too little about what should replace the National Curriculum. The committee in turn offered some of its own suggestions as a way forward, including the notion that 'simplicity' was the best way to proceed. It seems that everybody is entitled to express their views about the NC, except the key stakeholders – the children, and it is on this point that I now wish to discuss the Cambridge Review.

Although I would argue that both reviews of the primary curriculum acknowledge the need for reform and are moves forward, the Rose Review in comparison with the Cambridge review has one glaring omission. The Rose Review proudly details who were consulted in the review:

> A wide range of evidence has been drawn upon to fulfil the remit. For example information has been taken from the extensive databases of the QCA, Ofsted, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the National Strategies and the DCSF. Views have been sought from a wide range of stakeholders, including teacher unions, professional bodies, specially convened groups of head teachers and teachers, inspectors and advisers, teacher trainers, researchers and subject specialists. Much helpful information has also stemmed from unsolicited contributions from individuals and groups, such as parents and carers. (Interim Report p.13)

But not from any children, (my italics).

The Cambridge Review by contrast is an in depth analysis of primary education provision. It is the most detailed and thorough review since the Plowden Report of 1967. The Cambridge team was supported by 60 researchers, and had a 21 strong advisory committee, with a management group led by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. As part of the process of compiling the final report, over 20 surveys were carried out, 31 interim reports examined a range of diverse matters, including conversations with local communities. The final report drew on over 4000 published sources from many areas of research. For example the interim report 5/3, Children and their primary schools: Pupils Voices (2007) included no fewer than 20 sources relating to pupil voice and the primary school, for example, *Children and their Primary Schools: Pupils' Voices* by Robinson and Fielding. (2007) Essentially the Alexander Review has the child at the heart of the report. Pupil voice is included and it makes reference to the ECM agenda throughout. The review offers 75 recommendations some of which sit very comfortably with this thesis. For example

Respect and support childhood (4-21)

- Respect children's experience, voices and rights, and accept the UN Convention on the Rights of the child as the framework for policy

Closing the gap on achievement (6-8)

- Maintain the focus of policy on reducing under-achievement

The report recommends a greater emphasis on Initial Teacher Training to include more work regarding the challenges of diversity and difference. More work is needed to promote the equal valuing and treatment of children at school, especially in relation to ethnicity, gender and special needs. I agree with the Cambridge Report that there is a greater need to counter stereotyping and prejudice. Equity should be fundamental to professional consciousness. As we shall see in chapter four, the children who were given a voice and included in the discussion surrounding PE in this thesis came from an extremely diverse set of backgrounds. Equally as I shall argue in the next chapter, where I use the work of White (2004, 2007) to support my positioning, there is also a call for a significant rethink of the aims that underpin the curriculum. The Cambridge Review, not unlike White, recommends:

Aims (32-37)

- Establish a new and coherent set of aims, values, and principles for 21st century primary education, in addition to any wider aims for the school system as a whole
- Make the aims drive rather than follow curriculum, teaching, assessment, schools and educational policy

More significantly, the Review calls for a new curriculum:

A new curriculum (38-53)

- Introduce a new primary curriculum which:
    - Firmly aligns with the aims, values and principles in 32-37
    - Guarantees children's entitlement to breadth, depth and balance, and to high standards in all of the proposed domains, not just some of them

- Ensures that language, literacy and oracy are paramount

- Combines a national framework with a locally devised community curriculum

- Encourages greater professional flexibility and creativity

- Wind up the primary national strategy and re-integrate literacy and numeracy with the rest of the curriculum

These recommendations are key because from a PE perspective there is much to be commended in the review. The review acknowledges that breadth and balance in *all the proposed domains* is a child's entitlement. Moreover the review recognises the damaging effects of the split between *core* and *foundation* subjects, which is worsened by the relative neglect of the non-core subjects in schools and in the school inspection process. What the review does is to acknowledge the distinct contribution that PE offers a child, and the term *physical development* is used positively. This is in stark contrast to the Rose Report which excludes physical skills from the list of 'essential skills' required for primary children's educational achievement.

Earlier in this thesis I showed how Talbot formerly of the afPE (2006) outlined her concerns that there were problems with the limited amount of time that student teachers receive as part of their training. This point was not lost on Alexander's team either, for as Talbot noted in Physical Education Matters (2009), the possibility of a two year PGCE course might be worth revisiting and she also made the following points that:

- The report questions "Ofsted claims about the 'best ever' quality of ITT"

- The recommendations for review of ITT and CPD are based on concerns which most subject associations have articulated for many years

  Physical Education Matters: (2009, p.11)

In the same article Talbot quotes directly from the Cambridge Review and emphasises the point that:

> Children have a right to a curriculum which is consistently well taught regardless of the
> perceived significance of its various elements, or the amount of time devoted to them. (ibid)

Of course the Cambridge Review is a lot more complex than the Rose Report and this is understandable considering the depth, breadth and length of the review. Whilst I acknowledge there are many positive features in the Review, there are other aspects which are less positive. For example the notion of the proposal that 70% of time should be spent on the national curriculum, with 30% developed to meet community needs is a good one with lots of exciting opportunities from a PE perspective, but is it really as simple as that? What I would have liked to have seen was a far reaching statement about the range of learning experiences required in primary education, but *with the detailed application left to the schools themselves in how they timetabled and delivered the curriculum,* notwithstanding the point that physical education provision must include a variety of physical experiences. What continues to be unclear is quite how much freedom the new Secretary of Education will allow schools in relation to teaching the curriculum In a memorandum sent to and accepted by the United Kingdom Parliament from Professor Norman Thomas (2008), advising on Children, Schools and Families, Thomas argued that:

> The first overt action in the setting up of the National Curriculum was the identification of a
> series of subjects as its base. They corresponded to those commonly to be found on secondary
> school timetables but excluded foreign languages as far as primary schools were concerned.
> Working parties were set up to consider what the subjects were to include. Whilst helpful in
> recognising that children should acquire a range and depth of knowledge and understanding,
> this approach inevitably meant that the National Curriculum suffered and continues to suffer
> from being defined in this top down way. What is needed in the revision of the National
> Curriculum is a broad opening statement about what the school system (including the
> foundation stage) should be contributing to the growth and learning of the children it serves.

The subsequent Cambridge Primary Review document published in April 2010 calls

for an address of the perennially neglected question of what primary education is for

and states that educational aims:

> must be grounded in a clear framework of values – for education is at heart a moral matter.
>
> (p.193)

In his study of international curricula Oates, (2010) states that:

> The National Curriculum in England continues to manifest significant structural problems.
>
> These need to be corrected prior to securing a period of essential stability in arrangements.
>
> (p.16)

Oates looks to international models of curriculum content and structure as the way

forward. Oates directly cites the examples from Singapore, Finland, Hong Kong and

even the Canadian state of Alberta. What is significant here is that none of the

population of any of these countries or states exceeds seven million, yet the

population of England is presently estimated at over fifty one million, and is far more

diverse culturally than any of the examples cited. Moreover, in citing the example of

Finland where all teachers must have a Masters degree, Michael Gove in extolling the

virtues of the Finnish system, outlines how in England new entrants to the teaching

profession must have at least a second class degree to become a teacher. However as

Dutton showed in *The Times Education Supplement* in an article entitled 'The silent

truth of the Finnish classroom', that far from all Finnish teachers having Masters

degrees many schools were hiring teachers who did not make the grade at all. Perhaps

most worrying of all is that Oates sees 'consensus' on curriculum aims as

problematic. He concludes:

> One of the major concerns of the revision processes adopted previously is that they have
>
> lapsed into a drive towards consensus – there are indicators that the developers involved in the
>
> recent reviews were preoccupied with generating consensus. (p.16)

This is exactly what Alexander and Rose were trying to achieve, consensus that brings the very diverse nature of England's population together through democratic processes of including the diverse groups not emphasising the differences between the groups. Moreover Oates' paper draws heavily on the work of Archer (1979) and Green (1990) who contend that the education system in England is characterised by a problematic level of 'consensus seeking'. One could reasonably argue that exactly the opposite is true and that we do not have enough consensus at any level. As Thomas (2010) argued Oates' paper is full of 'double speak' and actually says very little that is new. I offer the observation that children or children's voices are rarely mentioned at any level in the paper, and that whilst an analysis of 'international' curricula is a good thing, a hurried and poorly thought through response to the Rose or Alexander reviews is not helpful in any context.

Through this theme I have argued that the essence of my critique is that we have continued to see an erosion and marginalisation of PE in the primary school, and that governments listen only, and pay heed to research that they suits their own agendas. This is often referred to as policy based evidence, and leads into the next section in this chapter and also serve as a link to my theoretical positioning which follows in the next chapter.

A critique of the curriculum purpose and market values

In this thesis although I focus essentially on the work of White (2004, 2007) a philosopher, I link his work with Ball, a sociologist (1993), Lawton, an educationalist (1996, 2000), Simon (1987, 1999), and other respected commentators like Apple (1995), Fielding (2004, 2008) and Marquand (2003). From a theoretical position (and I discuss this in the following chapter), these different perspectives are connected by the notion of democracy and the role of the learner being central in educational

processes. Whereas Ball argues that trends like private-public partnerships can be useful and pragmatically justifiable, he suggests that they may, if the balance is not properly weighted, work against other equitable educational perspectives. For example, with the current global emphasis on literacy in Information and Communications Technology, and funding coming from a variety of private and public sources both in the UK and elsewhere to support such development, ICT becomes yet another area of the curriculum that has to be not just 'fitted in' but given a curriculum priority – usually, it could be argued (cf. Moore & Klenowski 2003), at the expense of subjects like PE, Art or Music. In the case of PE, as school life becomes more sedentary the balance should logically witness an increase in physical activity to counter the extra hours sat at a computer console: a trend which, however, is not yet very apparent.

Furthermore, as Ball (1993) goes on to argue, the values of the market-place may well be replacing traditional interpretations of education, in ways that go beyond a straightforward influence over curriculum content and form. As noted earlier, Fielding (2004, 2008), Marquand (2003) and others would argue that change to the educational system is already in process. One could reasonably hypothesise that whilst the former UK Government's drive on ICT literacy is certainly producing a workforce more able to meet the changing nature of the global marketplace, it is not really any more beneficial to the individual if the newly acquired skill is then used in a windowless tele-sales centre, or where one is judged by how many 'hits' have been successfully recorded on a web page. Has logging-on, we might ask, replaced the clocking-in card? Are the long hours endured in a call-centre with no natural light a 21st century version of a Dickensian factory or mill? Equally, what of the ongoing debate about the previous government's (and possibly the current coalition's) keen interest, with inner-

city academies and how they are being funded by corporate partners? Will they not have very clear views on educational outcomes? In addition, if the medical professions are right (and it certainly appears that they are), the related illnesses associated with increased inactivity of our young people is likely to be a subsequent burden on our National Health Service. Is there not now a greater need than ever for an education about our physical, as well as about our marketable selves? Questions of rights, entitlement and benefits to the individual do not go away easily and do not sit comfortably with the aspirations of the ECM agenda, and pupil's involvement in their own learning.

A critique of the NC as entitlement and children's learning outcomes

When the NC was first introduced by the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker in 1988, it was hailed as a curriculum of entitlement. Yet it does not appear to have evolved into a curriculum of entitlement at all, because the learner is still not seen as central in the learning process. The NC was defined as a curriculum of entitlement to optimise the learning experiences for all children, but where some subjects are given greater prominence than others. So how this might be achieved for all children in all subject areas is still unclear. The fact that there have been so many additions and amendments to the original NC, introduced in 1988, suggests that it was far from a complete forward looking and inclusive document. In *Testing Times* (2008), Stobart argues that the gradual assessment of the curriculum has driven curriculum development, rather than, as it should be, the contents and priorities in the curriculum determining the nature and prominence of the assessment. The Primary Strategy (2003) for example, which saw a 'loosening of the shackles' for many teachers is but one of the more recent reports and initiatives to impact on the NC. Children learn in different ways and whilst this is useful to acknowledge, it is not

helpful to stereotype different types of learners as a means of shaping a child's future. For example a child might be seen as a predominantly visual, or kinaesthetic, learner, but a good teacher would know that knowledge or subject content can be presented to the child in different ways. The argument is whether the child is introduced to the subject content or whether the subject content is introduced to the child in a way that the child can access the material, and how the child is then 'measured' in relation to how successful they have been in absorbing the subject content. For example in the context of PE, the teacher can talk for many hours about the effects of exercise on the heart and lungs. They can show pictures and view CD ROMS to support auditory or visual learning. However only by doing physical exercise can the child physically feel, see, hear, touch, smell and experience the effects of exercise on the heart and lungs. The fortunate child may well understand this physiological process through communicating and viewing the relationship using Information and Communication Technology (ICT), but through *doing* the learning, the teacher is opening further approaches to learning. When one discusses childhood development in an educational context, one equally has to discuss 'entitlement', since the two are inseparable if the child is seen as the centre of an educational process. As Edwards and Kelly (1998) have argued:

> entitlement is a moral term, it encapsulates the notion of rights. And in a democratic context, the rights any individual has are intended to benefit him/her rather than society at large. Thus the right to an entitlement curriculum is a right to a form of education deliberately designed to promote the development of each individual. (p.xii)

Since I am contending that the NC has not developed into a curriculum of entitlement as it was stated it would, I offer the observation that it never could for outcomes and entitlement are viewed differently. I would also argue further, that in reality, it has achieved in fact the opposite, and has become more of a hindrance than a help. As

long as a primary curriculum is organised in a way that does not have the child as central to the learning process, and areas of learning are clearly divided into subjects which do not take into account how children learn, the questions that will not dissipate are, and to paraphrase White (2004, 2007), 'Who is education for?' and 'What is it for?' In answering these questions, a useful point of reference is Edward and Kelly's (1998) assertion that a curriculum which does not take into account of *the interrelatedness of all aspects of the experience of being human'* (p.xii) cannot be said to be a curriculum of entitlement.

Summarising Comments

In this chapter I have outlined my conceptual framework and I have articulated how I have used the term 'pupil voice' in this thesis. I have positioned the literature review in the context of my primary research questions which are

- What do the children think about PE?
- How might their views help inform current policy, practice and research?

I have provided through this literature review three themes which mirrored my own learning journey. Through critiquing these three themes I have demonstrated where there are 'gaps' in the literature and how this research adds to the existing body of knowledge and goes some way to addressing these 'gaps.' The five major areas that I have used to critique the literature in this section are

1) There is little or no dialogic aspect to the literature which focuses on pupil voice, relatively little, on the primary curriculum foundation subjects, and even less on PE.

2) PE should not be restricted to just traditional team sports and is at odds with my own definition of PE.

3) The positioning of PE within the existing NC framework is highly problematic and does not take into account the advances made in understanding how children can be involved in their own learning.

4) The gradual erosion and marginalisation of PE as a subject area within the NC continues to be a significant issue in the primary sector.

5) Policy based evidence continues to be significant for governments past and present), where the only research heeded or acted upon is research that fits comfortably with their own respective agendas.

This research brings the children's views up to date and, through PE, looks at how they are able to inform current policy, practice and research. What is different about this research is that it includes the children throughout in relation to their thoughts and views on PE, and this in turn contributes to a significant void in related literature and research for this age group of children. In examining the literature, the questions that do not go away easily are who and what is education for? In this chapter, I have increased my own understanding across a range of issues, including the ability to critically analyse literature and then to reflect on how to apply what I have learnt into my own teaching and professional practice.

In the following chapter, I discuss my theoretical positioning where I have linked the perspectives of Lawton (1996, 2000), Fielding (2004, 2008), Simons (1987, 1999) and White (2004, 2007), but where I focus essentially on the work of White. I discuss the methodological instruments used to gather the data from the children. I add further detail and colour to the schools which took part in my research and I justify why I used these particular research tools.

## Chapter Three – Theoretical positioning and Methodology

I have been guided in the formatting of this hybrid or 'mixed methods' case study by the work of Yin (2003), but I have been especially inspired by the work of Helen Simons (1987, 1999) and Fielding (2004, 2008). Their work influenced me, by indirectly encouraging me to think about elements of case studies and the relationship with democratic processes, self-evaluation and action research. Moreover their work made me think about the need through humanistic methodologies (see below for elucidation of my use of the term) to encourage institutions to want to continue their own development, and value the benefits of doing so. We could certainly perceive schooling generally, education or even the Department for Education as institutions in this context.

In many respects my own theoretical positioning mirrors my own learning in higher education. For example, my first degree was at the University of North London which had a distinct 'left wing' ethos. At Newcastle where I did a PGDip it was more 'right wing', and at Leicester where I did my Masters, the emphasis was heavily on 'figurational' sociology. I have always enjoyed looking at issues from various perspectives, and exploring different ways of seeing life. Hence I chose to do this EdD at the Institute of Education, where PE does not play a significant part in higher education by any stretch of the imagination. I welcomed the challenge. I have enjoyed studying at different institutions where the academic 'feel' and 'moods' have varied. To this extent I initially chose not to adhere to one over-riding academic philosophy but rather, I attempted to adopt an eclectic stance where I tried to link the work of White, Fielding, Simons, Apple and Lawton. I explored the commonalities between them. I wanted to show that although these principal works had their roots in different

academic fields of enquiry, they could be linked across two common strands.

Although located in different camps they were all calling for greater use of democracy

to inform educational processes, and for the learner to play a greater role in their own

learning. However it is on the work of White that I focus.

<u>Theoretical Perspectives and Positioning</u>
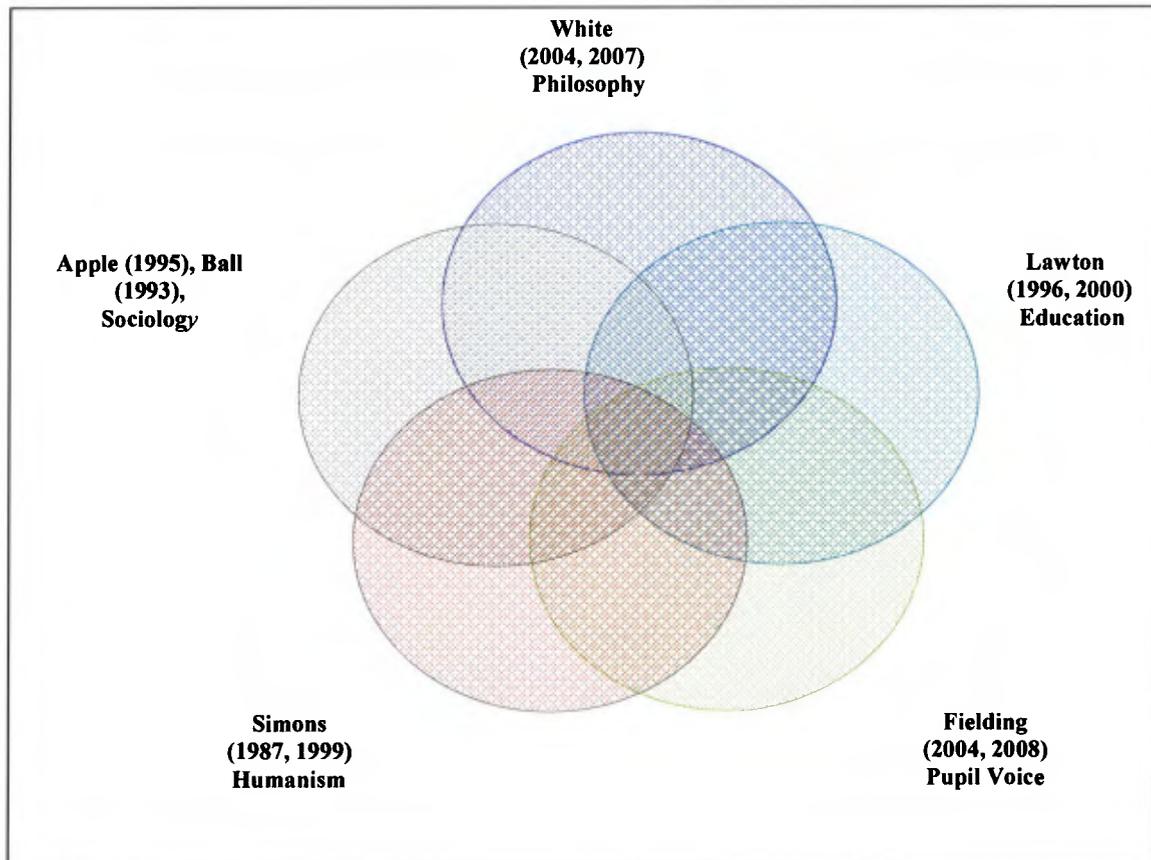
My own starting point in this relationship is largely through a 'constructivist –

interpretivist' stance, Geertz (1973), Schwandt (1994), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and

Burr (1995), and is based upon 20 years experience of working in the field of

education and PE, and is also linked to my own geographical background.

This interpretivist position looks at the unique or individual viewpoint, and then

endeavours to construct general 'trends', based on what the individual is saying, to

form more general but robust arguments, as opposed to isolated random responses.

Both constructivism and interpretivism are related approaches to research that are characteristic of particular philosophical views. The ideas stem from the German intellectual tradition of *hermeneutics* and the *Verstehen* tradition of sociology. The purpose of inquiry is in understanding the world from the point of view of those who live it. While the goal of natural sciences is to offer scientific explanations, the goal of inquiry based qualitative research lies in the grasping of understanding, or the 'meaning' *(verstehen),* of social phenomena or human behaviour. In the words of Geertz (1973), an anthropologist, we seek not just to observe and describe but to offer *a thick description* of how people understand and ascribe meaning to their actions. Schwandt (1994), talks about constructivism and interpretivism as sensitising concepts, which steer researchers towards a particular outlook.

He states:

> Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. (p.233)

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that knowledge is constructed out of making meaning of peoples' lived experiences. They write:

> Knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is a relative consensus (or at least some movement towards consensus) among those competent to interpret the substance of the construction. (p.206)

In the case of this thesis I have attempted to understand what PE looks and feels like for Year 6 children in Hackney, based on what the children have shared with me, and if enough of the children shared the same points of view I have interpreted this as consensus.

In an attempt to find answers to my two lead research questions,

- What do the children think about PE?

- And how might their views help inform current policy, practice and research?

I have used a conceptual framework not unlike that first detailed by Hughes in (1996), emphasised by Lawton (1996, 2000), and furthered by White (2004, 2007) to analyse key areas. I have linked my questions to Lawton's framework in relation to the NC, whilst being mindful and considering the legal requirements of the *Every Child Matters* agenda (2003). The relationship between the areas that I explore, and my primary research questions are linked by my analysis of the work of White (2004, 2007) and how I use his work as my main academic source to inform my research. The areas that I explore link to my lead research questions where I ask how the children's views on PE might inform practice, policy and research. Lawton poses the question:

1. Is there is a mismatch between the N.C. and what is now known about children's ability to be involved in their own learning? (2000:17).

Mullan (2003) for example argued that an educational system, which focuses on the rights and responsibilities of the child will involve children in decision making processes in all aspects of school life. Lawton also asks:

2. Is there is a need to go beyond the NC and its subject centredness? (2000:18)

Elsewhere, Yandell (2003) has stated that what we have now:

> is a system in which much thought is devoted to what children should learn, what they should be able to do, what they should know, by what age and stage and much energy is spent in determining and enforcing what teachers should teach and how. The agency of young people who are meant to be learning has in fact disappeared (p.11)

As Lawton (2000) argued, his:

> paper was not an argument for de-schooling nor a criticism of teachers. It is a plea for bringing schools up to date (p.11)

Professor John White of London University's Institute of Education, in a paper published in 2007, *What schools are for and why* argues that the current NC is a relic of the 19th century and needs to be brought up to date to reflect modern society. (This is not unlike those views expressed by Mick Waters formerly of the QCA referred to in the previous chapter.) In his paper, White's vision for the future aims of education are classified under four key headings (my figures have been inserted):

Personal Fulfilment

1) Experience many absorbing activities

2) Engage in close relationships

3) Live a healthy life and understand what makes for this

4) Make competent decisions in relation to managing money

Social and Civic Involvement

5) Communicate with other people appropriately

6) Play is a helpful part in the life of the school and the community

7) Critically assess the role of the media

8) Reflect on human nature, its commonality and diversity

Contribution to the Economy

9) Work collaboratively in the production of goods and services for the school or community

10) Be aware of the rights of workers and employers

11) Critically examine how wealth is created and distributed

12) Be aware of the impact of science , technology and global markets on work prospects

Practical Wisdom

13) Sensibly manage desires

14) Learn to cope with setback, change of circumstance and uncertainty

15) Resist pressure from peer groups, authority figures and the media

16) Strike a sensible balance between risk-taking and caution

White believes schools should be inculcating knowledge relevant to modern society, such as the ability to live healthily, to manage money and to find fulfilment. White's work certainly sits very comfortably with the ECM agenda, and the overlap should be

very obvious to the reader. Where they diverge is in relation to the NC, because whereas White is calling for a major re-think regarding the aims and content of the NC, the ECM agenda makes no such demands. White argues that the current NC is a middle class concept based on values and curriculum content aimed in essence at middle class children, since these children were the first to attend schools prior to formal state schooling. He goes on to assert that the origins of the present day NC lay in appeasing the *Dissenting communities* of the eighteenth century:

> These groups, descendants of the puritans, attached great importance to the acquisition of knowledge, with more abstract studies like logic, mathematics and physics (natural philosophy) prior in importance to history and geography. Personal salvation was a central preoccupation and for this one had to possess a solid knowledge of the structure and manifold glories of God's universe. It was efficiently arranged in discreet categories and sub categories. In some institutions at least, it was transmitted in a time-efficient way in short timetabled chunks and regularly examined (p.7)

Of course not everybody will see things from this perspective, and some might argue that a *'good education is a good education'*. Kenneth Baker (1986, 1993), for example, who brought in the NC in (1988), argued that a broad subject based curriculum was a positive thing. Whilst I do not disagree that an overview of what is being taught and a form of regulation are necessary to monitor syllabuses nationally, White's reasoning does hold because society itself, and moreover the people who make up society, have changed. Certainly the catchment area of where my research was carried out is extremely culturally diverse and not everybody sees things from the same angle. History, for example, may be interpreted in different ways. Other sections of society believe in different Gods, and some do not believe in any God at all, so to adhere to a curriculum where the roots, as White argues, are locked into personal salvation and obeisance does not take into account the societal changes present in the

twenty-first century here in the United Kingdom. These different viewpoints are of course always contentious. For example, the ECM agenda advocates that young people should make *positive contributions and be involved in community and society,* and White talks about *'experiencing many absorbing activities'.* Yet, as White contends, people differ over what they see as worthwhile, and it is all too easy to impose one's own value judgements on others. White's unique contribution to the discussion surrounding curriculum design and content lies in the fact that as a leading philosopher of education since the 1970s, he has spent a career alerting policy-makers to many questionable but influential assumptions that underlie their work. For example it is now over 30 years since he challenged the assumption that the content of school education is rightly determined by individual teachers. Not long afterwards, the government here in the UK accepted that this assumption was wrong and so started work on a National Curriculum. However it soon became clear at this point that another assumption came into play, the legacy of which is still with us today. The assumption was that a National Curriculum could be meaningfully produced without carefully thinking through the basic aims of education. White has for many years been concerned about the continuing neglect of this question. It is not controversial to argue that a basic aim of education is to prepare young people for adult life, but

- What kinds of adult lives do we want schools to prepare children for?

