



PHYSICAL CHILDREN,
ACTIVE TEACHING
Investigating physical literacy

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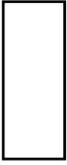
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Series editor's preface



Cameo

Glenn has taught across the age range in different primary schools for the last 15 years, specializing in art. In that time, he has had to make many adjustments in his thinking. The emphasis now appears to have shifted significantly from considering the learning needs of children as paramount, to 'delivering' a curriculum over which he feels little ownership and about which he feels even less real enthusiasm! The National Curriculum, with its individual subjects and language of 'teaching', not to mention an impending Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection, has shaken his confidence somewhat in his own understanding of what primary education is all about. It has also meant that he feels *he* is doing most of the learning, rather than the children – all those detailed plans and topic packs for individual subjects which teachers have been developing within the school seem to Glenn to leave little for children to actually do except explore the occasional artefact and fill in worksheets.

Yet he knows that he enjoys the 'buzz' of teaching, revels in being part of children's progress and achievements, delights in those rare times when he can indulge in art activities with children, is appreciated by parents and colleagues for the quality of his work and, generally, still finds his real heart lies in being an educator and doing something worthwhile. His constant question to himself is 'How can I work with children in ways I feel and *know* are appropriate and yet meet the outside demands made on me?'

Sound familiar? You may well begin to recognize a 'Glenn' within you! He encapsulates the way many teachers are feeling at the present time and the persistent doubts and uncertainties which continually underpin many teachers' work. In the early and middle years of primary schooling in particular, teachers are facing great challenges in conceiving how best to accommodate the learning needs of children in a context of growing pressure, innovation and subject curriculum demand. Yet conscientiousness drives the professional to strive for greater understanding – that little bit more knowledge or skill might just make a big difference to one child, or it might provide improved insights into one aspect of the curriculum.

Glenn, like many teachers, needs time, encouragement and support to reflect on his current practice and to consider in an objective way the changes needed. Rather than trying to add something else to an already overcrowded curriculum, today's teachers should consider those existing aspects which are fundamental to ensuring that children are not only schooled but educated in the broadest possible sense. Only then can we begin to sort out those things which are vital, those things we would like to do, and those things which would benefit from a rethink.

This series aims to offer practitioners food for thought as well as practical and theoretical support in establishing, defining and refining their own understandings and beliefs. It focuses particularly on enriching curriculum experiences for everyone through recognizing and appreciating the crucial interface between the child, the teacher and the context of primary education, including the curriculum context. Each title in the series seeks collectively and individually to enhance teachers' understanding about the theories which underpin, guide and enrich quality practice in a range of broader curriculum aspects, while acknowledging issues such as class size and overload, common across primary schools today.

Each book operates from the basis of exploring teachers' sound – frequently intuitive – experiences and understanding of teaching and learning processes and outcomes which most teachers inevitably possess in good measure and which, like Glenn, they often feel constrained to use. For example, the editor is regularly told by teachers and others in primary schools that they 'know' or 'feel' that play for children is or must be a valuable process, yet they are also aware that this is not often reflected in their

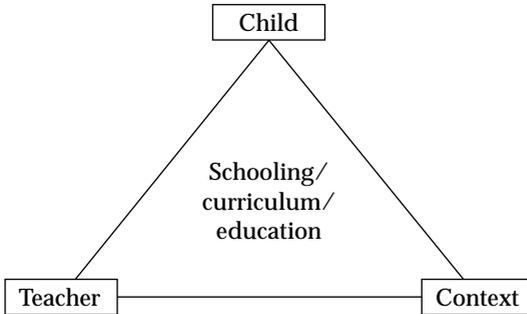


Figure 1 Child, teacher, context

planning or curriculum management and that the context of education generally is antithetical to play. What is more, they really do not know what to do about it and find articulating the justification for play practices extremely difficult. Other writers in the series have suggested that this is also the case in their areas of expertise.