- What sort of society do we want to create for the future?

- What, in short are schools for?

- Perhaps moreover, who are they for?

The complexity of these questions is compounded still further when we consider the cultural diversity of many of the UK's large conurbations. Opinions may vary tremendously between groups regarding the kind of adult lives to be desired, or the

kind of society which is desirable for the future. The *aims* of a curriculum need serious attention, from politicians, from teachers, from parents and other key stake-holders, including I would advocate, young people. In a democratic society, we all have a stake in what is taught in schools, and there needs to be a vigorous debate about what the institution of schooling is really for. At the heart of White's argument is a call for imaginative thinking instead of the kind of tired thinking that condemns children to years of study which may benefit no-one at all. One of the ways forward is to include the pupil voice as a means of informing the debate; it is by no means a new way of thinking about curriculum aims, but it is an area still largely ignored. In this thesis I use pupil voice to uncover their views and thoughts on PE in a way that White would have encouraged as a means of understanding what the curriculum is like for the children receiving it. Like White, the Cambridge review calls for *'curriculum reform'* not *'curriculum tinkering'* and as noted earlier, the aims of a curriculum must be grounded in a clear framework of values, and the aims should shape the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and the wider life of the school, and not be added on as mere decoration.

In relation to PE specifically White argues that the NC as it stands has given legitimisation to long standing historical practice. He states:

> Traditionally the subject has been conceived as a collection of discrete forms of activity, most often connected with sport. This conception originated in elite public (i.e. independent) schools in the nineteenth century, elitist connotations continuing in the privileging of preparation for high-order sporting performance among the aims of the subject as practised. The original National Curriculum order for PE had wider purposes than performance, but political involvement in the early 1990s, narrowed these in the direction of the traditional connotation. (2004:18)

The NC at present continues to be focussed on performance around the six areas of

activity and not the aims which were associated with it originally. In analysing the data from the children, I am forced to reconsider the tenets on which the NC is based. Penney (2004) calls for a radical refocus, and for a more flexible, interconnected and inclusive curriculum which is geared to children's current and future lives with greater opportunities for choice given to schools and pupils. These views sit comfortably with those advocated by White in terms of making the curriculum relevant to young people in the twenty first century, and by bringing it up to date. What better way to find out what works, what does not and to invite suggestions from the key stake-holders in the overall process, than to ask the children? As part of such a process to be made possible, Penney argues that:

> physical educationalists may need to consider a radical re-orientation and re-structuring of their subject and in that process embark on a possibly uncomfortable view of their own professional identities. (2004; 139)

Moreover this challenge will involve moving away from the notion that activities or sports are ends in themselves, and that performance or sport performers are justifiable aims alone, to a consideration of the idea that the activities or sports are as Penney states:

> vehicles capable of facilitating and providing the contexts for a rich array of learning [and where] teaching and learning will extend beyond out-dated boundaries and connect with the needs, interests, and lives of all children and their roles in the transformation of communities and societies (2004:149)

Penney cites Boorman (1998:88) to make the point:

> although many people have school experiences of physical education which provide the entrance to a lifetime passion for physical activities of all types, these same experiences for others generate an ongoing aversion to anything remotely physical. In between these two extremes are a multitude of people whose experiences have given rise to a loathing of one activity and delight in another. (2004: 149)

So who is right? What do children really think about PE, health or fitness, and how might their views inform future policy, practice and research?

Methodology

My research is a case study of one geographical location in London. Having read Hammersley (1992), and ever mindful of potential problems, my research approach was ultimately the result of nearly nine years work, where other formats were tried, tested and in some cases discarded. (See for example my supporting statement at the beginning of this thesis, where I have outlined some of my shortcomings over the course of the EdD programme, how I overcame them, and how the lessons learnt have fed into this thesis.) I chose to use case study as an approach because it allowed me flexibility in how I structured the methodological instruments that I was seeking to use. Moreover through the design of questionnaires and follow up interviews in one geographical location I was able to employ my theoretical positioning and where I took a constructivist-interpretivist stance. After piloting the questions in the Institution Focussed Study (IFS) I felt it was the most appropriate method of getting the data that I required in trying to answer my research questions. It is the children's views that I was particularly interested in, and whilst I acknowledge that teachers' views, and those of parents and governors, are all inter-related and enrich a case study, their views were not my main interest, and I made a clear research decision at this point. The methods used in this research were in my opinion, 'the best fit' for what I was trying to achieve, and they had been piloted in earlier formats. Part of the rationale for my approach stems from Simons, (1987,1999) in her advocacy of the importance of self-evaluation. I was mindful also of the work by Stenhouse (1967), who in seeking to 'reconceptualise' the humanities for young people sought to encourage young people to reflect about their experiences in society, rather than absorbing abstract

knowledge. My research is concerned with gathering data from a neglected point of view, that of the child. In this respect I would like to think that I am encouraging the child to 'reconceptualise' their ideas about PE, their health and fitness, for example, by using the subject area as a resource for reflecting on their real life experiences as opposed to being measured and tested in the abstract. It is about the children taking responsibility for their own learning and understanding how their physical well being impacts on their everyday lives. Moreover it is also about encouraging the children to look after themselves both now and in the future. In my first data set I used these tools to facilitate an exploration of a number of particular contemporary issues, i.e. what do children really think about their health, fitness and PE in the early 21st century? In my second data set I asked the children specifically about their favourite subject and why they had made their decisions. I did so for the purpose of gaining breadth of understanding into the issues that underpin the research project from one particular geographical location. Of course I acknowledge that case studies generally can yield rich and often detailed descriptive accounts of an issue. My use of questionnaires and follow up interviews sit most comfortable with my philosophical positioning because they are the research tools that I use to give the children a voice in my case study. My use of both questionnaires and interviews with the children could only complement each other by using both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, that is to say that the questionnaires gave me the quantity that was required to make the research a feasible study, and the follow-up interviews added greater quality to the project. Again, this was a decision that I made in relation to the research and to my earlier experiences (Bassey 1999, Caldecott and Walker 2000). At a rudimentary level humanistic methodologies like those advocated by Simons (1987, 1999) the sociologist Apple (1995), and Fielding (2004, 2008), have the human being at their heart or focus all the

time, and this thesis is no exception, as the children involved are the heart of it throughout. Advocates of such an approach like Simons would argue that the human being must come first and ahead of mechanical or animalistic theories or indeed fiscal demands. It is a way of looking at behaviour, experience and intentionality. This viewpoint has human growth and self-actualisation at its core, and where the individual has an understanding of his or her actions. Giving children a voice is an example of such practice because it can only help the child to gain a greater understanding of his or her actions. One of the key aims of this research was to add to the limited existing knowledge base of what PE looks and feels like to a year six child. At present there is not a great deal of data available in the primary sector when compared with research in other curriculum areas, like the NC core subjects Maths, English and Science. Spray's work on Understanding Pupils' Motivation in Physical Education (2007), which focussed on secondary school pupils, is informative, and the timely set of papers included by Williams (2006) in Primary School Physical Education: Research into Practice are most welcome. As is Research Matters, the section now given over entirely to sharing research findings in Physical Education Matters, the official journal of the Association for Physical Education. Elsewhere as I have discussed, books such as The School I'd like by Burke and Grosvenor (2003) give children's general views on schooling, but there is no particular focus on PE. In this respect I will be doing something quite different that can add to the dialogic strand of pupil involvement in school. As Fielding (2004, 2008), and Carnell & Lodge (2002) have argued, this is as opposed to pupil involvement that is focussed more on 'school improvement' (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), that is to say, more learner centred, rather than school or institution centred. My work is dialogic in the sense that the 236 children involved in the research were invited to

comment on PE, and twenty four were also given the opportunity by their teachers to discuss issues during the follow-up interviews. I analysed and explored the views and responses of the children within the same school and across all four schools. The children told me about the skills and benefits they thought they got from the PE provision, and what they felt about their health and fitness. I endeavoured to explore what they thought about PE generally, their likes, dislikes, and why they had made particular statements and decisions.

The Questionnaires

In the previous chapter I 'themed' my work around a) pupil voice, b) the status quo in primary physical education and, c) ideas on curriculum development. The questionnaires in both data sets and the follow up interviews fit comfortably into these three themes. For example theme 1 is addressed throughout by actually giving the children a voice, theme two is addressed by inviting the children to tell us what the current curriculum looks and feels like for them, and theme three is answered by the children in the sense that their responses tell us how to make the curriculum more accessible and appealing to them. My questionnaires and interviews were designed around my theoretical positioning and in practice demonstrated democracy at work. (See Appendix A for the complete set of questions used in this research and Appendix G for the short second follow-up questionnaire.) In compiling the questionnaire, I was guided by Oppenheim (1992), Robson (2002), and Kambouri (2002).

I used the questionnaires as my main instrument for this piece of research, as they had been very successfully piloted in earlier work for children of this age for example in my IFS. The children had also helped in their design, as part of a literacy lesson in another school. The instrument was kept reasonably simple, even fun in places and I

knew that the children were familiar with the formatting as they are still tested

frequently at school. The Key Stage Tests for example have used not dissimilar

approaches. It was made clear to the children that the questionnaires were not tests,

and that they did not have to complete them if they did not want to. I requested that it

was made clear that I as a researcher was asking for their help. The questionnaires in

the first data set were initially piloted and tested for understanding in February and

March 2007 in a school not taking part in the research. Two year 6 classes piloted the

questionnaires and I felt that, based on my own teaching experience and in discussion

with teaching colleagues, that twelve or so questions were an appropriate quantity for

children of this age. Kambouri's model offered a very helpful approach in detailing

the instrument for eliciting different types of responses and I endeavoured to include a

range of questions. For example using Kambouri's model, I placed most questions at

the 'open' point within the framework. So for example Question 1, *What is Physical*

Kambouri (2002) – Types of Research Questions

Open Ended	Closed (Forced-choice)
Use	
a) To get at general feelings	b) To see if the respondent has thought about the issue.
	c) To get at specific aspects of the issue.
	d) To find out how strong an opinion is held.
e) To find out respondent's reasons for their opinions or behaviour.	

Open----------------------> Pilot----------------------> Closed

Coding

Analysis   Kambouri (2002)

Education? (P.E)? was an open-ended 'a' type questions where I was seeking 'To get

a general answer.' However by comparison, Question 4, *Please circle how you feel*

about PE? is a relatively closed question, where I am trying 'To get at a specific

aspect of the research', in this case trying to ascertain how the children felt about PE

generally but giving them clear indicators of what the responses might include.

Throughout, a range of the different types of questions have been included in

accordance with Kambouri's model (2002). There existed the potential for overlap

and some responses yielded answers that related to another area and type of question.

In seeking to measure the responses I had been influenced by Foddy (1993) and de

Vaux (2000), and heeded their guidance on ways to elicit data. I therefore tried to vary

the type of question in order to gain full and honest responses. The questions for the

children were closely linked and I divided them into broad categories. I deliberately

kept to a minimum of twelve questions, although questions 3, 6, 9, 10 and 12 in the

questionnaire did have additional requirements to be completed as a means of gaining

detailed data. For example in Question 10 I ask, *What does being fit mean? What is*

it?

In the questionnaire, questions 1 and 2 sought to explore what is understood by the

terms PE and health, and questions 3 to 5 explored children's views on the importance

of PE and health. Specifically questions 6 to 8 were to do with 'preferences', likes and

dislikes. Questions 9 to 12 seek to shed light on children's attitudes, beliefs, feelings

and ideas about PE and health and the Olympics Games. The ordering of the questions

was also compiled with the help of the children who piloted the questionnaire, who

felt that all the 'hard' questions like questions 2, 10 and 12b, should not come

together. The language that I used in the children's questionnaire is language that a

class of year six children suggested that I use. The class, not part of the research

project, came up with the terms *love, hate* and *alright* during a literacy lesson looking specifically at language used in surveys. Indeed the class teacher had suggested I do an initial trial with her class. When completing the questionnaires, where there were children in the classes who did not speak or indeed read English as a first language, support was arranged (where possible) to ensure that each child could access the questionnaire with the help of a translator. I do of course acknowledge that even this support is open to a manipulation of the answers, but I asked the teachers to inform their teaching assistants and translators, not to directly influence any responses given by the children. This process was repeated in the spring term of 2010 when the short second questionnaire was administered.

Retrospective analysis of the methodology used

It is my belief that there is no single methodology that is better or superior to any other methodology in every case. Different research questions lend themselves to different methodologies. The issue is, as Robson (2002) argues, about using the methodology that best fits the research question as a means of getting the information required. Generally the methods that I used in this research worked well but I do acknowledge that on reflection things could have been tightened up and improved. For example I should have spent more time with the class teachers who administered the first questionnaires to ensure that the work was carried out in a more systematic and consistent manner. A brief handover outlining what was required, how and when was not really sufficient and I should have spent more time with the teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) who worked with the children. These improvements were put into place during the process of administering the second questionnaire in data set two. Ultimately I have to concede that I cannot say categorically that the teachers and TAs did not in any way influence the data presented by the children in either cohort,

because I was not present, but I did trust them and made it very clear at both handovers that I wanted the children to provide the data not the adults. Another aspect of the research that I would do differently next time was in relation to the children talking about their ethnicity and cultural background. Looking back I should have included this in the original questionnaire and asked the children themselves as opposed to initially asking the teachers for this data and then talking to some children about their feelings. I do not feel that it was an issue that the class teachers had access to the completed questionnaires and could trace, if required, what individual children said, although I appreciate that it could have been an issue. I kept the children's first or preferred names in both data sets only because I wanted to demonstrate the rich cultural make up of the local area. Interestingly no parent or carer from any of the schools, at either cohort, has asked to see their child's responses or the data that I have collected to date. On a practical point I can see how the use of a five point scaling system could have been confusing when the 'smiley' face that represents three of the responses is exactly the same (see for example questions 5 and 6). On reflection the three point scale of 'smiley' faces would have been more effective.

The use of a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

Following the suggestion by the advisory panel prior to being permitted to advance to the thesis stage of the EdD, I opted for the use of SPSS to help with the data analysis as it could be adapted for a variety of contexts. The package is both rigid and reliable in structure but is flexible enough to measure variables like attitude or opinions in a statistical format. That is not to say that it is perfect or without disadvantages. In terms of my own learning, it is a resource that I have had to learn to use and my own skills have developed to this extent. In constructing statistical tests I was continuously mindful that a *sample,* was only ever going to be a *sample.* As Kinnear and Gray

(2005) state:

> A sample is a selection of observations (often assumed to be random) from a reference set, or
>
> population of possible observations that might be made. By analogy with a lottery, it may be
>
> helpful to think of a population as the numbers churned around in the barrel, and the sample as
>
> those actually drawn. Sampling implies sampling variability: samples from the same
>
> population can vary markedly in their characteristics (p.1)

So in the context of this research although questionnaires were initially administered

to 115 children, and then a further 121 in 2010 (population), and a further 24 children

(sample) out of the original 115 were interviewed as a result of the questionnaires, I

am fully aware that to make an inductive inference about *all* children in the area,

would be foolish. As Field (2005) advises users of statistical analysis need to

remember that:

> Statistical procedures are just a way of number crunching. In a statistical analysis there is no
>
> substitute for empirical thinking (p.34)

Reliabilty and Validity of results

Although reliability and validity are not statistical concepts as such, statistics are often

involved in their measurement or in related discussions. In this research the *reliability*

is taken to mean the reliability of my measurement instruments, these are my

questionnaires and interview questions. I am certain that the questionnaires and

interviews would yield very similar results if they were repeated with similar aged

children again. The questionnaires were both 'piloted' before administering and were

administered in four different schools. Equally the children also gave a very large

amount of quantitative data in both 2007 and 2010. In many respects this could be

referred to as *test-retest reliability*. Regarding *validity* this usually refers to whether or

not the measurement instrument is measuring accurately what it is supposed to be

measuring. In this sense I got answers to my lead research questions and much more

data besides. I would argue that my research has been enhanced as both the reliability (repeatability) of the measurement instrument and its validity (accuracy with respect to what it is measuring) are high. Ultimately the truest test of reliability is when other researchers use the same instruments to test both reliability and validity in similar circumstances. This will be one of the recommendations emanating from my research, as I hope that further research is carried out to uncover what children think about the NC and education generally in the future. My research instruments and methods used have been very effective and also promote democracy in the process.

Data Set One 2007 - Data Source to data File (From questions to variables)

Kambouri's model (2002) for including different types of questions sits comfortably with the SPSS package and allowed me to include a variety of types of question. I have not included any closed questions with a simple Yes / No response as I felt that these were not appropriate, but I have included 'closed' questions which invite the respondent to answer with a closed three or five point scale. Another example of where Kambouri's framework sits well with SPSS, is in formatting open questions, where possible answers have not been specified beforehand. SPSS is able to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative open questions. In the questionnaire, question 12 a) *Can you write down for me THREE (3) people who you think are fit and healthy please?* is an example of a qualitative question, because the response is a non-numeric property, yet it also asks for three examples, so it does have quantitative properties

also.

In terms of naming variables I heeded the advice given by Huizingh (2007):

> We recommend to always begin with a variable that contains the number or the case number. A case number will help you trace quickly any data entry errors or extreme values back to the original questionnaires (p.29)

The variables that identify the case numbers or respondents in this research are coded in the sense that part of a name is given, a number is given and a letter identifying the colour of the paper used in the questionnaire. For example *Michab16* tells me that the respondent was Michael, blue questionnaire number 16.

From Questionnaire to Interview

The interview schedule was informed by my analysis of the data presented in the questionnaires. (Please see the full interview schedule logged as Appendix D.) The questions were designed to build on the information provided in the questionnaires in two ways. Primarily I sought to get more detailed information in the follow-up interviews as a means of adding greater quality to the data. So for example question 1 in the follow-up interview is informed by questions 6 and 7 in the questionnaire, where I seek to gain a greater understanding of what children love about PE and why this is so. Equally questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the interview build on the earlier questions 2, 5, 10, and 11 in the questionnaire and are to do with the children's views on health.

The second way that the follow-up interview is informed by the data presented in the questionnaire is that I tried to broaden the data base by exploring the children's views on PE outside of school hours and how they thought it linked to local communities and neighbourhoods. These are included as questions 5 and 6 in the interviews These avenues of exploration were not present in the questionnaires but they did link to the ECM agenda, and to the philosophy advocated by White, which I discuss in the remainder of the thesis

The interviews:

Throughout I have kept all the children's first or preferred names, and they agreed to this. I chose to do this because when writing up the thesis, I remembered individual

children as well as individual and shared conversations and it continues to give my research colour and vibrancy. No family names were used and the schools, as we have seen, were given fictitious names in order to protect all parties involved. My justification for using a semi-structured interview in addition to the questionnaire was to give the project a broader richness and a means to focus key issues arising from the 115 questionnaires. The use of follow-up interviews also literally gave the children a voice as well as giving my thesis colourful portraits of real children by virtue of their responses. Data was analysed as a means of building on what was initially shared in the questionnaires and to further elucidate the primary data. The interviews were informal, and conversation was encouraged to allow the children to speak for themselves.

Data Set Two 2010 – Data source to data file (From questions to variables)

My rationale for introducing a second data set is to do with impact. In the first submission of my thesis, I had hoped that the children's love and enjoyment of PE would shine through. However I did not ask a specific question in relation to their choice of favourite subject, hence I was advised to omit all reference to it as I had not actually *asked* the question. For emphasis in this data set I wanted to know what the children's favourite subject was and why in the hope that it added to, and built on the positive comments shared in the 2007 data set. The second set of data that I collected was from a further 121 children taken from the same four schools that had provided the information for my first data set. I returned to the same schools nearly three years (eight terms) after the initial questionnaires and interviews were carried out. I was influenced here by the work of Keys (1995) who looked longitudinally and cross-sectionally at children's attitudes to school at both the top of the primary school (Year 6), and at the bottom of secondary school (Year 7). The children engaged in providing

the data on this occasion were of course different to those engaged in 2007, and this meant that in total 236 year 6 children had contributed to this research. Two of the teachers who had first helped me carry out the initial research were still teaching year 6 classes at Green Park and Lea Park. At Central Park, a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) was the year 6 teacher, and at Abney Park a contracted supply teacher agreed to administer the second questionnaire.

As with the first data set, permission was sought from the head teacher, and informed consent letters were sent home at each school (See Appendix F). All four head teachers were happy to allow me to proceed but requested that they see the completed questionnaires at the end. This was never an issue at any point and the class teachers also had access to the completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire (see Appendix G) was simple in format and it was piloted with a separate class of year 6 children in the same borough. The class which piloted the questionnaire reported to me that it was simple to do, easy to understand and it did not take long to complete.

Although I did not administer the questionnaires, I met with the four teachers beforehand during their non-contact time, to explain how I wanted the questionnaires to be administered, why I was doing the research and to answer any questions that they might have had. I made it as explicit as I could that they as the teachers / administrators must not in any way influence the children's responses, nor in any way indicate my area of interest. Moreover I also re-emphasised that if any support teachers or teaching assistants were present, then they were to be instructed also not to influence or guide the children's responses. Once again, I asked only that the children's first name be used on the questionnaire and for the children to note whether they were male or female. The teachers had the opportunity to observe the responses

and said that they would be interested in seeing the results anyway. The children were also given the opportunity to decline taking part in the research and not to include their names if they did not want. None of the 121 children declined to take part, and everybody included their first name and gender.

Questionnaire Coding Index

Each child's response was coded as 1.0 where they had to choose one curriculum subject from a choice of thirteen.

The subjects were coded as

1 =Art

2 =Citizenship

3 =Design Technology (D&T)

4 =English

5 =Geography

6 =History

7 =Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

8 =Mathematics (Maths)

9 =Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

10 =Music

11 =Physical Education (PE)

12 = Religious Education (RE)

13= Science

The Schools were coded as

1.0 = Abney Park

2.0 = Central Park

3.0 = Green Park

4.0 = Lea Park

Gender was coded as 1.0 Male or Boy, and Female or Girl was coded as 2.0. However in terms of coding the children's responses to the question as to 'Why' their choice was their favourite subject, I drew upon the work of Benjamin Bloom in his Taxonomy of Learning (1956). Notwithstanding the point that there has been a number of interpretations and additions to Bloom's taxonomy since his original work, see for example Harrow (1972), Dave (1975), the taxonomy serves as a very helpful guide in terms of categorising the children's responses.

In his taxonomy Bloom identified three different types of educational activity, which he called domains of learning.

  a) The *Cognitive,* which he associated with mental skills and were linked to *knowledge*

  b) The *Affective,* which was linked to growth in feelings or emotional areas and associated with *attitudes*

  c) *Psychomotor* learning was linked to the development of manual or physical activities and associated with *skills*

I return to the work of Bloom later in the thesis and cite examples of how the children's responses were classified.

Moral and Ethical issues

Prior to commencing the research and during the research in 2007 and 2010, written confirmation from the head teacher and the board of governors was sought and approved. All children and parents/guardians were given and were required to complete an *informed consent* form, (see Appendices B, C & F) detailing the nature of the proposal and relevant background information. All involved had the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. All parties involved were assured that all

information collected, would remain strictly confidential and only used for the purpose of this research. As Burgess (1989) and Bassey (1999) have detailed, ethical concerns are potentially very hazardous and I was mindful to avoid any of these. For example, the children were giving me their views confidentially and some of the data that they shared may not have reflected well on some schools or teachers. This did not prove to be an issue however.

Data was collected from eight classes totalling 236 children in Year 6, and chronologically aged ten or eleven years old. I had chosen to work with these year groups because it was their last year of primary schooling and much would change in the children's lives when they started secondary schools.

Most children in year 6 would also be able to draw upon at least seven years experience of primary school PE.

In a broad sense Foucault (1972), argued that society is shaped by discourse and in turn discourse is shaped by society. Language, I would argue, is *social,* or as Cameron (2001) states:

> we speak with the voice of our communities (p.12)

and as Apple (1995) has asserted we are not distinct from our own history or social context. In this case study I have sought to give the children of Hackney the opportunity to speak with the voice of their communities. Hackney is a community, albeit that it is a community made up of many smaller communities, and schools are communities in themselves of course. I wanted to hear what the children of Hackney had to say in their own way of saying things.

As Burr (1995) puts it:

> A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on – pieced together to produce a particular version of events, a particular picture, a particular way of representing (p.28)

Summarising Comments

In this chapter I have detailed the methods that I used to gather my data through two questionnaires and one set of follow-up interviews and located their use within a theoretical framework, linking across different perspectives, but focusing on the work of White. Overall and on reflection, the methodological instruments worked very well in providing data from which to answer my lead research questions, as I hoped that they would, although I do acknowledge that on reflection there were improvements that could have been made and I have acknowledged these weaknesses and sought to rectify them through administering the second questionnaire.

In the next chapter I present both data sets through the three themes that I introduced in my literature review and conceptual framework, namely pupil voice, the status quo in primary physical education, and ideas on curriculum development. In chapter five I analyse the data and in the final chapter, I offer my summary findings and the recommendations emanating from the research. Finally I include the conclusions that I have come to, and add my overall personal reflections. I also comment on my learning and the possible impact of the research.

Chapter Four - Presentation of the data and overview

Before presenting my data, I wish to emphasise how my philosophical positioning and approach has informed the research data, collection and analysis. Firstly I included a range of open ended questions to allow the child's voice to be expressed and in a way that was compatible with my constructivist positioning. The questions were on the children's current understanding of PE in the NC and responses were used to inform my understanding of what PE in the NC looks like for the children, in order that I could develop trends. Secondly, the questions were designed to elicit the children's views on PE within the NC with their attitudes and views implicit as a basis to inform further discussion and new agendas. Thirdly, interviews were added to the first data set in order to add greater reliability and validity to the research. The children in line with White, Fielding, the ECM agenda, and my own belief offered a tremendous amount of data. So for example I asked the children to tell me about PE from their perspective. Then depending on the data that was given I was able to 'group' responses into categories that showed similarities or used not dissimilar vocabulary. So as a further example the children told me about the vast variety of activities that they liked and disliked. From this and in accordance with my own theoretical positioning in terms of analysing the responses, I constructed the case that 'a broad range' of activities needs to be on offer to the children if they are to be encouraged to be active. This is also in line with my own defining of PE.

I present the data gathered from the children via the questionnaires of 2007 and 2010, and I include responses from the follow-up interviews of 2007. I have included commentary in addition to some of the things that the children told me in order to link the children's statements, but also in the belief that it adds to the overall flow of the

thesis. I have largely followed the presentational style used in *The School I'd Like* by Burke and Grosvenor (2003) as I enjoyed this enlightening and inspirational text. The quotes from the children are also presented in exactly the same way as they were given to me and do include small grammatical and spelling errors in places.

I discuss and analyse the data as a means of providing answers to my leading research questions which are,

- What do the children think about PE?

- How might their views help inform current policy, practice and research?

Part One - Data Set One (2007)

In this section I have used the children's responses to the questionnaire and interviews to inform the three themes which run throughout this thesis and the data has been grouped accordingly. These are

1. Pupil voice (demonstrating the vibrancy and willingness of what is possible)

2. The Status Quo in PE. Where we are now in relation to PE and the NC (from the pupil's perspective)

3. Curriculum Development. Ways to make the NC work (Pupil voice as a means of telling us what works and what does not. A way of building a curriculum together.).

I present the children's responses to the questionnaire in two varying formats, largely for emphasis, but essentially to give the reader an immediate overview of what the children have told me. I tried throughout to create an environment in which the children were comfortable. I also offer the observation here that not all children had English as their first language and therefore some of the responses were quite short and to the point. What also occurred to me was that one of the reasons that 'texting'

has become so popular is because for many young people they do not need to say very much – even the words themselves had become shortened. For example 'Gr8' meaning 'Great' or 'lol' meaning 'laugh out loud' or 'dissing' meaning 'being disrespectful'. I include some general block graphs to provide an overall visual picture of the responses by the children, and I have also included, in places, charts that give quantitative and accurate information which includes specific numeric classifications of the data. These include definitions and general frequency (def gen frequencies) and also add a qualitative dimension to the data. As a researcher, I was particularly pleased with the methodological instruments used to gather the data for this thesis, notwithstanding the difficulties that I encountered and discussed in the previous chapter. I was pleased with the amount of information collected, and also the variety of data gathered. This is only half of the story for I wish to make it clear at this early juncture that it was the children themselves who brought the research to life by offering to share, in many cases over and above what was required, their thoughts, feelings, dreams and wider aspirations. No child chose to decline completing the questionnaire or to be interviewed when invited. I wondered if the children welcomed the opportunity to be heard. The vibrancy of the data came from both boys and girls and gave interesting insights into children's perspectives from a range of cultural backgrounds and first languages used and spoken at home. (See tables 1 and 2 below which were constructed from the first data set.)

The first group of 115 children was made up of 66 boys and 49 girls. As tables 1 & 2 show below, 18 different languages were spoken by the children with English, Bengali and Turkish being the largest groups. In terms of cultural identity and cultural background, 20 classifications were identified with English, Black British, and Asian British being the largest groups listed. It would be fair to say that at times in seeking

to give my data colour and vibrancy, by including some of the children's comments

from both the questionnaire and follow-up interviews I was absolutely overwhelmed

Languages spoken at home (table 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
English	70	60.9%	60.9%
Bengali	10	8.7%	69.6%
Turkish	8	6.9%	76.5%
Kurdish	4	3.5%	80.0%
Arabic	3	2.6%	82.6%
Polish	3	2.6%	85.2%
Gujerati	2	1.7%	86.9%
Croatian	2	1.7%	88.6%
Portuguese	2	1.7%	90.3%
Spanish (S. America)	2	1.7%	92.0%
Ibo	2	1.7%	93.7%
Hindi	1	.9%	94.6%
French	1	.9%	95.5%
Punjabi	1	.9%	96.4%
Greek	1	.9%	97.3%
Yoruba	1	.9%	98.2%
Somali	1	.9%	99.1%
Sylethi	1	.9%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

by the sheer volume of the qualitative data offered by the children in this study. In

discussing the children's responses over the remainder of the thesis, the reader will

'hear' the voices and read the thoughts of over 120 different children from the data

sets of 2007 and 2010. That is just over half of all the children who took part in the

research. The voices of the children were taken at random from the four different

schools and represented a range of the children's responses. I did consciously include

however, responses from boys and girls from different cultural backgrounds, in order

to gain a broad overview of what the children were saying in answering the questions

on the questionnaire. The children for the follow-up interviews were selected by the

class teacher and I asked only that they include boys and girls from different cultural backgrounds

Cultural Background / Identity (table 2)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
English	35	30.4%	30.4%
Black / Brit	34	29.6%	60.0%
Asian / Brit	13	11.3%	71.3%
Turkish	4	3.5%	74.8%
Kurdish	4	3.5%	78.3%
M. East / Brit	3	2.6%	80.9%
Nigerian	3	2.6%	83.5%
Polish	3	2.6%	86.1%
Portuguese	2	1.7%	87.8%
Irish	2	1.7%	89.5%
Croatian	2	1.7%	91.2%
Indian	2	1.7%	92.9%
Scots	1	.9%	93.7%
Australian (British)	1	.9%	94.6%
Pakistani	1	.9%	95.5%
Zairean	1	.9%	96.4%
Spanish	1	.9%	97.3%
Somalian	1	.9%	98.2%
Colombian	1	.9%	99.1%
Greek	1	.9%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

Theme One – Giving Pupils a voice.

In this theme I include the responses from the children to three questions (questions 2, 5, and 10 in the questionnaire,) as a means of demonstrating the range, quantity and quality of data that the children were prepared to offer if given the chance.

What is health education?

Every child except one offered an opinion about what they thought health education was, and in some cases more than one definition. Almost half of the children felt that

health education was all about understanding what being healthy is. Others felt that it was about diet and doing exercise. Again because of the vast range of responses I have grouped them into nine broad categories depending on the type of response that

HE def gen frequencies (table 3)

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
HE def gen	Being healthy	53	34.2%	**49.5%**
	Eating right things	37	23.9%	34.6%
	Looking after self	21	13.5%	19.6%
	Being fit	12	7.7%	11.2%
	Exercise	11	7.1%	10.3%
	Others	8	5.2%	7.5%
	Doing PE	4	2.6%	3.7%
	Know how to be healthy	3	1.9%	2.8%
	Everything / all things	3	1.9%	2.8%
	Don't know	2	1.3%	1.9%
	None	1	.6%	.9%
	Total	155	100%	144.8%

was given. For example, Ahmed at Green Park thought that: 'health education is teaching about your health and how important it is' Anisha at Abney Park wrote that: 'health education is when you learn to be healthy when you grow up.' Luke at Central Park felt quite strongly that: 'Health Education is a lesson where children learn about the body, how to keep fit, and what we need to survive.' So Luke's answer was recorded and categorised as knowing how to be healthy, being fit and eating the right things. Luke also made the connection that it could include learning and understanding about the body.

Please circle one face that shows how you feel about your health?

In this question the children were invited to comment on a five point scale of how important they felt their health was to them. Most pertinently, options 4 and 5 on a 5

point scale noting that their health 'was not important' and 'was never important', was not circled by any children at all. Hence the findings show only three options. The depth of feeling shown by the children regarding this question became clear in the follow-up interviews and this was an area into which I deliberately sought to gain a greater insight. Responses by the children were both interesting and informative and showed a genuine level of care about their health. For example, Terrance at Abney Park felt that his health was very important because: 'If you keep healthy you can live longer.' In the same discussion Izzy added that his health was important because: 'It can expand your life span and you will live longer if you keep healthy.' Ozenc at Green Park offered the view that his health was very important to him because: 'if you are healthy you will be able to do lots of things. You can do other things when you are

HE feel (table 4)

HE feel
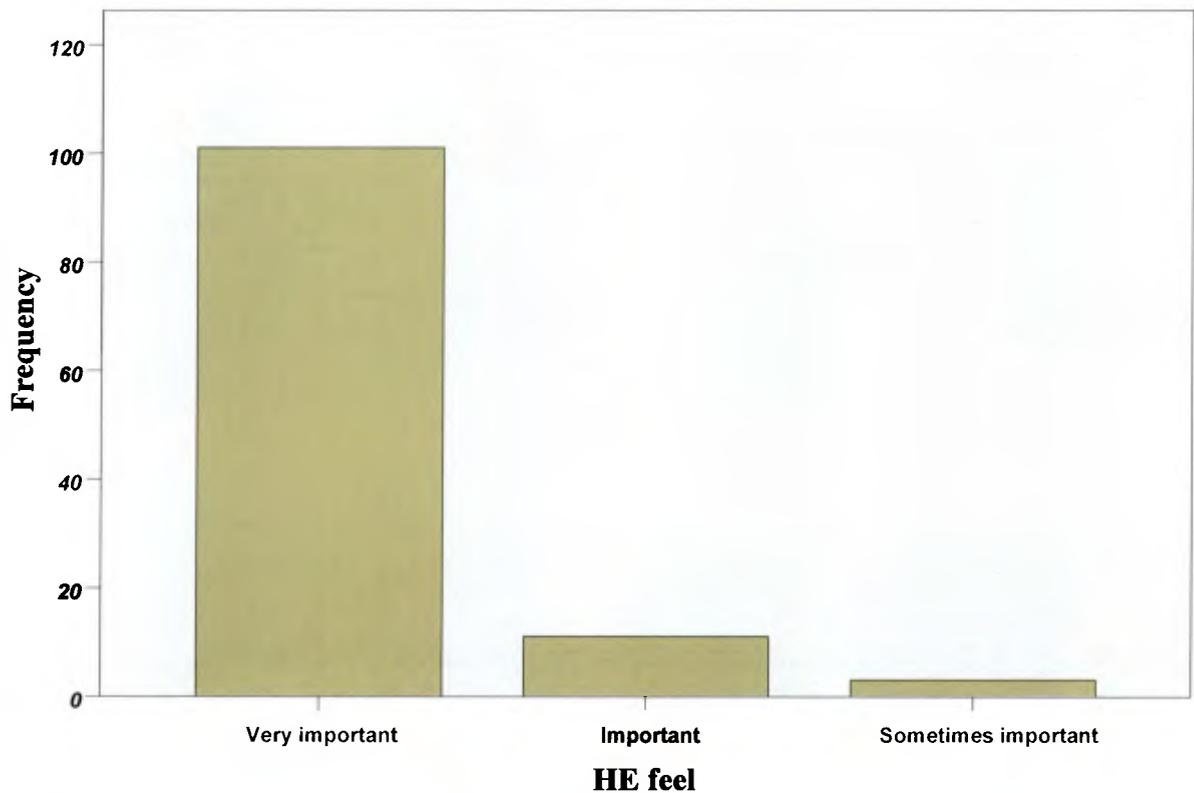
older. If you don't care about your health you can have a heart attack.' These examples show the children making connections with 'life-long activity', one of the key components in my definition of PE.

What does being fit mean? What is it?

I again include three responses from the children in answering this question and they are grouped because they are not dissimilar. Kimesh at Central Park commented: 'It means you are healthy and you can run around a lot. It means you are active.' Octavia a girl at Lea Park in response to the same question wrote: 'It means keeping active and being healthy. I do quite a lot of exercise, but I also play on the computer.' Mashiba a girl from Lea Park felt that: 'Having healthy bones, being strong and having fun. I am a bit fit.' I have also included the quote from Mashiba because she

What is being fit / meaning (table 5)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Doing PE	1	.9%	.9%
Exercise	19	16.5%	17.4%
Being Skinny	3	2.6%	20.0%
being healthy	30	26.1%	46.1%
being healthy strong	8	7.0%	53.0%
None	14	12.2%	65.2%
Running diet	6	5.2%	70.4%
Doing athletics	1	.9%	71.3%
Eating good food	5	4.3%	75.7%
Not anorexic or obese	1	.9%	76.5%
Not fat	4	3.5%	80.0%
Stamina	6	5.2%	85.2%
Looking after self	4	3.5%	88.7%
Good Shape	3	2.6%	91.3%
Active	9	7.8%	99.1%
Not breathless	1	.9%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

mentions the word 'fun' specifically. This is a word that was used regularly by the children in both data sets and again its inclusion in also a key component in how I define PE.

Theme Two – The Status quo in PE and the NC.

In this section I include another three questions and responses (questions 1, 4, and 6 in the questionnaire) to demonstrate through pupil voice how the children view their PE within the NC.

What is Physical Education (PE)?

Every child who took part in this project offered an opinion as to what PE actually was to them (see Table 6 below). Some children offered more than one definition of PE to demonstrate what they understood by the term. The children's answers were grouped into nine broad areas and I have listed them in order of frequency. I have included both the frequency of the response and the percent of the overall case as a means of gaining an accurate overview of the children's answers. For example Inez a girl at Green Park School wrote that: 'PE is when you learn about exercise and

PE def gen frequencies (table 6)

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
PE def gen	Exercise	61	29.8%	53.5%
	Being fit	31	15.1%	27.2%
	Doing different things	28	13.7%	24.6%
	Sport	26	12.7%	22.8%
	Others	22	10.7%	19.3%
	Healthy	20	19.8%	17.5%
	Training	10	4.9%	8.8%
	Football	6	2.9%	5.3%
	PE	1	.5%	.9%
	Total	205	100%	179.8%

taking part in sporting activities like football running etc.' Kourtney believed that:

'PE is where you do activities and wear shorts and a t-shirt and sometimes run about a

bit.' Neil at Central Park felt that: 'Physical Education means education that you do

with your body.'

In analysing the data, I had at times to make judgements about how I grouped the

children's responses. I used my teaching experience to help me make these

judgements. For example, where the term 'exercise' was recorded it was included in

the category *Exercise*. If the word 'fit', or the children wrote about 'being fit' then this

was included in the category *Being fit*. Where the children wrote about doing all sorts

of different things, or they recorded that PE is when you 'play at different things.'

these responses were included in a general category termed *Different things*. If the

term 'Sport' was written down then it was recorded in the *Sport* category. The

category *Others* included responses like Kourtney's where she wrote about wearing

shorts and a t-shirt. References to health or being healthy were included in the *Healthy*

category. The *Training* category included references to 'training' regimes or the word

'training' itself. PE refers to one child who wrote in response to the question that PE

is PE.

Please circle how you feel about P.E.?

I have included a block graph (Table 7) here solely for emphasis as it shows very

clearly what the children think about the amount of PE provision that they receive.

This question was presented giving the children the option of indicating whether they

thought they did too much PE, not enough PE or the right amount of PE. The children

had to circle their answer on the questionnaire. Although the children were not invited

to offer any thoughts as to why they had come to their decisions at this point, I have

again added some of the comments that the children gave in the follow-up interviews,

and these are also themed for emphasis. For example, Shakeela at Abney Park thought that PE should take place: 'Everyday for like half an hour after lunch because children feel sleepy and they can't concentrate. They need to let their food digest.' Jack C at Lea Park offered an interesting and differing view that: 'It should be more optional

PE feel (table 7)
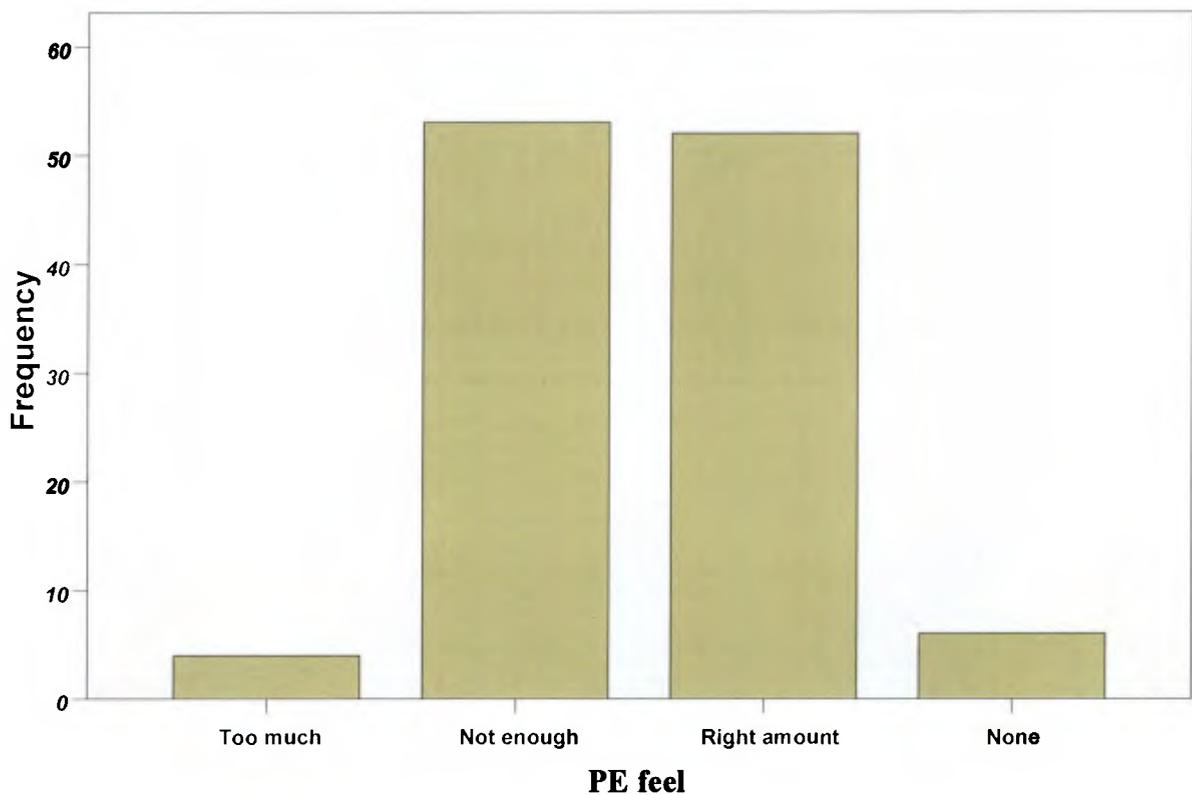
after school, because if I am late home I will miss my tea.' Aaron at Green Park was interested in different sports and stated: 'I think it should be a variety of sports, not just the same old ones. Yes that's it a variety.' What is worthy of note in the graph shown above is that the data does show that the majority of children at all four schools in 2007 either thought that they did the right amount of PE or would like to do more.

Please circle the face that shows how you feel about each area of activity?

This question has six parts, where the children were invited to tell me about each of

the six areas of activity for PE in the NC. The children were given a five point option ranging from *love* the activity to *hate* the activity. Regarding **Games** no child indicated that they *sometimes hate* or *hate* games hence only three response options are shown. I will again give three examples of what the children wrote or said to illustrate a flavour of their views. Gwen at Green Park wrote: 'I enjoy Tennis as it is

Games feel (table 8)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	91	79.1%	80.0%
Sometimes love	18	15.7%	95.7%
Alright	5	4.3%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

Games feel (table 9)

Game feel
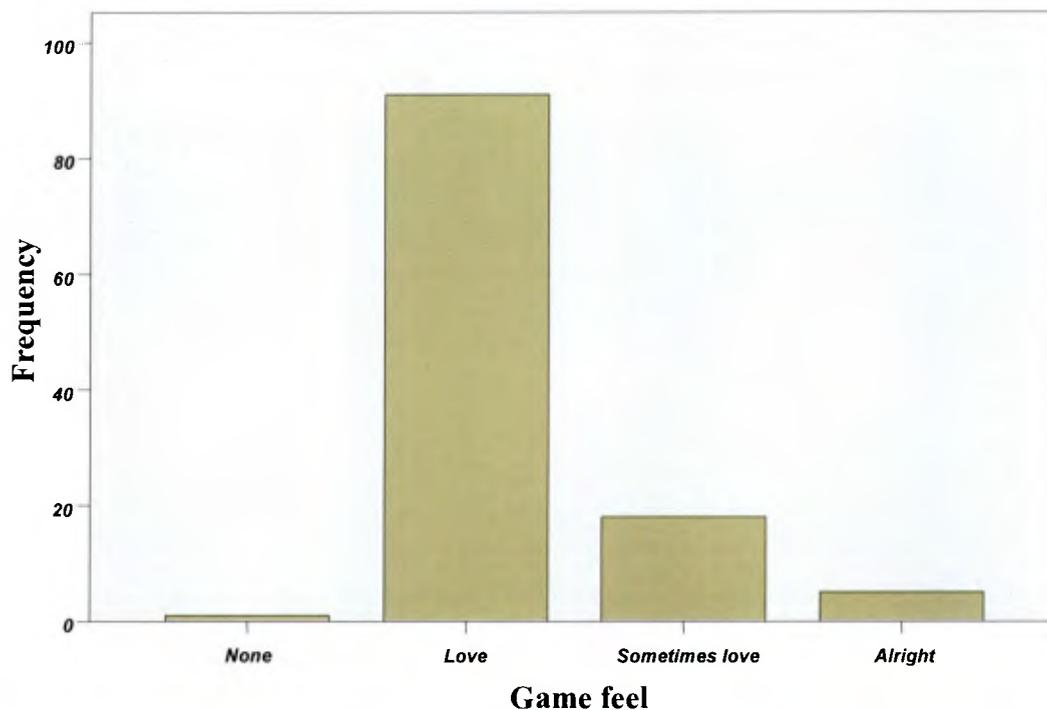
fun and exciting. You can use a racket and a ball and you have to bat the ball to an opponent.' Rianne at Lea Park was clear that:' I don't mind games even Netball.' Cherno at Abney Park wrote: 'I enjoy playing for the school like, but it is hard when we lose a match or something.'

Gymnastics at school was taught on a regular basis and again the children offered some interesting and often conflicting views on the curriculum area. Charlene at Lea Park stated: 'I love doing team ball games and especially gymnastics.' Dorica also at Lea Park in the follow-up interview confided that: 'Gymnastics, stretching and putting yourself into positions – that's all rubbish.' Perhaps shedding light on why she felt such negativity, Dorica then proceeded to stand up and pirouette and added: 'and I always get in trouble for doing it wrong.'

Gym feel (table 10)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	73	63.5%	64.3%
Sometimes love	25	21.7%	86.1%
Alright	11	9.6%	95.7%
Sometimes hate	2	1.7%	97.4%
Hate	3	2.6%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

In terms of curriculum delivery, gymnastics is in my experience the area of physical activity within the national curriculum that causes most teachers most concern, including experienced teachers, NQTs, and trainee teachers. It is the area of activity that I am invited to do the greatest amount of In Service Training (INSET) at local

level in schools, and for Education Authorities. Yet, as my data shows the majority of children generally feel very positive about gymnastics although feelings are varied. I have included additional children's voices to demonstrate this point, because the children's views included here may reflect how many teachers feel about gymnastics. For example, Koulla at Green Park stated: 'What I hate most is doing inside PE, you know gymnastics and all that.' Adding to the wider debate Luke at Central Park admitted that: 'I don't like gymnastics or dance because boys are not good at stretching.' Lanre in the same group added in response: 'That's what you think!'