All the books in this series seek to enrich and extend teachers' curriculum thinking beyond the level of just 'subjects', into dimensions related to the teaching and learning needs of children and the contextual demands faced by schools. The books cover areas such as creativity, success and competence, exploration and problem solving, information technology across subjects and boundaries, play in the primary curriculum, questioning and teacher-child interactions, values in relation to equality issues, social, moral and spiritual frameworks, and physical aspects of teaching and learning. Each book has had, within its working title, the rationale of the unique triad of child, teacher and context which underpins all primary schooling and education, for example in this particular case, interaction and communication. This structure serves to emphasize for authors the inextricable and imperative balance in this triad for effective classroom and curriculum practices. The model we have developed and agreed is shown in Figure 1.

All the writers in the series have been concerned to emphasize the quality, nature and extent of existing classroom practices, and how it is possible to build on these sound pedagogical bases. For this reason, chapters within each title often begin with two or more cameos offering features of practice as starting points for teasing

out aspects requiring enquiry, analysis, evaluation and discussion. Chapters then develop their own relevant themes but with consistent reference to what these mean to children and teachers within the general autonomy, and constraints, of the school context.

Issues concerning the *child* take their stance from cognitive psychology (as this book does) and include the child as:

- an active searcher after meaning;
- an individual with particular perceptions of the world and their part in it;
- a person who can reflect on their own learning and understanding;
- a learner with his or her own curriculum needs and interests to be considered;
- an interactive person, learning in collaboration with peers and adults;
- a unique individual but also one with collective needs;
- a member of a 'social' community, i.e. home, family, school, wider community.

Aspects to do with the teaching role lay stress on the *teacher* as a reflective and critical professional who will occasionally but regularly need to stand back from day-to-day practice in order to think about and analyse the triadic relationships and to acknowledge:

- their own learning styles and experiences;
- their own beliefs, values, knowledge and conceptual understanding of pedagogy;
- their need to raise questions about practice and find solutions in an ongoing way;
- their role as mutual learners with children and colleagues;
- their responsibilities as facilitators of learning, as models of learning and as negotiators of meaning with children;
- their role in enabling children's learning rather than always in 'teaching';
- their function as observers and assessors of children's understandings as well as outcomes;
- their obligation clearly to conceptualize the whole curriculum of which the National Curriculum is a part.

When we consider the *context* of pedagogy, this focus subsumes such aspects as the learning environment, school ethos

and the actual classroom and school. It also includes such elements as:

- the physical environment – indoors and outdoors;
- the social environment of school and schooling (e.g. is the child an outcome of the context or has the context influenced the child?);
- the psychological environment of school and schooling;
- the philosophical considerations within schools and aspects such as teachers' beliefs and values;
- the curriculum context, including the National Curriculum where this is relevant and appropriate, but also showing where this does not necessarily meet pedagogical needs;
- the frameworks within which the whole concept of schooling takes place and where this fits education in a broader sense.

The overall rationale for each book in the series starts from a belief that teachers should be enabled to analyse their own practices in specific aspects of the broader curriculum as a major aspect of their professionalism. The books are particularly useful at a time of continual curriculum change, when reflection is being focused back upon the child and pedagogy generally as the only perpetuating and consistent elements.

As an integral component, all the books weave teachers' assessment of children's learning and understanding into each particular focus, the intention being to show how the planning>learning>assessment>planning cycle is vital to the quality and success of children's and teachers' learning experiences. With their practical ideas, challenges and direct relevance to classroom practice, these books offer ways of establishing theory as *the* adjunct to practice; they build on teachers' thinking about how they already work in the classroom and help teachers to consider how they may enrich, extend and advance their practices to the mutual benefit of themselves, the children, the curriculum and education in society as a whole.

Physical children, active teaching is a book to support and inspire practitioners involved in movement education with all 3- to 11-year-old children. Through delightful cameos and pacy writing, Trish Maude uses her undeniable enthusiasm, commitment and tremendous depth of knowledge about physical development and human movement to show just what physical education should mean for children and teachers. The whole book is full of life, joy

and exuberance – just what physical education and ‘growing up’ in itself should be like.