Gym feel (table 11)

Gym feel
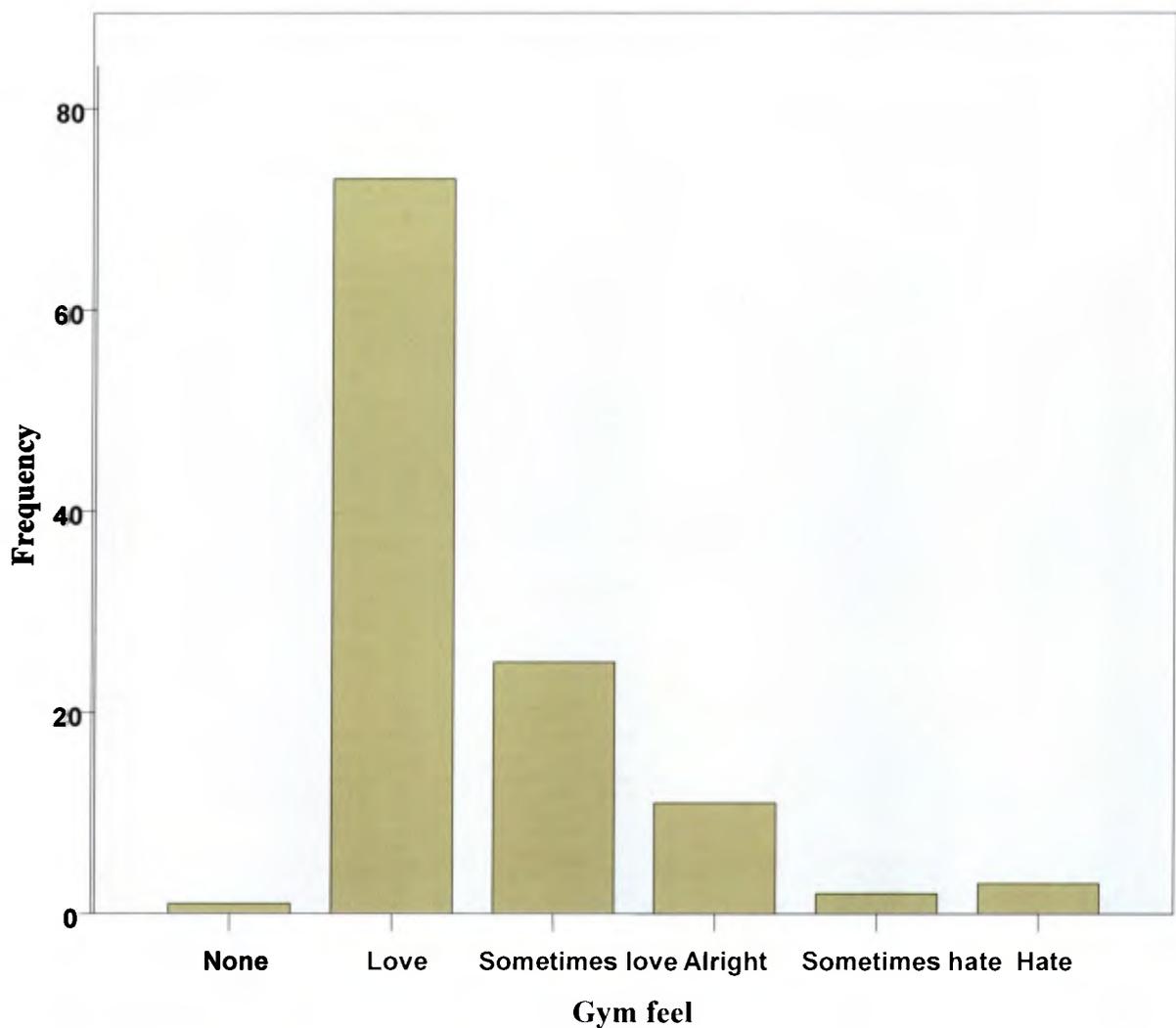
With regard to **Outdoor Adventurous Activities (OAA)** the children responses

indicated that they enjoyed adventure and being doing activities outside. For example

Arlene at Lea Park wrote: 'I absolutely love cycling.' Izzy at Abney Park stated that:

'Climbing is the best thing ever, I love climbing.' Stella from Green Park had

OAA feel (table 12)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	92	80.0%	80.9%
Sometimes love	17	14.8%	95.7%
Alright	4	3.5%	99.1%
Hate	1	.9%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

OAA feel (table13)

OAA feel
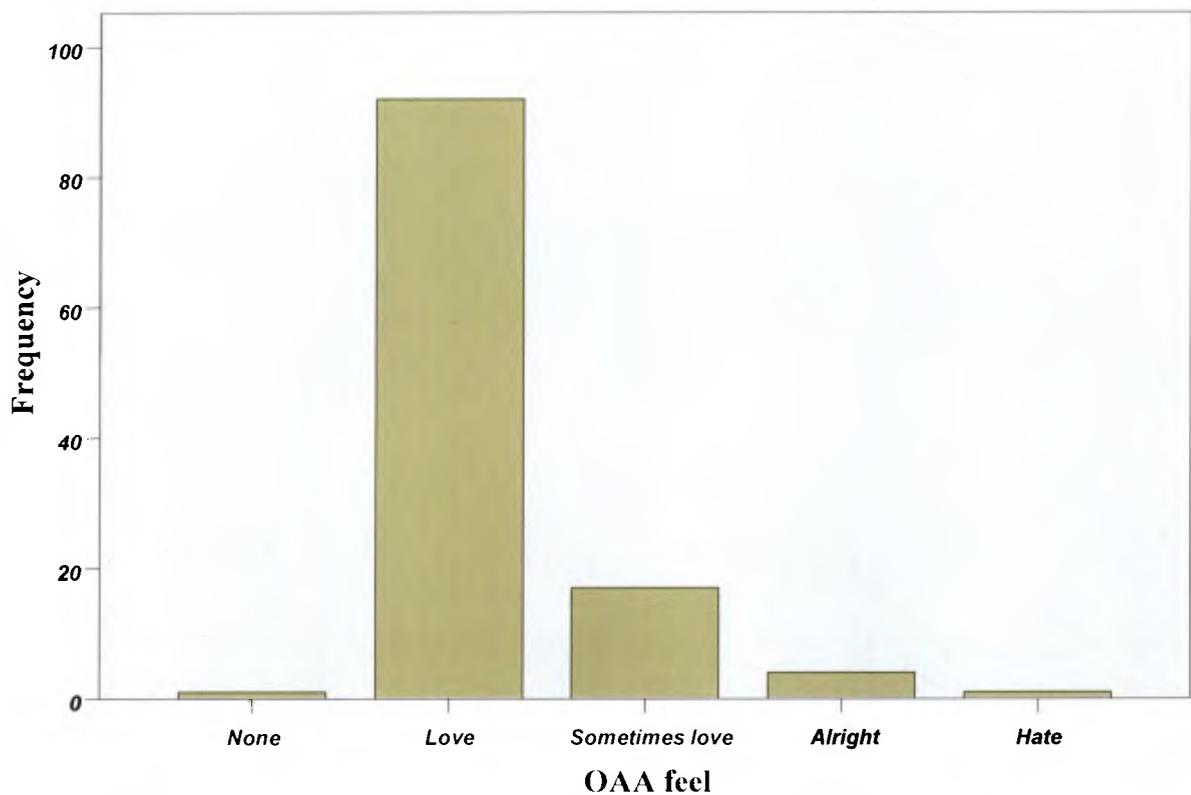
obviously been thinking about what OAA was because she noted: 'Well I don't know if it is the same thing, but I love skipping, you know when you do games and sing songs and rhymes and all that.' The thing worthy of note in these three responses is the passionate and colourful language that the children are using.

Swimming as an area of activity is one that I have referred to earlier in this thesis. It

Swim feel (table14*)*
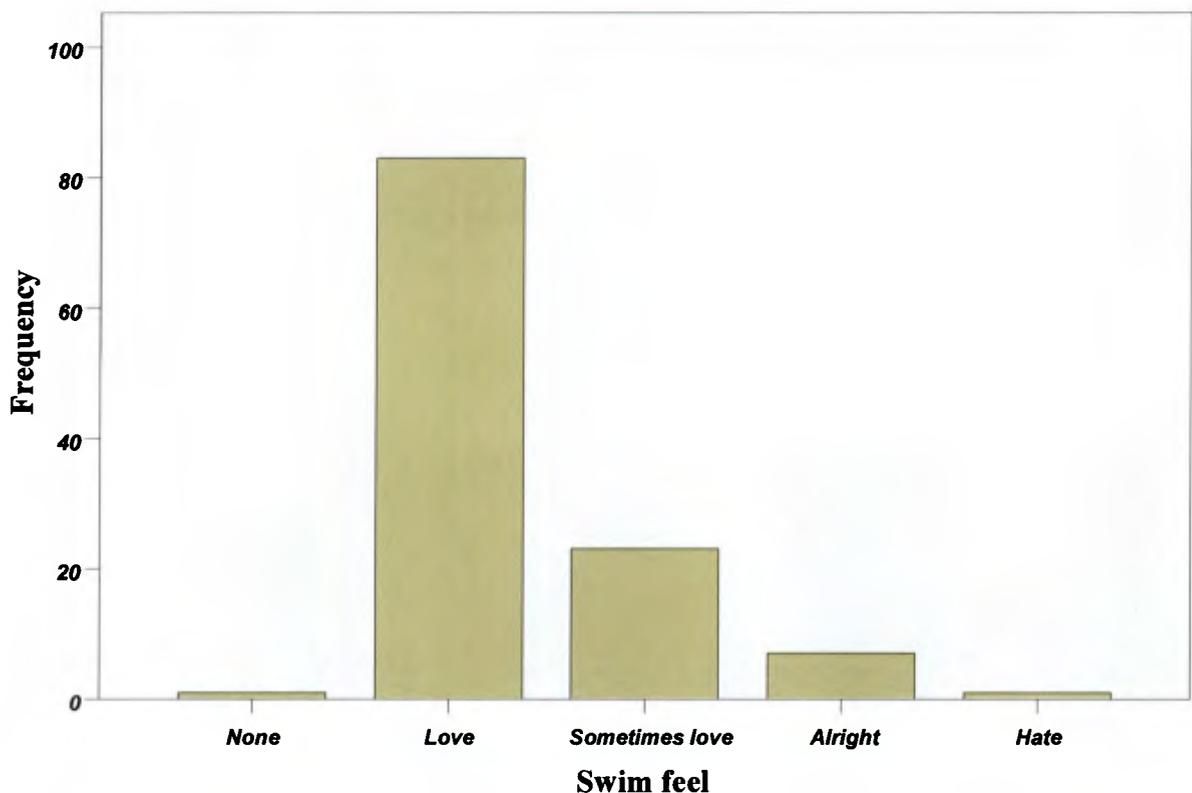
is I would argue, a life skill in every sense of the word and as important as literacy, numeracy, or ICT literacy. The children in this research clearly enjoyed the activity and it was populat at all the schools, even though coverage and the frequency of visits to swimming pools was patchy. Gul at Green Park wrote: 'I love swimming because it is good exercise, but at the same time it is FUN.' (Gul's capital letters) Hannah also at Green Park offered: 'I love doing swimming and water sports because I feel safe and

secure in the water.' Maryam at Central Park said: 'I like swimming but I am not very good but I can swim.'

Swim feel (table 15)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	83	72.2%	73.0%
Sometimes love	23	20.0%	93.0%
Alright	7	6.1%	99.1%
Hate	1	.9%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

Dance as an area of activity produced a range or responses from both boys and girls. It was an aspect which surfaced again in the follow-up interviews. Ahmet, a boy at Green Park wrote in his questionnaire: 'I love dancing. I do it every week.' Mehmet at Abney Park however felt the opposite: 'I hate dancing. All of it because I can't dance.' Central Park's Nastacia: 'I love doing everything really but you know dancing is the best. It is so cool.'

Dance feel (table 16)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	43	37.4%	38.3%
Sometimes love	29	25.2%	63.5%
Alright	25	21.7%	85.2%
Sometimes hate	6	5.2%	90.4%
Hate	11	9.6%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

Dance feel (fig 17)
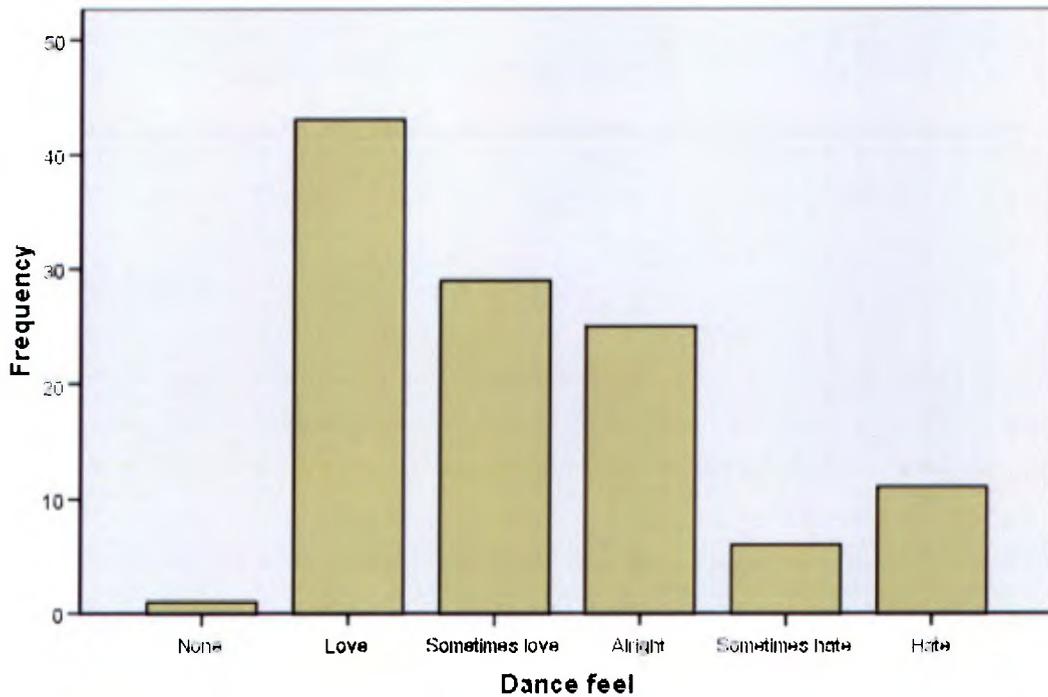
With regards to **Athletics** in the primary school, I include three quotes from the children and they are contrasting views. For example, Green Park's Hannah wrote in her questionnaire: 'Running. I do not like running because I do not like sweating and I do not feel secure running.' Nazia at **Central Park** wrote: 'I don't like running around

Athletics feel (table18)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	1	.9%	.9%
Love	69	60.0%	60.9%
Sometimes love	28	24.3%	85.2%
Alright	12	10.4%	95.7%
Sometimes hate	3	2.6%	98.3%
Hate	2	1.7%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0%	

the playground, laps warming up.' However Sinclair also at Central Park felt very strongly and his views were in line with the majority of children, he stated: 'Athletics is my favourite activity, but I love all other sports too.'

Ath feel (table 19)
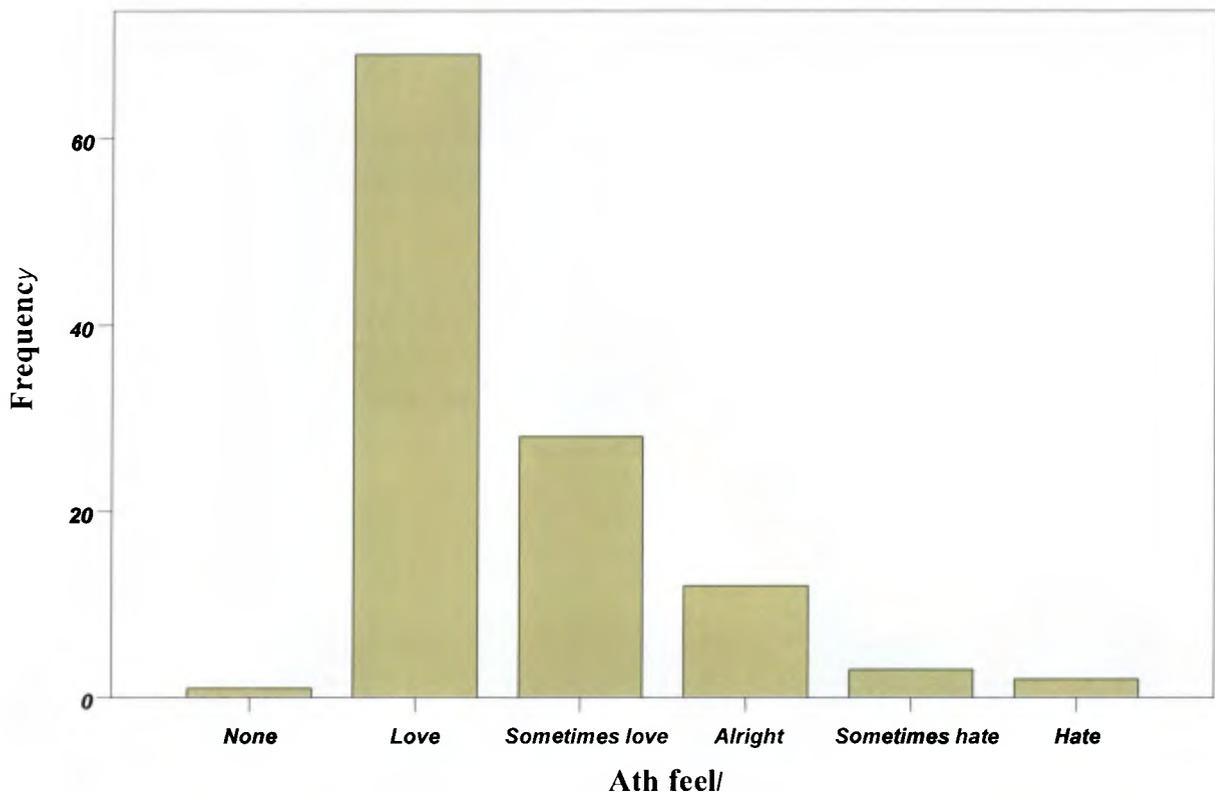
In the following theme I use pupil voice to inform the discussion surrounding ideas to make the PE curriculum work. I use their voices to indicate what works for them and what does not.

Theme Three – Curriculum Development: Making the NC for PE work

In this section I have included a further three questions (questions 7, 8, and 12 in the questionnaire), to find out more about what the children liked and disliked about PE,

and how role models can play a part in their lives. I again include three responses

from the children for each question to demonstrate their views.

Please tell me about an activity that you really love doing?

The children had already indicated which areas of activity they enjoyed most in the

NC for PE in the previous question 6, (Please see tables 8-19 in theme 2).

In this question I sought to gain more information about which specific activities they

Act love (table 20)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Football	26	22.6%	22.6%
Swimming	22	19.1%	41.7%
Athletics	11	9.6%	51.3%
Dancing	7	6.1%	57.4%
Basketball	6	5.2%	62.6%
All Sports	5	.4.3%	66.9%
None	5	4.3%	71.2%
Others	5	4.3%	75.5%
Everything	4	3.5%	79.0%
Skipping	3	2.6%	81.6%
Baseball	3	.2.6%	84.2%
Tennis	3	2.6%	86.8%
Reading	2	1.7%	88.5%
Outdoor Advent Acts	2	1.7%	90.2%
Cricket	2	1.7%	91.9%
Singing	1	.9%	92.8%
Hockey	1	.9%	93.7%
Ice skating	1	.9%	94.6%
Softball	1	.9%	95.5%
Cycling	1	.9%	96.4%
Badminton	1	.9%	97.3%
Gymnastics	1	.9%	98.2%
Climbing	1	.9%	99.1%
Table Tennis	1	.9%	100.0%
Total 24	115	100.0	

enjoyed most and why. The children's answers were not surprisingly very varied. For

example, Anisha at Abney Park wrote: 'I love doing athletics, basketball and any

other outdoor activity. Ahia at Abney Park appeared to enjoy most Sports: 'football,

cricket, swimming, badminton, tennis 100%.' Mohammed at Central Park admitted

that: 'I love doing football because you get to have a bit of a laugh and run around.'

Although football and swimming made up over 40% of the responses, the vast range

of different activities should be noted here and the variety of types of activity listed.

Please tell me about an activity that you really hate doing?

This question was asked as a means of getting a balanced view of the children's likes

and dislikes about physical activities. In the previous question I had asked what they

Act hate (table 21)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	27	23.5%	23.5%
Dance	23	20.0%	43.5%
Netball	11	9.5%	53.0%
Others	8	7.0%	60.0%
Athletics	7	6.1%	66.1%
Cricket	6	5.2%	71.3%
Football	5	.4.3%	75.6%
Not entered	5	4.3%	79.9%
Basketball	4	3.5%	83.4%
Rugby (Variations of)	4	3.5%	86.9%
Tennis	4	3.5%	90.4%
Gymnastics	4	3.5%	93.9%
Badminton	2	1.7%	95.6%
Rounders	2	1.7%	97.3%
Hockey	1	.9%	98.2%
Golf	1	.9%	99.1%
Playing with boys / diff classes	1	.9%	100.0%
Total 17	115	100.0	

loved, and here I was seeking to find out their dislikes, as a means of informing the debate. What was interesting here was that twenty-seven children, 23.5% nearly a quarter of the cohort, stated that they did not dislike anything.

Alphonso at Green Park had very clear reasons as to his choice, because he wrote: 'I really hate dancing because sometimes you have to dance with a girl.' Anna also disliked dancing but for a very different reason: 'Dancing, because I'm not good.' Interestingly Mohammed A at the same school wrote: 'I hate gymnastics because you can easily pull a muscle and you cannot run for a moment.'

For some children the teachers and how the lessons were taught were significant factors in making a judgement. This seems to be the case with dance especially at Green Park and Central Park where the children commented on the teachers bad temper. *Others* in this section included 'fighting' 'being sent to my room' 'extra reading classes' was entered twice, 'shopping' and 'knocking on people's doors'

Question 12 was in two parts and I focus on the first part which looked at substantiating the children's views on fitness and health and who they see as positive role models.

Can you write down for me THREE (3) people who you think are fit and healthy please?

Dwayne at Abney Park suggested that three of his friends were fit and healthy, he recorded:' Yes, Moses, Jervon, and Lucas.' Holly stated: 'My teacher Mr Bushby, Thierry Henry, and Kamal my Uncle.' Robbie had given the question a lot of thought and wrote: 'Jaiven, Dylan, Jack my friends, and 3 footballers like the Arsenal players Robert Pires and Freddie Ljunberg and even Sol Campbell I suppose, but he is always injured a lot.' What was evident here was that the children saw a number of groups as having the potential to be role models to them in terms of fitness. As shown in the

third question in theme one, the children had a good understanding of what fitness was and were able to associate people who were fit with who actually was fit. The children answered confidently and appeared to be very assured in what they recorded.

Fit & healthy person (table 22)

Fit & healthy person
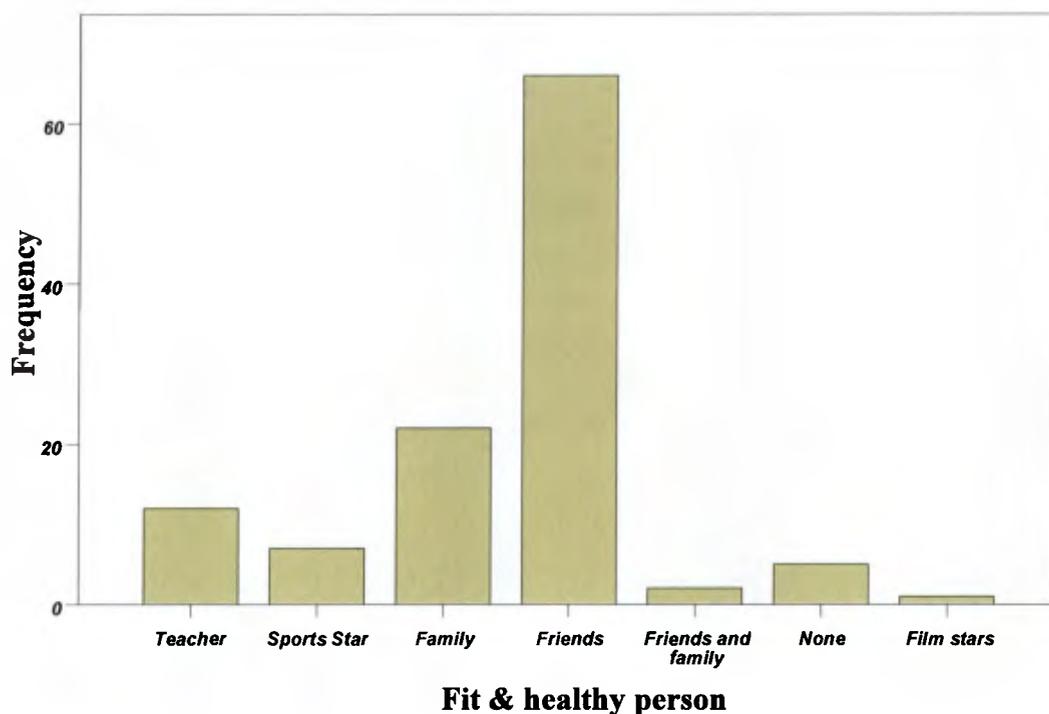
The second data set of 2010 builds on the data set of 2007 and asked the children specifically to name their favourite subject and to tell me why they had made their choice. There is also a focus on gender, as one of the things that came out of data set one, was that whilst there were many similarities in the responses between the sexes, there were also differences too.

In this section I have used the responses from the children to show the richness of pupil voice, what PE in school looked like for them in 2007, and how the potency of pupil voice can inform future discussions and agendas.

So here, I now ask the question, 'What was the favourite subject of year 6 pupils in 2010?'

Part Two – Data Set Two (2010)

In presenting the second data set, of the 121 children 57 were boys and 64 were girls (See tables a and b below) Here I asked specifically about their favourite subject and why they had made their choice. Of the 121 children, 114 children gave a single reason why they had chosen their favourite subject. Of the 114 children, 54 children also gave a second reason for their choice and another 6 children gave three reasons why they had made their choice.

Table a gender

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	57	47.1	47.1
	Female	64	52.9	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

Table b schools

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Abney Park	41	33.9	33.9
	Central Park	28	23.1	57.0
	Green Park	27	22.3	79.3
	Lea Park	25	20.7	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

So, in taking PE as an example, Max at Central Park circled that PE was his favourite subject, and he wrote: 'because it is a fun lesson.' Using Bloom's taxonomy, this was recorded as a single domain response and placed in the affective domain category, as I have associated the word 'fun' with the feelings and emotions. Olga at the same school circled PE and wrote: 'because you can do sports and they are fun.' Olga's

entry was recorded as a two domain response because I associated the word fun with the affective domain, and the playing of sports with the psychomotor domain. Laura at Green Park recorded a triple response where each domain was addressed in her response. Laura circled PE and wrote: 'because I can learn new and active things, It can keep you healthy, it is fun and it is good for you.' So Laura enjoyed learning new things, the cognitive, she felt that the lessons were fun which was recorded in the affective domain, and she also enjoyed learning new 'active' things which would include physical skills and be recorded in the psychomotor domain. As the pie chart below shown as table c, demonstrates very quickly, 30 children just under a quarter of

Table c – Curriculum choice

Choice

- Art
- Citizenship
- Design Technology
- English
- History
- ICT
- Maths
- Music
- PE - Physical Education
- RE - Religious Education
- Science
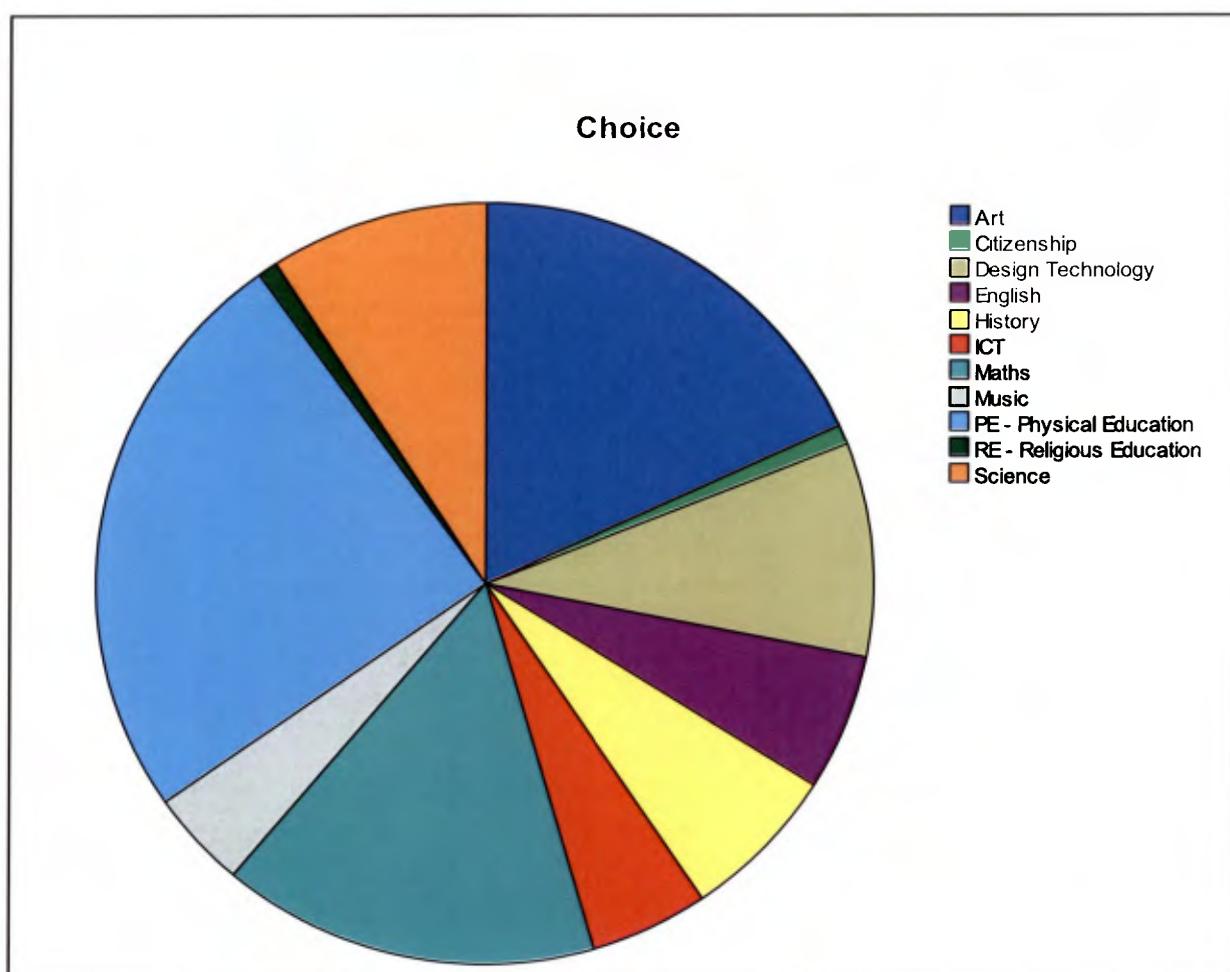
the cohort chose PE as their favourite subject, followed by Art with 22, and Maths with 19 selections. Science received 11 nominations, as did Design and Technology. History received 8, English 7, Information and Communications Technology was recorded 6 times and Music on 5 occasions. Religious Education and Citizenship were awarded one nomination each. As will be noted when the data is analysed and the reasons why the children made their choices, the reasons were at times varied, yet at other times clear patterns began to emerge. In analysing the data, the focus will be on what the children had to say about PE but contrasts and comparisons across other curriculum areas will be evident, as the children linked them in a number of ways. It is also worth making the point that every child recorded a response. This is not unlike the first data set where all the children were willing and able to complete the questionnaires and be interviewed if necessary. Having completed this second data set successfully, it adds to both the reliability and validity of the research overall in terms of the repeatability and re-test reliability of the instruments used.

Table d – Choice percentages

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Art	22	18.2	18.2
	Citizenship	1	.8	19.0
	Design Technology	11	9.1	28.1
	English	7	5.8	33.9
	History	8	6.6	40.5
	ICT	6	5.0	45.5
	Maths	19	15.7	61.2
	Music	5	4.1	65.3
	PE - Physical Education	30	24.8	90.1
	RE - Religious Education	1	.8	90.9
	Science	11	9.1	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

The following three tables e, f and g show how the children's responses were grouped across all subject areas. Table e shows that 114 children gave at least one reason for their curriculum choice, table f shows that of the 114 children, 54 children gave a second reason and table g shows 6 children gave a third reason for their choice. Please also see tables h and g which combine and link this data and show the children's reasons 'why' they made particular choices and how they are linked to particular subject choices.

Table e – Reason why 1

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Cognitive - Knowledge	46	38.0	38.0
	Affective - Feelings & Emotions	42	34.7	72.7
	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	26	21.5	94.2
	None or other	7	5.8	100.0
	Total	121	100.0	

Table f - Reason why 2

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Cognitive - Knowledge	14	11.6	25.9
	Affective - Feelings & Emotions	24	19.8	70.4
	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	12	9.9	92.6
	None or Other	4	3.3	100.0
	Total	54	44.6	
Missing	System	67	55.4	
Total		121	100.0	

Table g – Reason why 3

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Affective - Feelings or Emotions	2	1.7	33.3
	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	4	3.3	100.0
	Total	6	5.0	
Missing	System	115	95.0	
Total		121	100.0	

For example of the 30 children who chose PE as their favourite subject, 13 of this group included a second reason why, and one child included a third reason. Forty four reasons in total for the choice of PE were offered. Not surprisingly then, this was the largest number of reasons offered for any one curriculum subject choice. Table h below shows a cross tabulation of how the children's responses were classified according to their initial reasons why. This has been included as it exhibits the largest response rate. A further cross tabulation which includes all the multiple responses follows shortly and is shown as table j. A point worth noting here is that no child selected geography or modern foreign languages as their favourite subject. To embellish this data I give further examples of what the children wrote about PE to demonstrate how I have coded and interpreted the data. Simba at Lea Park wrote that PE was her favourite subject because: 'it's a way just to focus on one thing, it also makes me more mentally strong.' This was a unique answer and was included as a cognitive response because Simba had clearly been thinking about the cognitive benefits of PE, and not on the emotional or physical aspects. By contrast, Shay at the same school felt that it was his favourite subject and offered more of an emotional response because he wrote: 'I like PE because I enjoy it.' Remelle's response at

Abney Park was classified under the psychomotor domain of learning because he wrote that PE was his favourite subject: 'because you learn new tricks (skills)' my italics.'

Table h – Choice 1 Domain Cross tabulation

		Domain				
		Cognitive - Knowledge	Affective - Feelings & Emotions	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	None or other	Total
Choice	Art	4	12	5	1	22
	Citizenship	0	1	0	0	1
	Design Technology	2	4	3	2	11
	English	5	2	0	0	7
	History	7	0	0	1	8
	ICT	3	1	2	0	6
	Maths	7	10	0	2	19
	Music	0	3	2	0	5
	PE - Physical Education	6	9	14	1	30
	RE - Religious Education	1	0	0	0	1
	Science	11	0	0	0	11
Total		46	42	26	7	121

Table j - Choices 123 Frequencies

		Responses		
		N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Choices 123 all	Cognitive - Knowledge	60	33.1%	49.6%
	Affective - Feelings & Emotions	68	37.6%	56.2%
	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	42	23.2%	34.7%
	None or other	11	6.1%	9.1%
Total		181	100.0%	149.6%

Table k below builds on table j, because it demonstrates all the children's responses specifically to their subject choice and includes the choices where more than one response has been recorded. So we can see that for PE, the 30 children who chose PE as their favourite subject offered a total of 44 reasons why they had made their choice. Nine children's responses were interpreted as falling into Bloom's cognitive domain of learning, fifteen responses were categorised in his affective domain, and a further nineteen responses were placed in the psychomotor domain of learning.

Perhaps not surprisingly the psychomotor which includes the learning of physical skills or manual skills (19 responses recorded), was the most popular reason for the selection. The 44 responses recorded for PE were fairly evenly spread across the three domains identified by Bloom, with the cognitive meriting 9 responses and the affective domain 15 answers from the children.

Table k - Choice Domains 123 Cross tabulation

| | | Domains 123 | | | | |
		Cognitive - Knowledge	Affective - Feelings & Emotions	Psychomotor - Manual or Physical Skills	None or other	Total
Art	Choice	8	19	7	1	35
Citizenship	Choice	0	1	0	0	1
Design Technology	Choice	3	5	5	5	18
English	Choice	5	4	2	0	11
History	Choice	7	0	0	1	8
ICT	Choice	4	4	4	0	12
Maths	Choice	12	14	0	3	29
Music	Choice	0	3	5	0	8
PE - Physical Education	Choice	9	15	19	1	44
RE - Religious Education	Choice	1	0	0	0	1
Science	Choice	11	3	0	0	14
Total		60	68	42	11	181

In table 1 below, I show for the first time the differences between the boys and girls in their subject choices, as an analysis of gender is to be a theme in the following chapter. The most popular subjects for the boys in order were PE, Maths and Art, whereas for the girls the choices were Art, PE and Maths. What was evident here was that of the 30 children who had chosen PE as their favourite subject, 20 were boys. The second most popular subject was Art, and in this selection, 15 out of the 22 respondents were girls. By comparison with Maths the overall third most popular choice, the difference was much smaller, with boys making up 10 out of the 19 cohort. As a means of adding further colour to the data, I again include some of the things that the children wrote on their questionnaires as a means of demonstrating how their responses were classified and then recorded.

Table 1 – Choice Gender Cross tabulation

		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Choice	Art	7	15	22
	Citizenship	1	0	1
	Design Technology	4	7	11
	English	1	6	7
	History	4	4	8
	ICT	3	3	6
	Maths	10	9	19
	Music	1	4	5
	PE - Physical Education	20	10	30
	RE - Religious Education	1	0	1
	Science	5	6	11
Total		57	64	121

Calvin at Lea Park wrote that he chose PE: 'because it can make you have exercise, and you can have lots of fun.' This was recorded as a psychomotor and affective response. Michelle at Green Park chose PE: 'because we get to learn new sports and have fun, but most importantly you learn how to play the game.' Michelle's response was recorded in all three domains. Ben recorded: 'because you learn about your muscles and move a lot of the time. And you learn new stuff like how to punch a ball and dribble a ball. And it is good exercise.' Ben's answer was recorded as a cognitive and psychomotor response, and was one of the few respondents who did not mention an affective quality. Mia at Green Park clearly enjoyed the social aspects of PE as she stated that PE was her favourite subject: 'because I like to do PE with my friends in class.' Mia's response was recorded as an affective categorisation as it was associated

Table m - Choice Gender graph
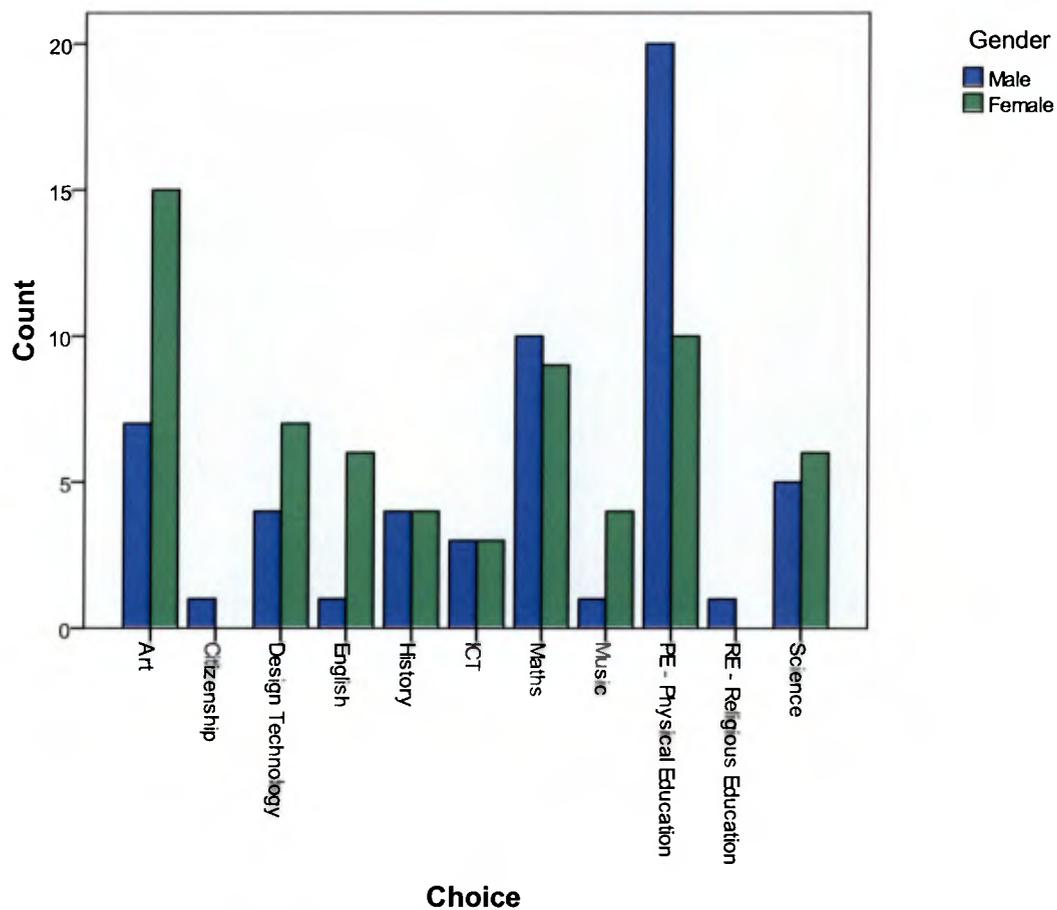
with feelings and was an emotional response.

Before comparing and contrasting the data across both sets in the following chapter, I also wish to show in graph form how the curriculum subjects look when cross referenced with the learning domains. For it was evident that the learning of and experiencing of physical or manual skills was of significance importance to the 30 children who chose PE as their favourite subject as table n clearly shows. However as we shall see in the next chapter when we analyse the data a little more closely, there were marked differences as to why the girls and boys chose PE as their favourite subject. As was noted earlier in data set one (tables 20 and 21 pages 113 /114), the children in the research identified 24 areas of activity that they enjoyed and 17 that they did not.

Table n - Domains Cross tabulation
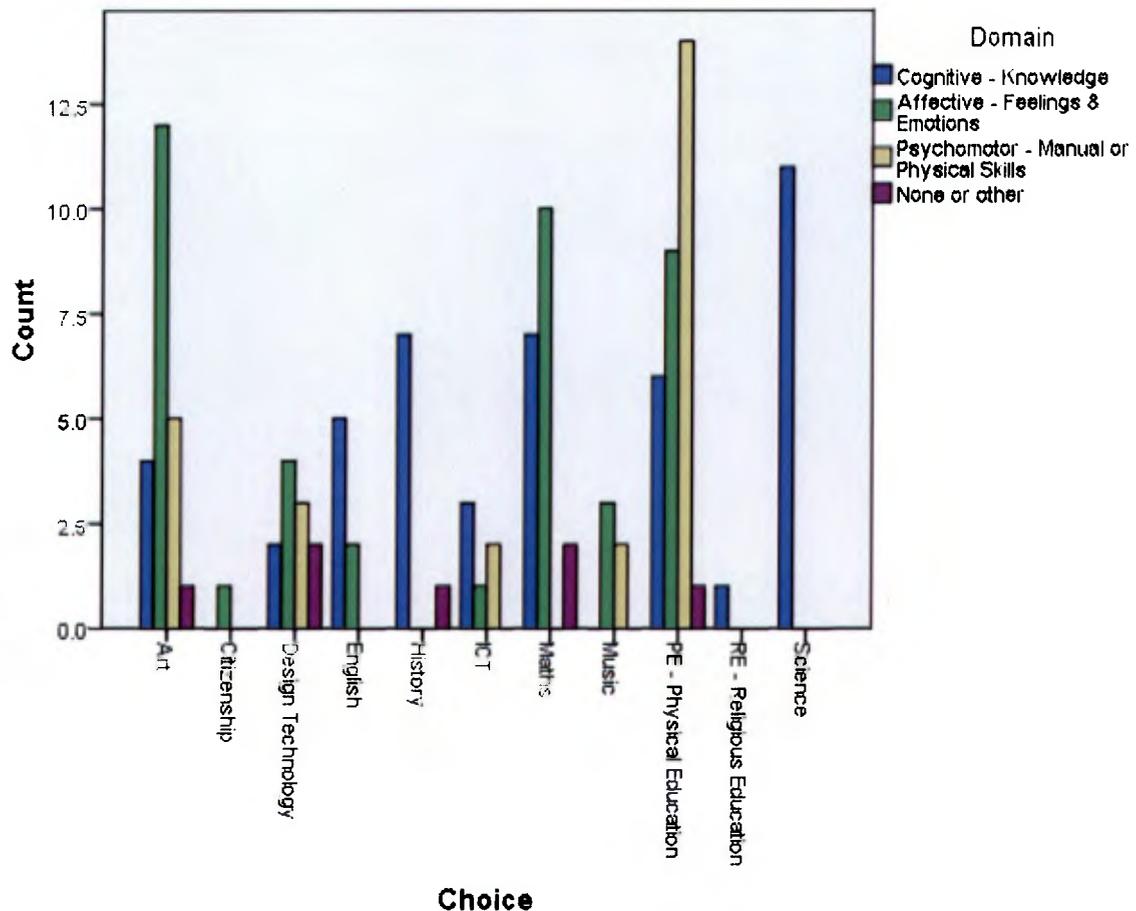
Summarising Comments

In this chapter I have presented an overview of both data sets gathered from the children in this research. I have been selective in what I have included as text, as I could not present everything that the children shared with me. I have included the data that I felt was most relevant in answering my primary research questions.

In the next chapter I analyse the data, link it to my theoretical positioning and begin to provide answers to my primary research questions. I include additional children's voices from 2007 and 2010, as a means of demonstrating the qualitative richness and the quantity of the data that the children have given me. This will be apparent in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Five – A discussion of the data and theoretical perspectives

Before analysing both data sets, I wish again to include my definition of PE as the discussion is intrinsically linked to my own understanding of the term. I argue that PE is an inclusive term, that PE is about giving children a broad range of physical experiences, presented in a positive way, where they can experience fun, enjoyment, and success at whatever level they access the physical activity, sport or game. Moreover it is about helping young people to understand and value their physical selves, how the body works, and how to look after it.

In the previous chapter I presented the data with added commentary as a means of demonstrating what the children had to say. In this chapter I have analysed the data and in places added new tables to show comparison and contrast across both data sets. I have grouped my analysis across three broad areas which came out of the data sets in the previous chapter. This material is used as a means of providing answers to my lead research questions, which are

- What do Children think about PE? and

- How might their views help inform policy practice and research?

The areas which feed into answering my lead research questions in the order that I analysed them are

1. Pupil voice and an analysis of gender

2. The status quo in PE, pupil voice and health and fitness

3. Curriculum Development, pupil voice and fun, enjoyment and positivity in PE

I have also linked the data given by the children to demonstrate how the key aims advocated by White (see page 72) can inform the debate surrounding the call for a reconsideration of the aims that underpin the NC, therein showing how they can be

realised, if not already impacting on the children's lives. (White's vision and key features are italicised from here on, and numbered as outlined in section three of this thesis.) By examining very specific and individual data, it was possible to form general responses based on the frequency of the data offered, that is to say how the specific was used to illuminate the general.

Apple (1995) wrote that one of the reasons why he wrote *Education and Power* was to think through:

> the complicated structural and cultural conditions surrounding schools and to uncover the cracks in these conditions, and in doing so to find space for critical actions (p.xiv)

The inclusion of pupil voice through broadening the discussion and democratising of the process is one example of such critical action.

1) Pupil voice and an analysis of gender

In the data set of 2007, 49 children out of the 115 cohort were females. Of these, 12 children recorded that they 'loved' all activities, 10 'loved' swimming, and others 'loved' athletics, dancing, skipping, cycling and OAA amongst others. 11 children recorded large team games as an area that they 'loved'. Conversely when the children were asked to record an activity that they 'hated', 17 were named with football and netball being nominated the most. Interestingly, 13 girls recorded that they did not 'hate' any activities. Please see tables o and p below which looks specifically at the choices that the girls made. What was very clear was that the girls (and boys), recorded a vast range of activities that they liked and disliked. However in the table listed as q below, there is a marked difference between the gender groups for the data set of 2010. There is a clear difference between the boys' and girls' responses in why they chose PE and how these were categorised. Perhaps we should not be surprised by this because of the very broad range of physical activities that the children have identified. This is certainly in line with my own philosophical positioning and

Act females love 2007 (table o)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Love all	12	24.48%	24.48%
Swimming	10	20.40%	44.88%
Football	4	8.18%	53.06%
Dancing	4	8.18%	61.24%
Basketball	3	6.12%	67.36%
Athletics	3	6.12%	73.48%
OAA	2	4.08%	77.56%
Tennis	2	4.08%	81.64%
Baseball	2	4.08%	85.72%
Skipping	2	4.08%	89.80%
Softball	2	4.08%	93.88%
Gymnastics	1	2.04%	95.92%
Cycling	1	2.04%	97.96%
Playing with friends	1	2.04%	100.00%
Total 14	49	100.0	

Act females hate 2007 (table p)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Don't hate any	13	26.56%	26.56%
Dance	5	10.20%	36.76%
Athletics	4	8.16%	44.92%
Football	4	8.16%	53.08%
Netball	4	8.16%	61.24%
Tennis	3	6.12%	67.36%
Rugby	3	6.12%	73.48%
Cricket	3	6.12%	79.60%
Basketball	2	4.08%	83.68%
Gymnastics	2	4.08%	87.76%
Rounders	2	4.08%	91.84%
Badminton	2	4.08%	95.92%
Hockey	1	2.04%	97.96%
Other	1	2.04%	100.00%
Total 14	49	100.0	

defining of PE. I urge that policy makers listen to the children and offer them a broader range of activities than is on offer for many at present. As table q below shows, that whilst the cognitive domain was the most important reason why the girls chose PE, the boy's main responses fell into the psychomotor domain.