Those of you who perhaps have never made the most of those timetabled hall or outdoor PE sessions, or have perceived there to be too many other ‘important’ things to do in curriculum time, should read this book closely. Trish highlights and pinpoints the vital links between movement education in all its forms and thinking skills, literacy development, creativity and maths – essentially all areas of the National Curriculum as well as the Early Learning Goals. She describes the process as being ‘physically educated’ and outlines it as a key factor underpinning all areas of learning. Teachers must work in tandem with children to encourage and develop the highest quality physical skills and understanding. Throughout the six chapters, Trish provides teachers with a useful and formative rationale for engaging children physically in order to encourage delight in their own movement capabilities and ‘learning with the body’ (Chapter 2), improve literacy learning and creative skills (Chapter 3) and engage in well formulated observation and assessment activities (Chapter 4).

Other chapters take further strength from the clear arguments presented as to why more static activities are developmentally so inappropriate for all 3- to 11-year-olds. ‘Sitting still’ is described as associated with the hardest physical task of all – stillness – and Trish emphasizes that children who cannot sit still are often the ones who need *more* rather than less physical activity. It is vital that we’re not so busy ‘delivering’ the curriculum that we forget our physical learners! No child should ‘be hindered from learning an academic skill . . . on account of an underdeveloped motor skill’ (Chapter 1). Readers are encouraged to remember that ‘movement precedes spoken language developmentally as a medium for communication and retains its key role throughout the primary years’. Play, the focus of Chapter 2, has similar emphasis.

There are many, many ways in which this book is a delight, one of which is that it ‘goes against the grain’ in relation to what might be conceived of as traditional thinking about physical education. I was constantly delighted in reading through the text that things I had taken as ‘givens’ were continually challenged and new ideas presented. One of these worth mentioning here is the old educational adage ‘You can’t talk and perform!’ These days are decidedly over and Trish argues with great clarity that

talk is vital to the movement process and is one aspect of enabling children to develop what she calls 'physical literacy'. The special place of dance in enabling children to interpret language into thought and action is underlined in Chapter 5, together with other, sometimes underused, aspects of the movement curriculum, e.g. games, gymnastics, swimming and athletics. The argument for providing a full range of such activities for children is forcefully made and an unambiguous rationale presented to support teachers in exploring these aspects with parents and others who need to understand about inclusion of these crucial curriculum aspects.

Every chapter provides insight and guidance into a range of varied and stimulating physical activities that teachers can take up and use immediately. Like all the writers in the series, Trish has managed to pack a wealth of information and passion into relatively few pages that are accessible and capable of having immediate impact on teaching.

Trish weaves her arguments skilfully around the three themes of child, teacher and context, emphasizing each differentially within separate chapters in a book that I know all teachers will find informative, refreshing and vital to their role in providing not only for children's education but for their physical and mental well-being too.

Janet Moyles



Introduction

Having been an enthusiastic supporter of physical education (PE) from my childhood, including those daily 'drill' sessions, it is a great joy to keep on discovering, when talking with children, that they have just the same lively enthusiasm for the subject as I had then and still have now. Our local primary school had not embarked upon what was then known as the new-style PE, so we had daily physical training (PT) sessions on the playground and very thorough training it was, too. To this day I can remember the importance impressed upon us of copying the teacher's movements accurately and of standing up straight, with correct posture, in between the exercises. We learnt Greek dancing too, which, we were told, was also good for posture. I remember how tiring it was to have to pretend to be carrying an urn on our heads! In the summer we had a sports day, with ribbons as prizes for winning races. In secondary school we did gymnastics, hockey, tennis and swimming. Does one ever forget the exuberant anticipation that preceded each swimming lesson? What I did not realize until recently is that children today experience just the same excitement at the prospect of their PE lessons. It was when listening to children talking about their PE learning during their interviews for the *Gym Kit* video (Maude 1994) that I realized just how articulate and observant children can be. Paul, aged 10, says of his learning in gymnastics: 'I've learnt a lot from Anna and Charlotte, about keeping my legs straight when I do a cart-wheel. My legs used to be all over the place, but now I know how to keep my knees and ankles straight!' The children give