Table q – Gender Cross tabulations differences
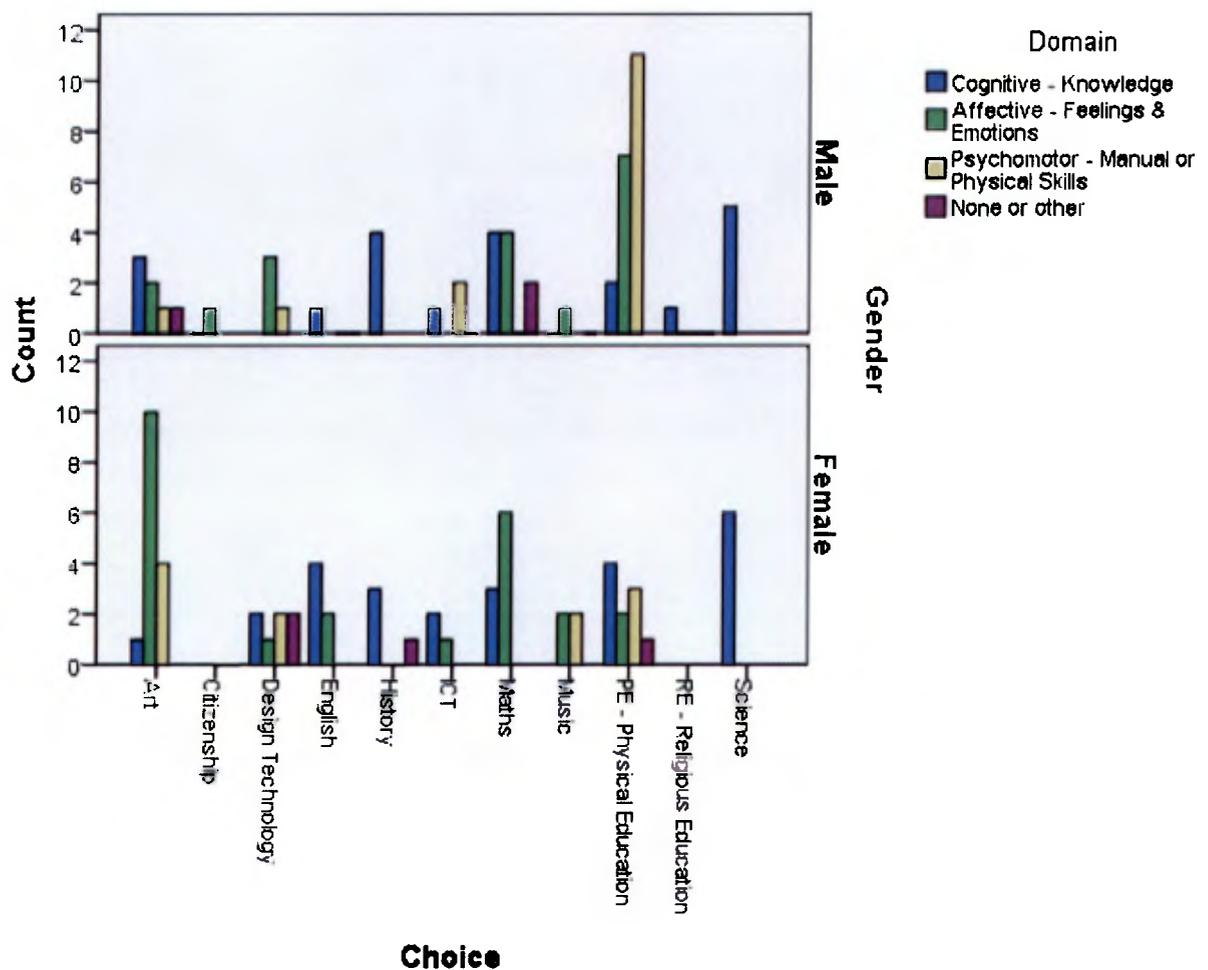
I detail two further responses from the children to demonstrate this point. Farhana at Abney Park wrote: 'I chose Physical Education because it helps me to understand how to keep fit and healthy.' Nathan at Lea Park by contrast stated that he chose PE: 'because I like sports and I get to be active in all different ways.'

One other thing was very apparent in terms of gender. As we have seen in data set one all the children clearly valued their heath. (Please see table 4 in the previous chapter).

However on further analysis there is another significant difference present between the boys and girls in the data. As table r shows below, a very large 87.82% of all the children stated that their health was very important to them.

Health feel all (table r)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very important	101	87.82%	87.82%
Important	11	9.58%	97.40%
Sometimes Important	3	2.60%	100.0%
Total	115	100.0	

Yet when this figure is analysed still further, in terms of how the girls alone felt, the overall percentage is much higher as table s shows. There are clearly implications

Health feel females (table s)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very important	47	95.92%	95..91%
Important	1	2.04%	97.96%
Sometimes Important	1	2.04%	100.0
Total	49	100.0	

here for a greater inclusion of PE and a variety of activities to be offered to the youngsters if the children's valuing of their health is to be acknowledged and valued in turn by adults.

One of my main aims throughout was to consider the children's views per se, and to include them in discussion. However one thing was extremely clear in the children's

responses in both data sets and that was that many children were still enjoying much of PE. As a teacher of PE, I have always been mindful of the difficulties that boys and girls often face at secondary school with the onset of puberty, and the related challenges that this brings for many young people. Specifically, much research exists, see for example Cockburn & Clark (2002), Flintoff & Scraton (2001), Garrett (2004), or O'Donovan & Kay (2005) for an in-depth analysis of some of the complexities present, including girls choosing not to take part in physical activity. These papers detail the difficulties that many young girls face during this period and the research shows that this is the time when many young females cease playing sport, or choose not to take part in any physical activity any more. It is a complex set of issues for many, and I am no exception in acknowledging that changes take place at secondary school, and many youngsters stop being physically active. The observation that I offer here is that at primary school many girls, irrespective of cultural background, identity, or languages spoken were all still enjoying physical activity and still talking positively about PE. Wright's work (2004), which is entitled *Preserving the value of happiness in primary physical education,* where the emphasis is on 'happiness' in the learning environment, is evidently still to be found in the primary school

2) <u>The status quo in PE, pupil voice and health and fitness</u>

In analysing my first data set, I directly asked the children about their views and thoughts on PE health and fitness. See for example tables 4, 5, 6, or 7 and tables r and s above, where a very large 97.40% of the children in the project felt that their own good health was important or very important to them. In the follow-up interviews the depth of feeling shown by the children regarding the question, became clearer as they told me why it was important to them. The responses also sit comfortably with the aim advocated by White where he makes the point that young people should *'live a*

healthy life and understand what makes for this.' (3) For example, Dorica at Lea Park felt that being healthy was very important because: 'by like having a good diet, you can get more talented as you get older. A good diet helps your brain.' In the same discussion Louisa added that being healthy was important because: 'you won't have weight problems or heart problems, it is very important.' The children shared their ideas about what constitutes a good diet and gave reasons for their decisions. Answers for this question varied tremendously with some children giving quite detailed responses and up to four recommendations for healthy eating. For example Leon at Central Park told us: 'water and milk and vegetables, they have lots of vitamins for your body. You need water because if you don't you'll get dehydrated.' At Green Park, Stella recorded: 'vegetables because they've got a lot of vitamins and nutrients. Water, it keeps you hydrated when exercising.' The children's responses also confirmed that the group were able to offer ideas about who they thought was fit and healthy and who was not, thereby demonstrating an understanding of the terms used and applying them to their own experiences. The responses from the children in relation to who they thought were active and who were not ranged from class peers, themselves, other children in the school and outside of the school, class teachers and other teachers in the school, close family including siblings and parents, extended family members, uncles, aunties, grand-parents and a range of sports stars. For example, Luke wrote: 'I know somebody who has run the marathon a few times and is an overall sports and health freak.' Hasan in the same school told me: 'I saw some fit joggers in the park the other day.' In relation to those who were not very active, Dylan from Lea Park said: 'Yes, my next door neighbour', and Hafeez stated: 'My Grandma is not very active, because she is less able to run as freely because she is older and less fit.' In data set 1, I asked the children to tell me what being fit meant? Again the

responses were numerous, informative and varied. For example Beverley at Green Park stated: 'It means that you are not overweight and you don't have problems.' Donnatella in the same class wrote: 'having a healthy heart. I am not really fit because if I run I become out of breath quickly.' In the follow-up interviews I asked the children to tell me about things that were unhealthy and should be avoided. The consumption of alcohol, doing drugs, and the avoidance of smoking were all noted on more than one occasion. These responses indicate an awareness of the aims advocated by White where he states that children should be able to *'sensibly manage desires'* *(13)* and *'resist pressure from peer groups and authority figures.'* *(15)*

In analysing both data sets I have shown that children do value their health and fitness, and they do have a sound understanding of what constitutes a good diet and also a good understanding of the terms health and fitness and how it relates to them. In the second data set of 2010, 17 references were made in relation to health and fitness as a reason for choosing PE as the favourite subject. Others words and phrases like doing exercise, being energetic, being active and moving were also mentioned. The data showed that the children were able to make the link between PE, physical activity, and health and fitness and therein understand at their own level of comprehension, the uniqueness of PE as a curriculum subject. Examples include Ryan from Central Park who felt that: 'PE is my favourite subject because you learn to keep yourself active.' Tyreke went further and told us how he valued PE: 'because you get to exercise your body and it makes your heart beat fast and quicker.' Elizabeth kept it simple and to the point and chose PE: 'because it's fun and it helps keep you fit healthy and feeling good.'

Elizabeth summed it up rather well and this leads me into the final area of my data analysis.

3) Curriculum development, pupil voice and fun, enjoyment and positivity in PE

It was very clear when reading the children's questionnaires that fun was very important to them as a reason for choosing their curriculum choice. In the first data set the vast majority of responses were positive, (see for example the percentage scores in the previous chapter for the activity areas within PE, listed at tables 7-19) Children talked and recorded continuously in data set one about 'having fun' 'enjoyment' and having the opportunity to work and 'play with friends.' Gul at Green Park (p109) wrote 'FUN' in capital letters, Gwen at the same school (p106), also used the term, and Arlene at Lea Park wrote that she: 'absolutely loved cycling.' In the second data set, of the 30 children who chose PE, 14 just under half of the group wrote the word fun on their questionnaire. Other words that they associated with PE were love, like, enjoy and exciting. For example Christine at Lea Park stated: 'I like PE because I love playing games.' Jessie at Green Park wrote that she chose PE: 'because it's fun and exciting. It also makes you exercise a lot.' Stanley at the same school selected PE: 'because I am a sporty person, and I love swimming.' Robert at Central Park wrote that it was: 'because it gets me outside the classroom and the games are fun.' What was also very evident was the positivity in which the children talked about their favourite subjects, and although the reasons varied the language was always upbeat. The children's responses sit comfortably with the work of MacGilchrist and Buttress (2005), who advocated that anything was possible in transforming learning and teaching provided that the young people were included and a ' we can if.......' (p.1) attitude and approach was present. The children at no point mentioned that any subject was better than, or more enjoyable than another, although 'core' subjects especially English did not score very highly at all in 2010. The theme of fun, enjoyment, and positivity now leads me into answering my first research

question, as it is a area that is never really far away for the children.

What did the children think about PE?

This section shows that children do have, and are able to hold, sensible discussions on PE and other issues, that they have their own thoughts and ideas on a wide range of things. As a researcher, I believe that had this research project chosen to look at children's views on music, art, history, D & T, or any other subject for that matter, the richness would not be dissimilar. The data that the children gave me with regard to what they thought about PE was very specific. For example, and just taking a sample of the data collected, 80% said they loved games, 64.3% stated that they loved gymnastics, 80.9% loved outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA), 73% loved swimming, 38.3% loved dance, and 60.9% loved athletic activities. What is evident from this data is that PE, as White argues, carries enormous potential for children in terms of personal fulfilment, *'to experience many absorbing activities.' (1)* Games and OAA as we have seen scored very highly with all the children, and one of the key factors involved in any game or OAA will involve notions of attacking and defending, and the application of skill to a particular challenge. White argues that one of the key aims of education is for the children to be able to *'strike a sensible balance between risk taking and caution.' (16).* Equally he states that *'Play is a helpful part in the life of the school and the community.' (6)* Both these areas of activity within the PE curriculum provide excellent examples of where White's aims can be accessed by the children. Elsewhere the children were perfectly able and willing to tell me *why* they loved, liked, disliked or hated any given area of activity. The children were also able to tell me about categories within areas of activities that they liked very much or disliked, and offered reasons as to *why* this was the case. I include here to substantiate this point and for emphasis, some of the things that the children told me during the

follow-up interviews as well as additional responses in the questionnaires. Shakeela a girl at Abney Park school stated that she loved: 'Football and basketball coz they are fun and you learn how to compromise and work as a team.' and Terrance a boy at the same school also thoroughly enjoyed: 'Basketball and football coz you work with other people and make new friends.' These two quotes from the children demonstrate and show in White's words that the children are able to *'engage in close relationships' (2)* and are able *'to reflect on human nature, its commonality and diversity,' (8)* such is the potential of PE.

In data set one, 46.1% of the children felt that they did not do enough PE, whereas only slightly less 45.2% (see figure 4) were generally very happy with the amount of PE provision that they were receiving, and felt that they did the right amount of PE. What the children collectively recorded was that they wanted a larger variety of activities to be included in the PE curriculum. These views are certainly in line with the work of Penney (2004) and Boorman (1998), where they explicitly show that different children like different sorts of activities and sports. This was substantiated by some of the things that the children wrote and recorded at interview. Shakeela: 'We should have more choice of what we do in PE. We need more fun a mix 'n' match of things.' Louisa at Lea Park said: 'We should do more things, a bigger variety of sports, not only doing games.' Inez continued: 'We don't do enough types of sport. Ok, we did Aussie rules which was fun, but we didn't even do like, cricket.'

The children at Abney Park went further than just articulating that they wanted a greater range of activities at school as part of the PE curriculum. They demonstrated an understanding of the financial pressures that their school faced in providing them with a rich and varied PE curriculum. The conversation was begun by Jasmine who asked the question: 'How come only years 3 & 4 should go swimming?' Jasmine's

well founded concerns stem from the fact that Abney Park, like many schools locally and nationally, can only afford to send their children swimming for two terms, when they are in years 3 and 4 at school. After this period, swimming tuition ceases at the school whether the children have learnt to swim or not, because the school does not have the funding to send the children swimming continuously. The NC dictates that schools legally have to send their children swimming, and all should be able to swim at least 25 metres by the end of year 6, when they leave for secondary school. The reality is that nationally thousands of children cannot swim 25 metres by this age, and at local level hundreds also fail to achieve the NC outcomes, or indeed even learn how to swim at all. (See for example the article by Slater and Thornton in the TES on 1st September 2006, or the research done in Northampton in 2007 by Chan, which showed that 1 in 3 primary pupils cannot swim.) In the following discussion, I emphasise the importance of learning to swim in the primary school and the relationship with the *Every Child Matters* recommendation about children being safe in and outside of school hours for a very specific reason. As noted earlier, in the second year of my teaching career, a child in my class drowned in a local river during the summer holidays. Nothing had prepared me for informing the rest of my class of the child's death, nor the deep pain and grief at attending the child's funeral. In the weeks following the funeral I found it very difficult to support the other children in the class as they tried to understand that one of their friends was never coming back. It is something that I will never forget and it has had a very profound and long lasting effect on me as a person and also as a teacher. Perhaps I feel a sense of professional duty to try to ensure that it never happens again, and also in the hope that the child did not die in vain. A reflection on the aims and purpose of education is never far away in this context and being safe has to be an imperative. The other significant concern with

swimming provision in the primary school is that, if a class only goes swimming for a term or two in years 3 or 4, this does not sit comfortably with the way that children actually learn. We know that children learn by regularly exploring, practicing, and honing new skills that have been learnt. Whether one prefers Piaget's notion of levels (1958), Bruner's ideas of a spiral curriculum (1963) or indeed Vygotsky's views on scaffolding learning (1962), or any other theory for that matter, all are dependent on the child having regular access and support within any given area of learning. Accessing any area of learning only fleetingly will not facilitate a sound development or understanding in any context. As young human beings we did not learn to read, write, type, walk, balance, or run for example by practising the skills for only a short while, but rather by continually practising, making errors, retrying, being guided, getting stronger, gaining confidence and refining developing skills. So for Jasmine in July 2007, there were still concerns about swimming provision in her primary school. Yet, in the same borough millions are still being spent on the Olympic facilities, and Abney Park, in April 2010, can still only afford to send children from years 3 and 4 swimming.

Jasmine's question is actually a very good question and does address the issues of entitlement and economics at a local and national level. The responses from three other children in the group not only show their ability to interact, discuss and think about wider issues, but also an ability to come up with helpful and thoughtful solutions to perceived problems. Stephanie felt that: 'Maybe we should ask parents to donate more money for resources?' Shakeela adds: 'Yeah, more events to raise money' Terrance thoughtfully reflects: 'If possible more equipment, I guess they are already trying, like book fairs and that?' The children are as White states able *'to make competent decisions in relation to managing money' (4)* and do indeed

demonstrate an ability to *'learn to cope with setback, change of circumstance and uncertainty' (14)* as young as they are. This discussion between Stephanie, Shakeela and Terrance in response to Jasmine's concerns also emphasises the point made by White that the children are able *'to communicate with other people appropriately.' (5)* There is also a year six view on *'how wealth is created and distributed.' (11)* and the relationship between school and the outside community. So in answering my first primary question, I have shown that

1. The children who took part in this research project are able to offer valid opinions on PE and related issues.

2. The children have told us what they understand the terms by the terms physical education and health education.

3. They have also given us their general feelings about the amount of PE provision they receive.

4. The children were also able to tell us specifically about each area of activity in PE and how they felt generally about the activity itself.

5. The children were able to tell us in greater detail about particular activities that they either 'loved or hated.'

6. The children told me about their favourite subject and why they had chosen it.

What the data is showing me as the researcher is that the children *Are asking for a greater range of absorbing activities to be on offer to them and for at the very least an explanation of why swimming provision is limited.*

The large question that remains, however, is that if *the children* in this research are recording that they do value their health and well being highly and enjoy PE, then why does PE continue to remain only a foundation subject in the NC? As Carney & Winkler (2008) have argued in their conclusion to the paper *'The Problem with*

Primary physical education' the debate needs advancing. Giving pupils a voice is and a consideration of the aims of education are two ways of advancing the discussion, surely? The ECM agenda is concerned with listening to children and what they have to tell us in order that they may feel valued and safe, and yet this does not appear to be the case at present. It is also concerned with children enjoying *healthy lifestyles* and *achieving and developing skills for adulthood.* (ECM: 2003), this is not unlike my own definition of PE.

How might the children's views help inform current policy, practice and research?
As I have demonstrated so far, the children involved in this research were, and are perfectly willing and able to inform current debates on a range of issues. The data offered by the children clearly suggests that they are able to play a greater role in their own education. As Lawton (1996, 2000), Fielding (2004, 2008) Simons (1987, 1999) argue and White argued so forcibly (2004, 2007), it does appear to be the case that there is clearly a mismatch between the NC (a transmission model), and the child's role in their own learning. Moreover, as White argues, the real problem lies in the lack of clarity regarding the basic aims that underpin education, What common goals and aspirations are we striving for? Should they include the views of the young people, the recipient group of our views and aspirations? That is to say, should they have a role to play in their own learning and should they be encouraged to enact this role and be given greater responsibility? Advocates like Mullan (2003) argued that an educational system, which focuses on the rights and responsibilities of the child, will involve children in decision making processes in all aspects of school life, and where the emphasis should not be on absorbing curriculum content alone. Data from a range of sources, for example the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (2008), the Bernard Van Leer

Foundation (2008), and the National Foundation for Educational Research (2008), have all advocated the tremendous benefits in creating harmonious learning environments that hearing what children have to say can bring to a school. The Fairbairn Foundation argues that allowing children to take part in open and free dialogue actually improves communicative and collaborative skills, and encourages children to take responsibility and make balanced decisions in relation to their own learning and wider perspectives. The foundation also emphasises the point that giving young people a voice in community initiatives can actually help the children develop interpersonal and political skills. The Every Child Matters framework clearly identifies that one of the goals to be achieved is to ensure that positive contributions are made in relation to community and society. Lawton (1996, 2000) argued that children should be encouraged to play a helpful part in the life of the school and community, and White (2004, 2007), calls for reform that will allow young people to:

> communicate with other people appropriately, reflect on human nature, its commonality and
> diversity and that play, is a helpful part in the life of the school and the community (p.26)

Perhaps one of the most effective aspects of my research was in relation to the methodological instruments used to gather the data for this project and the amount of information collected. One of the ways that schools promote these opportunities is by establishing, school councils. Schools which successfully run school councils are obviously very keen to promote the benefits that they bring to a school. One such community school in the east London borough of Waltham Forest, and although not a primary source in this research, has pupil involvement at the heart of all learning. The views of the deputy head sit well with the theoretical perspectives advocated by White and referred to in my thesis, for he argues that:

> Students my have a different kind of expertise, but it is expertise none the less. They know
> what excites them about learning and what turns them off, so it is crucial we listen to them and

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act if we want to be successful teachers (Schools Councils 2008)

By encouraging and promoting democratic principles where pupils are given a voice can only help young people gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the relationships between adults, or as White argues, develop a greater awareness of human relationships and power differentials including those *'of the rights of workers and employers.' (10)* Moreover such practice actively encourages young people to play an active and helpful role in the life of the school and community. Such views are also deeply entrenched in the United Nations (UN) philosophy which emphasises the *Rights of the Child*, which articulates that children's expressed opinions should be taken into account in any matter that affects them, which is of course also an underlying concept in the *Every Child Matters* agenda. Whitty and Wisby (2007), would agree with these perspectives and might support them fully as argued in *Real Decision Making? School Councils in action.*

> School councils - where democratically elected groups of pupils represent their peers to give them a voice in school decision making - can improve behaviour and encourage engagement with learning. They can develop pupils' social and emotional skills, inspire them to be more active citizens, and help schools give practical recognition of children's rights. As such, they are an important aspect of the Every Child Matters agenda (p.68)

Of course not everybody is happy with the idea of children having a voice, and being involved in school decision making. In an article published by The Association of Teachers & Lecturers (ATL) in October 2007, the union noted how some felt that it was:

> ......a failure to respect the professional roles and status of teachers

And even some children apparently argued:

> why do we have to do adults' jobs?

> (Seen and not heard, The Report October 2007; pp.12-14)

Whitty and Wisby (2007) readily acknowledge that implementing 'pupil voice' as a

means of improving teaching and learning, needs to be handled sensitively. They advocate that pupils will need training in effective decision making in order to combat adult fears that children are only children, and not really old enough or mature enough to make balanced adult decisions. They also argue that teachers will need training to ensure that they do not dominate pupils' deliberations, and that the pupil voice is taken seriously, and not just a token gesture, or that only the well dressed and well spoken children are invited to speak. Elsewhere some schools have embedded the pupils' observations and views firmly into school practice to such an extent that pupils sit in on job interviews and observe and comment on their teachers teaching. White argued that this is a worthy aim for education as it helps children develop an understanding of how to *'work collaboratively in the production of goods and services for the school or community.'(9)* Primary schools do not go that far, as far as I know, but School councils can be found in an ever increasing number of schools. However I also wish to make the observation there are some teachers who are afraid that before very long students may be encouraged to grade their teachers. These fears are not altogether without cause as unsavoury comments have appeared in public areas like *Myspace*, *Facebook* and *Rate my Teacher.com* quite recently. The data used in this research would support the views held by Whitty and Wisby (2007), Lawton, Fielding, Simons, White, and the ECM agenda, as the children are able to make balanced responsible decisions and to take part in open and constructive discussions. To further demonstrate this point I wish to examine two brief extracts of the children's responses to the questions discussed at the follow-up interviews after the questionnaires were administered. My role in these discussions which formed the basis of the follow-up interviews was as a facilitator for each of the groups that I worked with. The first example comes from Terrance, Stephanie and Shakeela at

Abney Park. The question asked was: 'Is there anything that you can tell me about PE healthy lifestyles and being safe?' Terrance answered: 'I want to say two things like, warming up because you could pull a muscle, and yeah also, with weights level, don't go high, stay low and work up. If you get short of breath you should see a doctor.' Stephanie added: 'You should always cross the road at night if it's dark and wear a bright stripe, and help little children across the road.' Shakeela contributed: 'Start low like Terrance says, so you don't pull a leg or muscle and always have water.' In this short extract, Terrance and Stephanie offered two very different views in answer to the question and both listened attentively to each other's answers. Shakeela then adds her support to the points made by Terrance. In this simple dialogue the children are demonstrating good advanced speaking and listening skills and interacting well with each other.

For my second example, at Central Park, the last question I asked at the end of the interview was: 'What don't you like in PE and why?' Shevonne replied: 'I don't like warming up.' Although Shevonne did not offer a reason why she disliked warming up, her response was immediately followed up by Lanre, who felt that he did have a reason. Lanre answered: 'yeah, I don't like it either, you think that you are doing PE, but you are not.' Nazia, also following the discussion added: 'I don't like running around the playground doing laps warming up.' Nastacia felt differently and said in turn: 'I don't like some kinds of dance.' Callum added: 'When you play football, everybody rushes for the ball and when your legs are aching and still aching 2 days later it is hard to do PE.' Luke said: 'I don't like gymnastics or dance because boys are not good at stretching.' Lanre retorts: 'That's what you think?'

This short discussion shows examples of the children listening to each other, in an informed positive manner and having the confidence to agree and more specifically

the confidence to disagree. In the first instance, Shevonne, Lanre and Nazia are clearly responding to each other, whereas Callum, Nastacia and Luke are independently sharing their own thoughts and views. It shows, again, very good speaking and listening skills demonstrated by the children, as well as interaction. Lanre and Nazia both respond to Shevonne's opening statement, and Lanre with humour in his voice, concludes and disagrees with Luke's comments about boys not being good at stretching.

I have demonstrated so far in this section that notions about how children learn and their role in their own learning have changed over the last fifty years, and that the debate about their role and involvement in education continues. What I have demonstrated is that children are able to speak for themselves on a range of issues and I have initiated discussions which show that the groups of children that I worked with are able to do this. I am also advocating that their voice be used as a means of informing current debate on education aims, a voice largely missing from historical discussion on children's learning. This perspective is implicit in the key aims detailed in White's work. To this end I have shown through PE that children's voices can inform policy, practice and research. A discussion of the aims of education and the inclusion of pupil voice would not be unhelpful places to start. As I detailed in chapter one as a means of contextualising my thesis, the Olympic Games will be in London in 2012. White argued that two further aims were desirable as a basis for a curriculum. He argues that young people need to be able to *'critically assess the role of the media' (7),* and to be *'aware of the impact of science, technology, and global markets on work prospects.' (12)* The implementation of the Olympic Games, their manifestation and the legacy could provide ample opportunities to see these aims come to rich fruition.

Summarising Comments

In this chapter the children have provided answers to my primary research questions. I have discussed these answers specifically in relation to the work of Lawton, Fielding, and most notably the key aims advocated by White and also in the context of making every child really matter. I have also shown that children are able to contribute to educational debate, therein identifying how their views might in the future contribute to policy practice and research.

In the second data set I have shown that PE was the most popular subject for the group of 121 children in 2010, although when analysed further, girls chose art as their most popular subject. I offer the view here in 2010, like in 2007, that the children from north-east London, irrespective of gender, cultural background, or first language spoken at home, were able to offer a healthy insight in to what PE looks like for a year 6 child. As White (2004, 2007) has argued so vehemently since the 1970s, until we are able to arrive at a common consensus as to what the aims of our education system should be, then there will be continue to be large disaffected groups within our communities. The communities in which we live in 2010 are very different from those of a hundred years ago, or even twenty years ago. My point is that if we are to fully realise and understand what the aims of education are, or indeed might be, then allowing children a voice in the discussion and broadening the debate to actually include them, and to uncover what the curriculum looks and feels like for them, has to be a consideration if democracy is to be valued. A post modernist view of building a curriculum fit for the 21st century has to hear and more importantly listen to all voices involved, thereby demonstrating democratic processes at work. This research, is an illuminating view of what children think about PE in 2007 and 2010, and challenges the old notion that they are not worth listening to. Not to do so only reinforces the

notion as Ruddock (2007) and Rudduck and Flutter (2004) have argued, that schools and education generally are two of the most undemocratic institutions in society, and this does not appear to have changed much over the last 120 years.

In the next chapter I summarise my findings and I detail the recommendations that I have drawn out of the children's responses in answering my lead research questions. I conclude with some personal reflections and look back at my own learning in the EdD programme and look at the implications for my research.

Chapter Six – Summary Findings, Recommendations, Conclusion and Personal Reflections

In answering my primary research questions in this chapter, I demonstrate how my research will inform policy pedagogy and research, and how my findings illuminate and could inform practice.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In part one I summarise my findings and I discuss the recommendations emanating from the research, and in part two I conclude and offer my overall personal reflections. I remind the reader that my research gave children a voice in relation to

- What the children thought about PE, and

- How their views might help inform current policy, practice and research

However before summarising my findings and offering my recommendations based on what the children have shared with me, I wish to further sign-post the journey so far. Through the themes that I critiqued in my review of the literature in chapter two, I argued that there was little or no dialogic aspect to the majority of primary research in relation to pupil voice, and even less in relation in year 6 children and PE. I argued that a focus on traditional team sport only, was prohibitive for many primary children, and I contested the positioning of PE within the NC framework. I also argued that PE has become gradually marginalised in the primary curriculum, and past and present government's over reliance on 'policy based evidence' was not helpful in any context. These areas of critique then fed into chapter three, where I outline my theoretical positioning. I drew largely upon the work of White who continues to questions the aims that underpin the NC as it stands. I also drew upon the work of Lawton who

argues that that there is a clear mismatch between the NC, and advances known about children's ability to be involved in their own learning, and the work of Mullan who contends that children should be given much greater responsibility in the decision making processes at school.

In chapter four I presented the data through the same three themes that I used to group my selected literature in chapter two. These were pupil voice, the status quo in PE, and towards building the future together through curriculum development. In analysing the data in chapter five as a means of providing answers to my lead research questions, I examined gender, fitness and health, and fun, enjoyment and positivity in PE all through pupil voice.

The children's informed responses have been used to support my call for a major re-think surrounding the aims of education and the relevance of curriculum content. My recommendations emanate out of analysing the data that the children provided through the same three key themes used in chapters two, four and five. My summary findings and recommendations should also be read with my own definition of PE in mind which I articulated in chapter one. I argued that:

> PE is about giving children a broad range of physical experiences, presented in a positive way, where they can experience fun, enjoyment and success at whatever level they access the physical activity, sport or game.
>
> PE is also about helping young people to understand and value their physical selves, how the body works, and how to look after it for a lifetime.

My research will add and contribute to a body of knowledge that is largely under-researched, in relation to year 6 children's views on PE, and how their views might inform policy and practice. That is to say, that in seeing the child's views as important, this research project is in part calling for an acknowledgment that the children are able and willing to play a role in their own learning agendas and thereby

broaden and democratise the discussion surrounding the aims of education. I now offer my summary findings and then my recommendations.

Part One: Summary Findings and Recommendations

What the children thought about PE?

The summary findings here and subsequent recommendations link my two primary research questions.

- PE is still very popular with many primary school children.

- All the children in this research were able to identify an area of activity that they enjoyed.

- The NC in relation to PE specifically (with or without wider NC reform, Rose's and Alexander's reviews included) needs to be reviewed and restructured because the *foundation* status afforded to PE has not helped some young people, teachers and parents to value the subject area.

- The classifying of PE as a foundation subject is based on a value judgement. I, like many of the children in this research do not see it in the same way and disagree with the judgement.

- The children want a greater variety of activities to be offered to them. This is crucial if they are to be encouraged to be physically active.

- If a curriculum that distinguishes between *core* and *foundation* subjects is to remain, then PE would need to be given *core* status if the children's own valuing of their heath is to be acknowledged.

- The data did not show that the children were asking for a move towards cross curricular thematic teaching, although many of their responses did link

subjects. This linking across subjects does of course give a distinct insight into how children view their world and is at odds with a subject centred curriculum.

As an observation and as a teacher, in my experience it appears to me that we are now seeing some children and their parents who have been taught the NC and who believe that PE is not as important as the core subjects, and as a result activity levels continue to decrease for many children. Almost half of the cohort 46.1% said that they did not do enough PE. Kourtney told us that she did not do enough sports, and Jasmine was concerned that only the children in years 3 and 4 went swimming. This of course would not be permitted for a core subject. Notwithstanding the crucial point that all children who took part in the research in 2007 identified that there was an area of PE that they '*loved,*' they were asking for a greater range of physical activities to be on offer to them. Some schools are already addressing these issues and perhaps things are changing for some children for I have uncovered three further sources which substantiate this point. In an article which is headed *Skating captures the attention of PE students,* it is reported how:

> a school in London is reporting success after it incorporated inline skating into its PE programme in a bid to help pupils get more active. Teachers worked with the National Healthy Schools Programme to promote popular 'street sports' to help make PE lessons more appealing (Future Fitness September 2008 p.6)

Not surprisingly, as it was noted by the children in this research, cycling is set to impact on the PE curriculum too. This interest is likely to continue to increase following the outstanding success of the male and female Great Britain cycling teams at the Beijing Olympics Games in August 2008. In another article titled *Bike riding could be back in schools,* Jackie Eason, a cycling instructor, tells how she:

> currently instructs in 20 schools. Cycling has now been in schools for a number of years and

he children are crying out for it. We know that children are being driven to school and that for

them to cycle is better for their health and fitness and for the environment. We teach them

skills to be able to do this safely (Future Fitness September 2008 p.30)

The third example demonstrates how some schools are interpreting the NCPE in an

innovative and creative way, and this perhaps might be one way forward. In an article

entitled *BMX biking goes on PE curriculum,* a forward thinking teacher writes:

Our PE was always very traditional and a lot of students weren't necessarily engaging, put

bluntly they just did not enjoy it, particularly the girls. A new PE curriculum was introduced

in September 2008 that allows for schools to operate in the 'adventure' strand of teaching. We

also include climbing and orienteering. (Future Fitness January 2009 p.2)

How might the children's views help inform current policy, practice and research -

Recommendations

- Children do have a voice worth listening to if given the opportunity. This

  should be done.

  Perhaps the most obvious point that I wish to make in this section and which

  should be very clear to the reader concerns the vast amount of data that was

  given freely to me by the children. They provided a colossal amount and

  richness of information, not all of which I have been able to use.

- The Children have shown that the National Curriculum needs reviewing. This

  should be done.

  A curriculum that is based on a model from 1904, and is not fit for purpose in

  the 21st century, as the under-pinning philosophical aims do not take into

  account that children can be intrinsically involved in their own learning, and

  the overall aims that underpin education are not clear as White argues so

  fervently. It is worth noting that both White and Waters also made this point,

yet their positioning is very different. My data has shown that children can be involved in their own learning.

- The NC has at its heart that a 'transmission' of knowledge is the best way in which children learn. This should be considered in any curriculum review.

Again my data has shown that this is not necessarily the case, as some children are prepared to challenge what is being transmitted, and how it is being taught. Kourtney and Inez were prepared to discuss their teacher's management strategies, and stated that they did not really like the dance teacher, because he was bad tempered and shouted at the children.

- The NC as it stands fails to 'acknowledge' that there are clear value judgements involved in deciding what should or should not be taught or indeed included in specific subject areas. Curriculum specifications should be reviewed.

- The underpinning philosophy of the NC is contentious in the sense that the views emphasised, may represent only one side of an event. Is history the same for everybody I contend? To this extent, curriculum content and curriculum specification also, should be considered in any curriculum review.

These issues gain in prominence when we consider that the cultural and ethnic makeup of large sections of our communities are now very different to 1904, the time from which the NC model dates or even 1988. 18 different languages were spoken by the children in this research in 2007, and in terms of cultural identity and background, 20 classifications were identified. A curriculum whose roots are embedded in the very early twentieth century can never really reflect the rich cultural diversity of many of the UK's large inner city communities present in 2010. The data provided by the children demonstrates that the aims which

which underpin education need reviewing on two further counts.

- Firstly there are problems regarding where one curriculum subject content might begin and another end. (See for example the second data set, where the children clearly linked PE to other areas of learning.)

- Secondly, as teachers of nursery, reception and young Key Stage 1 learners will testify, children do not learn in isolated curriculum areas. For the young learner it is all inter-related and part of the same thing. It is adult policy makers who have decided where one curriculum subject starts and another one finishes. The children do not see these boundaries in the same way that adults do.

For as Shakeela told me at interview when I asked her: 'How can being fit and healthy help you as you grow up and become an adult?' She replied: 'It can help you learn about puberty, during the puberty crises.' Or as Laura told us in 2010, she chose PE because: 'I can learn lots of active things. We can keep healthy all the time and it is good for you.' Whilst the comments shared by Shakeela and Laura do not conclusively demonstrate the problems associated with subject boundaries, they do I suggest, show that different areas of learning are related in the young mind. My final section is a conclusion of my work and where I locate this thesis in relation to wider policy, practice and research. I also offer some personal reflections of my own overall learning journey, a key requirement of the EdD programme.

Part Two – Conclusions drawn and Personal Reflections

In Chapter Four I presented the data offered by the children with my added commentary as a means of introducing the data, in relation to my primary research

questions. In Chapter Five I discussed the data in relation to a range of contexts. In this chapter, I have used the data that the children have given me and summarised my findings which in turn inform the recommendations that have emanated from this research. Moreover, and as a means of concluding, I locate my thesis in relation to educational research, policy and practice. I have attempted to theorise my own practice by giving the children a voice and not only listening to what has been said but actually hearing what has been said (Fielding, 2004, 2008). Through PE, I have demonstrated how their views are able to inform wider policy, research and practice. In viewing Apple's work on Education and Power (1995) I have tried to democratise the existing conditions, and in so doing show and demonstrate that children are more than just empty vessels. I also argue the point that at the very least by listening to and hearing what children are saying adds to the democratic process, by including them and giving due consideration to how their views might help inform current policy. Furthermore, and importantly, it contributes to their understanding of how decisions are made democratically by involving them in a democratic process. Sheila Wigmore, Professor of Physical Education at Sheffield Hallam University wrote in the autumn of 2006 in the second edition of the newly launched official journal of The Association for Physical Education (afPE) that:

> research is a process of systematically gathering and presenting information for the purpose of initiating, modifying or terminating a particular policy that affects the pedagogy of our subject, or our professional well being (p.40)

The triad used by Wigmore (2006), see below, details the relationship between *Practice, Policy and Research*, and it helps to elucidate a wider process at work, and one in which this research project sits comfortably. The notion of a triad indicates the inter-relatedness of practice, policy and research. It is a model where each aspect cannot help but impact on the other two aspects, and all are virtually inseparable from

whichever point one wishes to begin looking at an issue. For example, research can be influenced by policy and practice. Policy in turn can be influenced by practice, and research and practice may be influenced by both policy and research. To substantiate these points I offer some examples from this thesis. My research has been influenced by practice, that is, what the children have told me about what takes place in their schools, and also influenced by NC policy which stipulates what must take place.

Triad Used

RESEARCH

Influence agendas

Disseminate evidence

Advocate and campaign

Exemplify good practice

POLICY

PRACTICE
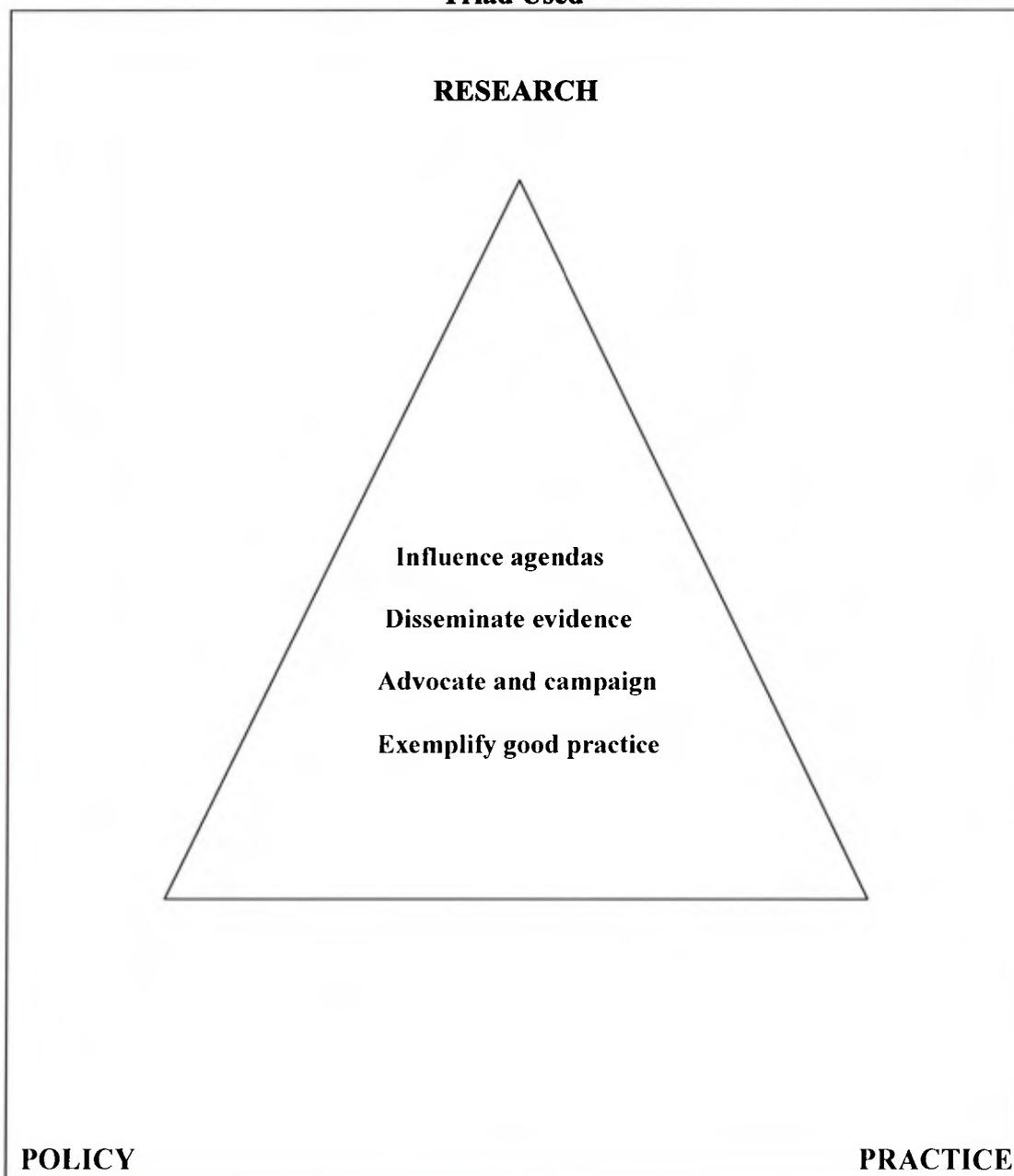
Taking policy as a starting point, some educationalists like Lawton, and Mullan, academics such as Fielding, and philosophers like White have argued that the basis of the NC has 'transmission of knowledge' at its heart. However they have argued, and I would agree, that this position is outdated and needs to be brought up to date to take account of children's perspectives on education as a means of acknowledging that children have a role to play in their own education.

Practice supports this stance, with the general increase in the numbers of children's school councils and a call for the child voice to be heard. My own research in terms of quantity and quality of what the children have shared with me, both willingly and freely substantiates this point. Using the same triad and employing another example, and taking practice as the starting point, I have found that the children are asking for a greater variety of physical activities to be made available to them, and my research in turn raises this issue and therein potentially sits comfortably with a number of policy documents like the ECM agenda, and White's call for a review of the aims of education. Wigmore (2006) goes on to present the case that provided the practice, policy, and research are fully integrated and explored in depth from any permutation or starting point, then the learning in the wider area of PE, and for any other area for that matter, for all those involved, children and adults alike, can only be beneficial by using such a process. If executed effectively, Wigmore (2006) advocates that research can influence agendas, exemplify good practice and impact on policy. Evidence can be disseminated and used to advocate or campaign for a particular reform or amendment. As a way of concluding, I will now consider some of my key theoretical points outlined earlier in this thesis and relate them to what the children have told us. Key points identified across all works include children and young people achieving *personal fulfilment and experiencing many absorbing activities, where play is a*

helpful part in the life of the school and the community (White 2007, p.25). The children asked for a greater range of activities for PE and Sport which could include a range of absorbing activities.

White also advocates that children and young people should:

> Engage in close relationships, enjoy and achieve developing skills for adulthood, and communicate with other people appropriately (White 2007 pp.25-26)

PE, when taught well, will address concepts like teamwork, collaboration and common identity. The ECM agenda, White, and I as a teacher all advocate *Living a healthy life and understand what makes for this* including *enjoying healthy life styles and being safe.* This of course continues to sit comfortably with my own definition of PE. The children as we have already seen also stated emphatically that their health and safety was very important to them, and these values are at the heart of Every Child Matters. On a personal and professional level I also found it very interesting that of the 236 children who took part in this project, male and female, who spoke many different languages and came from differing cultural backgrounds, all offered their own views on PE and their health and other related issues, irrespective of whether they had experienced PE in the UK or in the countries of their birth. Was PE or physical activity a universal 'language' I wondered further?

Personal reflections and Learning

In this section I reflect on my own learning over the course of completing this EdD. As required by a professional doctorate, I detail the local and professional significance of my learning and thesis, and how it could impact on practice. I also outline what the possible implications of my research might be, and how it can add to the existing body of knowledge and wider national discussions on related issues. I included in my literature review how I was professionally influenced by the Inner London Education Authority's document entitled *My Favourite Subject.* The power of this document

articulated for me what school children thought about PE and the views of the children were valued. This in many ways was my starting point for this research. I reflect further, by including an early example of how pupil voice influenced my own teaching and continues to so. The example I offer, was in many ways the catalyst, which has led me to where I am now. Inspired by the ILEA research, I involved one of my early Year Six classes in discussing what they thought we should present for our 'termly' class assembly. In what was initially a strategy used to help me, my teaching was transformed by the children's responses. The children were able to plan, choreograph, perform, sing, dance and evaluate their own performances. They demonstrated to me that they could play a greater role in their own learning and take greater ownership of their education. Over the years the children have sung and danced to all the tracks on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, a range of performances inspired by the Spice Girls and Madonna, and many variations of street dance including the early hip-hop genre. They have planned, performed, evaluated, recorded and filmed productions of Grease, West Side Story and High School Musical recently in which they also sang and danced. The children in the summer of 2007 and late winter of 2010 who contributed to this research did not disappoint in any way whatsoever. They shared with me their thoughts and their views about PE, as I had hoped and knew that they would.

As a result of my experience I now share my learning about pupil involvement and what they are able to do with the trainee teachers that I work with. I actively advocate involving the pupils on a number of levels and across a range of areas, for a variety of reasons too, including behaviour management.

On a personal level I have learnt new skills and improved at others. During the course of this EdD, I have carried out surveys, used questionnaires, piloted ideas, learnt how

to use a dictaphone, edit, sample and transcribe data. I have learnt how to use SPSS, overcome setbacks and continued working towards an end. The conclusion of this thesis is the result of nearly nine years work. At the outset of this thesis in Chapter one I stated that on embarking on the EdD programme I hoped to achieve the key outcomes for the doctorate which were to advance my professional development and to offer a contribution to professional knowledge and insight. I hope and feel that these outcomes have been achieved.

I also wish to make the point that on an individual level I too, have discovered that I have a voice as a relatively new researcher working at this level as part of the EdD programme. It has certainly been an interesting and very challenging journey to date. My own practical work and learning has also been illuminated by this research, because the quantity, colour and vibrancy of what the children had to tell me, helped me to find answers to questions that had been with me for virtually my entire teaching career.

Local and Professional significance

In my present school I have introduced four new initiatives into the PE curriculum and during extra-curriculum time as a means of giving the children a greater variety of learning experiences. We now have a cycle club established where safe riding and bicycle maintenance workshops are taught, and a lunch time yoga club available for upper key stage two children. We now also go sailing and offer two different types of martial arts classes both in and out of curriculum time.

What has not changed over the years is that the children I work with still have views on a whole range of issues including curriculum content and timetabling. These voices, then as now are very powerful, persuasive, bright and strident. I have seen music, art, geography, drama, D & T and PE suffer as a result of the core subjects

dominating the curriculum. Yet my early hunch based on what the children were telling me and indeed showing me was that they enjoyed a broad curriculum and physical activity very much. With the continued emphasis on ICT (and I do not have a problem with this, except that the increased time spent sitting down needs to be countered by an increase in physical activity levels, and I offer the observation that ICT must work for us as human beings, not us for it), children's involvement in understanding and valuing their health is imperative at a local and national level.

On a professional basis at local and national level the findings of my research may be of interest to a number of stakeholders who work with young people. Professionally, and in terms of adding the findings of this research work to the wider debate, I feel that there is not a great deal wrong with the PE curriculum content as it stands at present in the primary sector, and the children have verified this (although the *core / foundation* distinction is not helpful at all, and the underpinning aims need reviewing). However they are asking for the range of activities to be extended, and a successful inheritance of the Olympic and Paralympic 'hard' resources may help address this request.

Implications and contribution to National discussion

As has been discussed in this thesis, even the latest rethinking of the NC, the interim report of the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum published under the stewardship of Jim Rose and the Cambridge Report only 'tinker' with the existing structure, and are unfortunately, I would argue, still only 'more of the same'. Curriculum aims are not addressed in any significant way. I am clearly advocating a greater use of pupil voice to inform curriculum development and to include their voice in helping to structure clearer aims of education generally. When I think back to one of the taught modules in the early EdD programme, '*Curriculum, Pedagogy and*

Assessment', I was introduced to the new Maltese school curriculum. This was not a reworking of an old curriculum format, but something quite new, that took time to implement and involved representatives from all key groups in the consultative process. A great deal of time was spent endeavouring to come to consensus over exactly what the aims of education and the curriculum were actually for. This new Maltese curriculum was about embracing cultural commonality and diversity to reflect an ever changing society as we move further into the 21st century. A rethinking of the aims behind a NC must not be a quick fix, but rather a well thought through policy document which reflects modern ideas about how children learn, and takes into account the richness of our cultural and ethnic makeup in this century. The Cambridge Review does begin to address a number of these issues. As this research has shown the children were consistently helpful in terms of the advice and data they offered. They do have a voice and an informed one at that. I would certainly advocate inviting the children to inform an educational debate and ideas under-pinning the concept of the 'school council' is a worthwhile and powerful learning tool for teachers and children alike. Fielding (2004, 2008) would argue, no doubt, that it is also a part of a much wider democratic process. Elias and Dunning (1986) might have gone much further and even argued that it is just one small aspect of a much greater *civilising process.*

I have shown through PE that children can speak for themselves, especially in relation to things that were important to them like their health. What I do know from this research is that PE and health are important to children, and the inclusion of their views will go some way to informing the debate on curriculum aims and content, thereby ensuring that every child really does matter, and perhaps help the next generation to begin to understand the relationship between physical activity and their

health. Or as White has it, one of his principal aims is for young people to *'live a healthy life and understand what makes for this.'* (2004).