2 Physical children, active teaching

detailed accounts both of their own and of their peers' work. They are able to observe closely and give positive as well as developmental feedback. They also have an empathy with each other's work in a way that could not be achieved by a teacher.

The inspiration for this book, then, is a dedication to the continued provision of physical education that engages children in that excitement and fun of learning. Arnold (1970: 1) described physical education as that part of the educational process which 'enhances and harmonises the physical, intellectual, social and emotional aspects of an individual's personality, chiefly through direct physical activities'. It is this holistic, inclusive approach to physical education that has been at the heart of the planning of the book.

The book is organized into six chapters, each of which follows the series pattern through consideration of the child, the teacher and the context for learning. At the end of each chapter are questions for further consideration. The chapter topics are used to examine those key aspects of child development that underpin physical literacy and those factors which together integrate in the pursuit and achievement for children of becoming physically educated, through active teaching and active learning. One of the aims of the book is to provide primary practitioners with opportunities for reflecting on their current practice with a view to making whatever changes may be necessary, to raise standards. Another aim is to raise issues about provision and about finding ways to tackle the sometimes limited physical education provision in some schools and settings, capitalizing on partnerships and other creative ways of achieving sufficient time and quality teaching. There is intentional overlap between chapters, since PE is not a discrete discipline, but exists alongside and is integrated with other aspects of children's learning such as play, language and creativity. As not all teachers currently teach every aspect of physical education to the highest level, suggestions are made of ways to build on strengths and to address areas for further development.

Chapter 1 explores children's physical and motor development, including the ways in which development takes place from the top of the body downwards and from the centre of the body outwards. The analysis of ways in which movement is learnt focuses on gross and fine motor functioning, leading on to consideration of the several stages through which the learner

progresses towards the acquisition of maturity in fundamental movement patterns. These themes lead into Chapter 2 on play. Throughout the period of growth and motor development, play is seen as of paramount importance, as a medium for learning through physical activity, as a natural medium of self-expression and as a creative function of human behaviour. Further development of some of the early themes leads on, in Chapter 3, to exploration of the relationship of language to physical literacy and creative activity. The final three chapters of the book turn to consideration of aspects of what it is to be physically educated. In Chapter 4, processes of observation of movement and development of effective feedback to enhance performance are analysed. Whereas play is spontaneous, is directed to no particular overall end and is an expression of uninhibited absorption (Arnold 1970: 2), physical education is directed, conforms to the application of the curriculum of the subject and requires deliberation and reflection on performance, knowledge and understanding. Chapter 5 discusses the subject of physical education, the various activities that are the components of this subject and the learning available, by means of effective teaching, through the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. Finally, in Chapter 6, active teaching and active learning are proposed as being central to the raising of standards in physical literacy and physical education for children. The whole book is illustrated with photographs of children and with examples of experience observed and reported by children and by teachers.

Three key questions that the book seeks to address are:

- 1 How can children achieve their entitlement to gain physical literacy and to become physically educated?
- 2 How can parents and teachers ensure that children's movement development and movement education are of the highest quality?
- 3 What are the most appropriate contexts for facilitating children's physicality?

Physical Activity and Academic Achievement. Students who are physically active tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance (e.g., memory), and classroom behaviors (e.g., on-task behavior).^{14, 15} Higher physical activity and physical fitness levels are associated with improved cognitive performance (e.g., concentration, memory) among students.^{14, 15} National Physical Activity Plan Alliance. 2016 US report card on physical activity for children and youth. Columbia, SC; 2016. Institute of Medicine.