Disseminating the research:

I anticipate that this research will be of interest and use to a number of stake-holders in education, namely head teachers, teachers and policy makers, parents, governing bodies, and of course young people themselves. The research may also be of interest to professionals working in the field of children's health, and a number of other related areas including the sport sciences. Perhaps the place to start sharing this project is with my own professional body, the Association for Physical Education, in line with the request to submit research projects as a means of informing practice and policy. In carrying out this work I have sought to exemplify good practice, and do hope that my recommendations might be heard as part of a wider debate regarding legislative agendas, especially if we are to begin to value the child's perspective of what a curriculum might entail, thereby also valuing our children's health and their lives, and including them in taking responsibility for their own lives and communities in the future. Equally, I will disseminate my work in the hope that it might inform a number of discussions, and add a relatively new perspective to some very old debates. Whether that is a pedagogical debate in relation to pupil voice or the aims of education or curriculum content, the discussion surrounding the Olympic legacy, the ECM agenda or to add weight to the call for bringing the NC up to date in the 21st century, and challenging the notion of a 'top down' curriculum, remains to be seen. Perhaps at times in this thesis I have been too polemic and I do not apologise for this but I take great heart from the work of Apple (1995), who wrote in Education and Power:

> No author is immune from his or her own history and social location. As someone who grew up in a working class household in an extremely poor city, I have a particular kind of anger in

me. I get angry when I see conditions for so many identifiable people in this society visibly worsening with each passing year, month, week, day and minute. I get angry when I walk into schools and see my friends teaching in hallways, closets, and even toilets. What kind of society can do this to its children? And I get angry when I see powerful groups affix all of their blame on schools, on impossibly hard working education and community activists or, as now on the generic heritage of parents and children – *anyone* but themselves. (p.xiv)

Although I acknowledge that I have not seen any classes being taught recently in hallways or corridors, I have seen in the autumn term of 2008 a mixed class of 42 year 5 and 6 children respectively and I have also seen a class of 37 children in another school. On both counts this was due to the fact that the school could not afford to pay for the extra teacher, so classes were doubled up. On a professional and social level and in terms of discussing the aims for a curriculum in the future, I believe the pupils have to be given a voice if schooling is to move successfully into the 21st century. The child as a passive recipient, where crude testing governed and economic criteria which overtly 'levels' and labels children can never fully have the child's best interest at heart. We as educators need to understand pupil's perceptions of school and in this case PE and health specifically. We need to know what pupils can tell us through dialogue in their own right, if every child *really* is to matter. Whether policy makers at a national level or teachers at a local level choose to hear and listen to what children have to say about education, it is nevertheless a step forward. Even if some adults disregard what is being said at the very least it can only aid the democratic process, in the sense that the children are now included. That they are able to give new and fresh insights into the discussions can only advance the debate, surely? If pupil voice is to mean something of significance, it needs to go beyond:

being a fashionable thing to do (Fielding & Ruddock 219:2006)

It is about involving young people in an authentic way and offering opportunities for

decision making and investment in their own lives. It appears to me at best unwise, at worst invidious that the debate about children's health, PE and other related issues should continue to go on 'around' them, with others claiming to speak for them. It is not that the children are unable to speak for themselves. As this piece of research clearly shows, the children are perfectly willing and able to speak for themselves, and let us not forget who the biggest stakeholders are, and as the late Jean Ruddock would have argued, and I paraphrase her words in stating that 'schools and education are two of the most undemocratic aspects of modern society.' I conclude where I began, by re-visiting my own definition of PE for it is an inclusive term which can mean many things to many different people. Sport let us remember is part of PE and a significant part at that, but it is not the only significant aspect. PE is about giving children a broad range of physical experiences, presented in a positive way, where they can experience fun, enjoyment, and success at whatever level they access the physical activity, sport or game. If this aspect of the process is executed well, then hopefully the children will continue to participate and be involved in their preferred activities, games or sports, thereby continuing to be physically active and involved at a variety of levels for the remainder of their lives. Moreover it is about helping young people to understand and value their physical selves, how the body works, and how to look after it. Perhaps now is the time to give them the opportunity to make up their own minds for themselves.

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Appendix A (Questions for the Children)

Hello, my name is Barry Costas and I would like you to help me find out about health fitness and P.E.in your school and what you think about it.

Please help me by answering the following questions below ☺!

1.   What is Physical Education? (P.E.)?

2.   What is health education?

3.   What are good things to eat and drink and why?

4.   Please circle how you feel about P.E.?

        We do too much P.E.

        We do not do enough P.E.

        We do the right amount of P.E.

5. **Please circle one face only that shows how you feel about your health**

☺   😐   😐   😐   ☹

| My health is very important | My health is important | My health is important sometimes | My Health is not important | My health is never important |

6. **Please circle the face that shows how you feel about each area of activity.**

☺   😐   😐   😐   ☹

| I love playing games | Sometimes I love playing games | Games are alright | Sometimes I hate playing games | I hate playing games |

☺   😐   😐   😐   ☹

| I love doing gymnastics | Sometimes I love doing gymnastics | Gymnastics are alright | Sometimes I hate doing gymnastics | I hate doing gymnastics |

☺   😐   😐   😐   ☹

| I love outdoor and adventurous activities | Sometimes I love outdoor and adventurous activities | Outdoor and adventurous activities are alright | Sometimes I hate outdoor and adventurous activities | I hate doing outdoor and adventurous activities |

☺   ☻   ☻   ☻   ☹

| I love swimming | Sometimes I love swimming | Swimming is alright | Sometimes I hate swimming | I hate swimming |

☺   ☻   ☻   ☻   ☹

| I love dancing | Sometimes I love dancing | Dancing is alright | Sometimes I hate dancing | I hate dancing |

☺   ☻   ☻   ☻   ☹

| I love doing athletics | Sometimes I love doing athletics | Athletics are alright | Sometimes I hate doing athletics | I hate athletics |

7.   **Please tell me about an activity that you really love doing**

☺

8.   **Please tell me about an activity that you really hate doing**

☹

9. Can you tell me about somebody that you know who does exercise or plays sport please?

   Can you tell me about somebody that you know who is not very active please?

10. What does being fit mean? What is it?

11. Can you tell me what being healthy is please?

12a) Can you write down for me THREE (3) people who you think are fit and healthy please?

   b) What do you think about the Olympic Games coming to your part of London in 2012?

Thank you very much for your help and time ☺

Barry Costas

Appendix B

Institute of Education
School of Education
STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Research Title :   *Still My Favourite Subject? A study of Year 6 children's views on Physical Education, their health and fitness, the London Olympics and the implications for the future development of Physical Education within the National Curriculum*

Researcher :   *Barry Paraskeva Costas*

Subject :   *Physical Education*

Proposed dates :   *July 2007*

Dear Parent / Carer

The purpose of this research is to explore what the children at school understand by the terms health and Physical Education (P.E.) It aims to discover their views on P.E. fitness and health, and what they think about the importance of these areas of learning.

Your child will be asked twelve questions and then asked to record their thoughts. These responses will form the basis of the research.

I enclose a list of the questions for your perusal and you will have access to the research at any time.

I write therefore to ask your permission for your child to assist me in the project. You can of course decline the offer.

Please sign the form below, and if there is any aspect of the project that you would like to discuss first, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you for your help and co-operation in advance.

Yours sincerely

Barry P. Costas

I do / do not (please delete as appropriate) give my permission for_____
(child's name) to take part in the research project.

Signature of Parent / Carer_____

(Print) Name of Parent / Carer _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Institute of Education
School of Education
STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Research Title :   *Still My Favourite Subject? A study of Year 6 children's views on Physical Education, their health and fitness, the London Olympics and the implications for the future development of Physical Education within the National Curriculum*

Researcher :   *Barry Paraskeva Costas*

Subject :   *Physical Education*

Proposed dates :   *July 2007*

Dear Parent / Carer

The purpose of this second piece of research is to explore what your child understands about Physical Education (P.E.) and fitness and health specifically.

It aims to discover their views on activity levels and diet / nutrition amongst other things and what they think about these areas.

Your child will be asked some questions and their responses will be recorded.

These responses will form the basis of the research.

*I enclose a list of the questions for your perusal and you will have access to the research at any time.

I write therefore to ask your permission for your child to assist me in the project. You can of course decline the offer.

Please sign the form below, and if there is any aspect of the project that you would like to discuss first, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you for your help and co-operation in advance.

Yours sincerely

Barry P. Costas

I do / do not (please delete as appropriate) give my permission for_____
(child's name) to take part in the research project.

Signature of Parent / Carer_____

(Print) Name of Parent / Carer _____

Date _____

* to be detailed after the questionnaires have been administered

Schedule for follow-up interviews in school

Opening

1. Establish Rapport - Hello, my name is Barry Costas and I think your teacher told you that I was coming in today to talk to you. Your teacher thought that it would be a good idea to interview you so that you can help me with my research and can I also just say a very big thank you to you all for helping me with the questionnaires that you did for me earlier in the term.
2. Purpose – I am going to ask you some questions about what you think about PE, your likes, dislikes and why, and also about being fit and healthy and a couple of other questions. I am going to record your answers on this Dictaphone here, so please speak loudly and clearly and would you like to hear it played back at the end of the interview? Have you got any questions?
3. Motivation – I am hoping to use what you tell me to help me with my research where I am studying for a doctorate at the University of London
4. Time line – The interview should take about 20 / 30 minutes and for those of you who want to hear what you said at the end your teacher has said that you can stay to hear it.

Transition – Now let me begin by asking you in turn to introduce yourselves, and then I will continue by asking you the questions.

Body – Main questions based on responses from interviews

1) Now you all told me in your Qs that there were bits of PE that you loved. Can you tell me about one thing that you love doing and why please?
(White)

2) You also all told me that your health is very important to you. How can being fit or healthy help you as you grow up and become an adult?
(ECM, White)

3) What is a healthy life? (White, ECM, Lawton1)

4) What makes for an unhealthy life? (White , ECM)

5) Is there anything that you can tell me about PE healthy lifestyles and being safe? (ECM, Lawton, White)

6) Are there any ways that being healthy, doing PE or being active outside of school can help you to contribute to our community and neighbourhood? (ECM, Lawton, White)

7) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about?

Prompts for if a child gets stuck / dries / does not want to respond or does not have a view

- What do the rest of you think about........?
- In your questionnaires some people wrote....... what do you think?
- Who can give me an example of.......?

Transition – You have all been fantastic, and once again can I thank you for your help and support with my research.

Closing

1. Summarise – You have given me lots of help in the questionnaires and now in this interview, you have been wonderful
2. Maintain Rapport – Now is there anything else that you want to say or add, or is there anything that I have missed or should have asked you?
3. Action to be taken - Now what happens next is that I will go and listen to what you have told me and then to carry on and write up my thesis which will include lots of the things that you have told me.

Now, would you now like to hear what you said and told me about on the Dictaphone?

<u>Appendix E</u>

<u>The Children's responses at the follow-up interviews</u>

1) Can you tell me about one thing that you love doing and why?

(Abney Park)

Sam: Athletics because it's fun and challenging

Izzy: Climbing because it is challenging and quite rewarding when you have finished it

Terraance: Basketball and football coz you work with other people and make new friends

Stephanie: Football is fun and you learn how to control a football

Shakeela: Football and basketball are fun and you learn how to compromise with other people and work as a team

Jasmine: Swimming because it is fun but you exercise at the same time

(Lea Park)

Dylan: Football coz you get to run around a lot

Jack C: Rounders because it is a team game, and everybody gets to have fun

Jack 2: Football because you get out and do lots of running about

Dorica: Dodge ball because it is a team game

Latifat: Football and because we have a girls team

Louisa: Gymnastics, because you do stretching and all kinds of different things

(Green Park)

Inez: Swimming because I swim a lot and swim for Hackney and train. Butterfly is a beautiful stroke and swimming is good exercise and helps keep you fit and healthy

Kourtney: Athletics because I am good at it. I love running and doing the long jump.

Linda: Dancing, because you can do different types of dance and you don't have to stick to one kind, and you can make up your own, and do 'free' dance style. It keeps you fit like in hip-hop and street dance

Joe: Football coz it's good exercise and it's fun

Courtney: Tennis because I used to play for a tennis team and we came 3rd in a tournament, and I am good at it

Ozenc: Basketball because I play in the school team and I am good at it

(Central Park)

Callum: Football because it's fun, I like the way they play and they have good technique

Luke: Football, because I can enhance my hand-eye co-ordination (Luke confirmed he was a goalkeeper)

Lanre: Fitness and running coz I love it and the things I do like racing against people and playing with my friends

Shevonne: Running and athletics, I don't know really, it is in my culture. My brother runs every day

Nastacia: Cricket and racing

Nazia: Dancing, street dancing and hip hop. Everybody keeps moving and it is fun

2) How can being fit and healthy help you as you grow up and become an adult?

(Abney Park)

Sam: If you want to be an athlete you need to train more now and have a healthy diet

Izzy: It can expand your life span, you can live longer and keep healthy

Terrance: It can help you like to get to places, so you don't sit around, you can see new things and don't be lazy. If you keep healthy you can live longer. If you train now, it helps you later, maybe win things, win the pride of being healthy

Shakeela: It can help you learn about puberty, during the puberty crisis. If you want to be a respected person start now in training, or it can help you get a job.

(Lea Park)

Dorica: By like having a good diet, and you can get more talented as you get older. A good diet helps your brain

Latifat: Yeah, like don't have chips every day, only on Fridays….. and they confiscate crisps

Louisa adds: Kathy is a hypocrite, because she then has burger and chips on a Friday. It can also help you as you grow up by making you stronger, things like calcium in your diet. You won't have weight problems or heart problems, it is very important.

(Green Park)

Joe: You got to be fit and healthy coz when you are older you can walk to the City and your job

Courtney: You need to be fit like, if you are not you will be like running slower

Ozenc: because if you are healthy you will be able to do lots of other things. You can do other things when you are older, if you are obese you can have a heart attack

Inez: It helps you to be fit and to eat the right stuff. If you are obese you can't do most things

Kourtney: If you are healthy you will live longer, and if you are obese or big like when you go to the fair for a ride you won't enjoy it

Linda: If you are not fit, when you go upstairs you will be much slower, and your heart will get clogged up

(Central Park)

Shevonne: Keeping fit now and don't be overweight

Nastacia: Like some people smoke but you should do exercise

Nazia: If you are fat, I mean heavy or obese you might die early

Callum: If you begin to be healthy and strong you are unlikely to get cancer. (mention was made to Lance Armstrong and the group said they did his book in literacy)

Luke: You are less likely to get heart disease and you can keep your muscles fit and healthy

3) What is a healthy life?

(Abney Park)

Terrance: It is to train and get fit, eat the right foods and no junk food. If you train it gets you tired so you won't go out drinking and smoking

Izzy: You should avoid drugs and drinking and smoking

Shakeela: Keep fit, eat healthy foods and maybe only a little junk food because they don't have much vitamins

(Lea Park)

Dorica: Doing Exercise

Latifat: Going to the Gym

Dylan: Having plenty of sleep and lots of water

Louisa: A balanced diet, like eating fish

Jack C: Plenty of fluids and a balanced diet

(Green Park)

Joe: Healthy foods, exercise, and make sure you are not sitting down too long

Courtney: A balanced diet, like vegetables, cereals, orange or for a snack crisps

Ozenc: A balanced diet, like scrambled eggs for breakfast and a good snack

Inez: Meat or fish is a good diet, exercise, eat properly but you can do too much exercise and waste away if you don't eat properly. Once in a while do something you like doing, a fun thing and be happy.

Kourtney: Drink lots of water

Linda: Eat properly, don't get anorexic and be too skinny

(Central Park)

Callum: A healthy diet like pure juice or water

Luke: Try not to be around unhealthy things like pollution and things that are not good for you.
Exercise once a day and eat healthy foods like carbs.

Lanre: Exercise and don't eat fatty foods

Shevonne: Things like red meat, lemon juice, water and a little red wine

Nastacia: and grain and things like oats

Nazia: Fruit and veg and dairy products

4) What makes for an unhealthy life?

(Abney Park)

Terrance: Not too much oil (fat?) in your food

Stephanie: Not sweets

Shakeela: Not junk food

(Lea Park)

Dorica: Don't watch telly for 3 hrs. Don't binge drink or smoke

Latifat: Don't eat chips all the time. Smoking and drinking

(Green Park)

Inez: Drinking alcohol every day

Linda: Smoking

Kourtney: You shouldn't eat McDonalds or Chinese every day, you should eat different things

Ozenc: Not going out, not getting any fresh air

(Central Park)

Callum: Sugary foods

Luke: Try not to eat too much fatty foods, like get semi-skimmed milk instead of full fat milk

Lanre:: Don't drink beer (I asked if he drank beer jokingly, he replied no, but that he did
drink wine on New Years day)

Nazia: Eating oily foods like chips

Nastacia: and oily chicken......... (from chicken shops) and don't smoke

Shevonne : Don't eat chips or drink too much beer, don't smoke or do drugs

(She then asked Is it true you can eat some fatty foods?

5) Is there anything that you can tell me about PE healthy lifestyles and being safe?

(Abney Park)

Terrance: I want to say two things like, warming up because you could pull a muscle, and yeah also, with weights level, don't go high, stay low and work up. If you get short of breath you should see a doctor

(The group knew about the urine test and hydration)

Stephanie: You should always cross the road at night if it's dark and wear a bright stripe, and help little children across the road

Shakeela: Start low like Terrance says, so you don't pull a leg or muscle and always have water

(Lea Park)

Dylan: Smoking and doing drugs, getting into trouble coz they can damage your brain. You can even get cancer

(Green Park)

Courtney: Like when using weights yeah, heavy weights, you gotta know what to do and not use heavy weights at the start. When playing out have a mobile phone yeah?

(All the group had mobiles when I asked them)

Inez: You shouldn't push yourself too far, be sensible. Don't go out on your own in the dark

(Central Park)

Callum: You should always listen to the instructors

Shevonne: Yes, always listen to the instructors especially in swimming' 'And be careful in the dark

(I then asked whether they could all swim. I was told that they could, but there was about 5 or 7 children in the class who still could not swim.)

Nastacia: If like you are doing PE, you should always warm up first (and with a prompt) always cool down

Nazia: Stay where it is busy

Lanre: Don't do drugs

Luke: Don't do too much, and look before crossing the road

6) Are there any ways that being healthy, doing PE or being active outside of school can help you to contribute to our community and neighbourhood?

(Abney Park)

Shakeela: Neighbourhood offices can offer doing races for charity and you can raise money for charity. Being fit helps you keep little ones safe like crossing a road

(Lea Park)

Jack C: You can get more fit doing things outside of school, and train with other people, you can socialise

Latifat: You can help your neighbourhood by playing for a football team and making new friends

Dorica: Yes, you can join sports clubs like athletics...............Mile End is the nearest one

(Green Park)

Inez: If you play for a team you can help your community and neighbourhood

Kourtney Well if somebody is being robbed you can help them

(Central Park)

Callum: If you are playing football with your friends and you are a team you can help your team win. Sometimes if you hit a window, neighbours get upset

Luke: Yes, but don't do games like football or basketball in the road in your neighbourhood, because I did and hit some cars with the ball and this guy started screaming at me

Lanre: Once when we played football it went in somebody's window

Shevonne: Yeah, they always get upset

7) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about?

(Abney Park)

Jasmine: How come only years 3 & 4 should go swimming?

Shakeela: We should have more choice of what we do in PE. We need more fun a mix n match of things

Stephanie: Maybe we should ask parents to donate more money for resources?

Shakeela: Yeah, more events to raise money

Terrance: If possible more equipment, I guess they are already trying like book fairs and that.

(Lea Park)

Louisa: We should do more things, a bigger variety of Sports, not only doing games

(Green Park)

Joe: We don't do enough things like football, we should go ice-skating

Courtney: When you do sports you get more oxygen, and you can do more coz you get fitter

Ozenc: Dodgeball is fun

Linda: I like hockey, but would rather do it on ice

Inez: We don't do enough types of sport. Ok we did Aussie rules which was fun (Linda tells how she hurt her finger doing it), but we didn't even do like cricket

Kourtney: We don't do enough sports either, my mum said when she was at school you could do cartwheels with one hand and go to the park and other places. We don't do all different types of dance just old people's dances

(Kourtney's last statement seems to contradict what the other children have said, as they do have two peripatetic dance teachers visiting. CB- Linda's response to an area that she really loved Q1)

(Central Park)

Shevonne: Can I ask you a question? How is dancing a sport?

Luke: Wanted to tell me about the value of stretching before and after activity.

8) So how much PE should we do at school?

(Abney Park)

Sam: Every morning about 15mins as well as PE lessons

Izzy: An hour each morning

Stephanie: After playtime (am) do like half an hour

Jasmine: Every day do 15mins just before lunch

Shakeela: Every day for like half an hour after lunch because children feel sleepy, and they can't concentrate. They need to let their food digest

(Lea Park)

Jack C: We don't do enough PE, we should do more

Jack 2: Yeah, we should do more

Louisa: We should do about 2 hrs a week

Dorica: Maybe 4hrs....

Louisa: You could fit it in by doing extra PE after school

Jack C: It should be optional after school, because if I am late home I will miss my tea

Latifat: and you might not reach home till 6 o'clock

(Green Park)

Joe: We don't do enough

Inez: I think we don't

Kourtney: We don't do enough sports

(Central Park)

Using a show of hands 5/6 of the group thought that they did not do enough PE in school. The other child thought that they did the right amount of PE.

9) What don't you like in PE and why?

(Abney Park)

Izzy: dancing, especially country dance

Shakeela: Gymnastics, because I am not familiar with it

(Lea Park)

Dorica: Gymnastics, stretching and putting yourself into positions, that's all rubbish. Bull dog, like when the teacher goes in the middle at the end of the lesson, and netball, (she then demonstrates a pivot which is not quite correct), and I always get in trouble for doing it wrong

Latifat: I hate it when the teacher joins in on the other side, usually on the better team

I ask why they might do this..........

Louisa: it's so they can help the other team who is losing

Dylan: Yeah, but they shouldn't be allowed to join in

Jack 2: Dance

Jack C: Yeah dance, like festival dance

Dylan: And boys and girls together

Louisa: It's the way they teach it, like clap hands, left hand up, left foot forward

(Green Park)

Joe: Ballroom dancing with the teacher (not with the class teacher), coz it's like it's not my thing. You have to find a partner and he lets the girls dance together, but not the boys. He does like weird dancing, like girls dancing.

Courtney: I don't mind really all things. I enjoy most things including dance

Ozenc: Tennis, because you could pull a muscle. God knows where the ball will come next?

Kourtney: Football coz he (class teacher) only focuses on the boys. And like when you have a competition he only picks the team the week before the tournament In direct response to this,

Inez added: Yes, and he always talks about football and relates things in Maths or English to football. I think he supports Celtic. For the girls it's boring

Linda: I don't like dance with Laila, she says it is modern dance, but I don't see how it is modern dance, nor ballroom dancing?

Inez, interrupts: I liked the music from Ballroom dancing

Inez: I like dancing with girls (and Kourtney agreed), but I don't really like the teacher, (General agreement) because he is bad tempered and shouts at us

I don't like tennis because it's boring (Why boring? my prompt), It's boring for me coz you don't really do anything different. Like in swimming you do different strokes

(Central Park)

Shevonne: I don't like warming up

Lanre: Yeah, I don't like it either, you think that you are doing PE, but you are not

Nazia: I don't like running around the playground laps warming up

Nastacia: Some kinds of dance

Callum: When you play football, everybody rushes for the ball' 'When your legs are aching and still aching 2 days later it is hard to do PE

Luke: I don't like gymnastics or dance because boys are not good at stretching

That's what you think? adds Lanre

Appendix F

Institute of Education
School of Education
STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Research Title :   *A study of Year 6 children's views on Physical Education and the implications for Policy, Practice and Research*

Researcher :   *Barry Paraskeva Costas*

Subject :   *Physical Education*

Proposed dates :   *January 2010*

Dear Parent / Carer

The purpose of this research is to follow-up what children at school understand by the terms health and Physical Education (P.E.) It aims to discover their views on P.E. fitness and health, and what they think about the importance of these areas of learning and in relation to other curriculum areas.

Your child will be asked two questions and to record their thoughts.

These responses will add to an existing body of research.

I enclose a copy of the questions for your perusal and you will have access to the research at any time.

I write therefore to ask your permission for your child to assist me in the project. You can of course decline the offer.

Please sign the form below, and if there is any aspect of the research that you would like to discuss first, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I thank you for your help and co-operation in advance.

Yours sincerely

Barry P. Costas

_____

I do / do not (please delete as appropriate) give my permission for_____
(child's name) to take part in the research project.

Signature of Parent / Carer_____

Appendix G – Favourite Subject Questionnaire

Hello Year 6, My Name is Barry Costas and I would like you to help me with my research.

What is your favourite subject at school? (Please circle only one)

Citizenship   Science   Music   English   Geography   Mathematics (Maths)

Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Foreign Languages   History   Art

Physical Education (PE)   Religious Education (RE)   Design Technology (D&T)

Now can you please tell me Why it is your favourite subject at school? Thank You ☺