Evaluation of the impact of the TOP programmes on teaching and learning in primary schools in England

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1. The aim of the research project was to evaluate the impact of a professional development programme on teaching and learning in physical education (PE) in primary schools in England.

2. A review of literature revealed:
   - that primary PE was an aspect of the curriculum that suffered from sparse initial teacher training amounting for many generalist primary school teachers to little more than an introduction to the subject;
   - as a consequence of the above, generalist primary teachers have low levels of teacher confidence and competence with respect to teaching PE;
   - inadequacies in traditional forms of professional development in PE
   - calls for new, more effective ways of developing teachers, and cultivating communities of practice in primary schools around the teaching of PE.

3. Both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches were adopted within the project, including: pre-course audits, course evaluations, telephone interviews, and post-course self-evaluations, focus groups and individual interviews. The study involved a representative sample of five case study Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England.
4. Key findings included the following:

- Prior to engaging in the TOP programmes, primary teachers:
  - had variable experiences of PE during ITT, some of which were inadequate in terms of quantity and breadth and depth of content;
  - were in need of professional development in PE;
  - had anxieties about teaching PE.

- The TOP programmes:
  - increased teachers’ enthusiasm for PE and confidence to teach it;
  - enhanced teachers’ knowledge of PE and competence to teach it;
  - helped teachers with content ideas, short-term planning, and inclusion;
  - were well received and taken up by teachers who used the resources to support their delivery of PE;
  - were perceived by teachers as positively impacting on primary PE, raising the profile of the subject, and contributing to whole school improvements.

- Limitations of the TOP programmes were identified as:
  - Insufficient attention to:
    - medium and long-term planning
    - continuity and progression
    - special needs
    - assessment;
  - meeting the needs of some cohorts of primary teachers more than others;
  - the absence of follow-up support.

- The impact of the TOP programmes was generally positive but was limited by a range of factors, including:
  - the low baseline of some primary teachers in terms of their understanding of PE (due to inadequate ITT and limited local CPD)
  - lack of support in some schools for professional development in PE
  - the problematic nature of the consolidation and dissemination of professional development in primary schools
- reduced opportunities for some primary teachers to deliver PE due to the emergence in LEAs of outside specialist groups contributing to the delivery of curriculum PE
- logistical problems associated with the management and re-structuring of the TOP programmes causing delays in its implementation
- the staff turnover rate of: primary teachers; scheme trainers and managers in LEAs; and management staff in the YST.

5. Limitations of the research project were acknowledged as:
   - the absence of data from ITT providers and trainee teachers;
   - some potential for sampling bias in that teachers in primary schools in which PE may have been valued may have been more likely to choose to be involved in the research process;
   - the varying (and occasionally short) length of time from teachers attending the training to monitoring its impact;
   - the difficulty of not being able to attribute changes to teaching and learning in primary PE solely to the TOP programmes due to numerous other simultaneous and complementary PE and school sport initiatives.

6. Recommendations arising from the project included those for: future professional development in primary PE (e.g. providing teachers with follow-up, sustained learning opportunities); further research (e.g. exploration of the impact of teachers’ professional development on pupil learning); and future research on primary professional development (e.g. finding ways of enticing and engaging teachers in the research process).

7. The TOP programmes made a positive contribution to teaching and learning in PE in England for the primary teachers involved at a time when they were in great need of support.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

 Appropriately designed, resourced and delivered physical education (PE) programmes are believed to nurture movement skills, foster an appreciation of physical activity and enhance the quality of young people’s lives (Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom (PEA UK), 1998, p.1). Physical education is also considered to play an important role in developing young people’s life-long interest and participation in physical activity and sport (Williams, 2000). However, it has been recognised for some time that primary school teachers are not receiving sufficient training and support to effectively deliver physical education to pupils (Hardman & Marshall, 2002; Ofsted, 1998; Speednet (a consortium of national organisations representing physical education and school sport), 1999). This lack of investment in initial and ongoing teacher training in the primary sector has led to primary school teachers having limited knowledge of, and lacking confidence in teaching, physical education (Hardman & Marshall, 2002; Ofsted, 1998; Speednet, 1999).

The Government White Paper ‘Raising the Game’ (Department of National Heritage, 1995) called for the development of activity opportunities for young people in schools and highlighted the need for improved school sport, teaching and coaching. As a result of this and subsequent significant government policies detailed in ‘A Sporting Future For All’ (Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS), 2000) and the ‘Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links’ (PESSCL) Strategy (Department for Education and Skills (DFES) & DCMS, 2003), there has been a plethora of PE and school sport developments during the past decade. An early example of these was the creation by the English Sports Council of the National Junior Sport Programme designed to provide sport and physical recreation opportunities for all young people aged 5 to 18 years. Out of this initiative came the TOP Programmes which were devised by the Youth Sport Trust.
1.2 Youth Sport Trust TOP Programmes

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a registered charity which was established in 1994 to:

*develop and implement, in close partnership with other organisations, quality physical education (PE) and sport programmes for all young people aged 18 months to 18 years in schools and their communities (www.youthsporttrust.org, 2002).*

The YST developed a series of progressive programmes known as the TOP Programmes to ‘form a sporting pathway along which young people can progress according to age and development’ (www.youthsporttrust.org, 2002). The YST drew on expertise from within the physical education profession to develop the programmes which were designed to be integrated into Local Education Authority (LEA) and individual school planning to improve their effectiveness.

TOP Play and TOP Sport represent two of the initial TOP Programmes and were first introduced in April 1996 into 2000 primary schools to support the delivery of high quality PE and sport for children aged between 4 and 11 years. The target was stated as being 19,000 primary schools and 33,000 community sites by April 1999, reaching over 4 million children (Department of National Heritage, 1996). One year later, it was reported that 94 LEAs (now known as Local Authorities or LAs) had adopted TOP Play and BT TOP Sport into their schools which spread the programme into 2,438 schools throughout England (Youth Sport Trust (YST), 1997).

TOP Play focuses on the acquisition and development of core skills amongst children aged 4 to 7 years, with an emphasis on the core games skills of movement, sending and receiving. TOP Sport provides children aged 7-11 years with opportunities to develop skills in a range of sports, building upon the core skills developed in TOP Play. Additional TOPs programmes such as TOP Athletics, TOP Dance, TOP Gymnastics, TOP Outdoors, and Fit for
TOPs were later developed to relate to the activity areas and programmes of study within the National Curriculum for Physical Education (Department for Education & the Welsh Office, 1995). Each TOP programme has its own specific activity-related objectives. For example, TOP Gymnastics was designed to introduce children to key skills and linking actions that would assist them in performing fluent movement patterns and sequences, and TOP Dance was designed to provide an introduction to a range of dance activities and to improve children's dance skills and stimulate their enjoyment of dancing.

Accessing the TOP programmes involves teachers attending a generic four hour training course which incorporated TOP Play and introduced TOP Sport. The teachers are provided with associated resources, including a handbook, set of cards and access for their school to a bag containing child-friendly equipment to support the use of the resource cards. Further training is required to access the additional TOP programmes such as TOP Gymnastics, TOP Outdoors and Fit for TOPs.

A second phase of the TOP Programmes was announced in 2002 (Curriculum Matters, 2002) when the associated resources were re-designed to support the revised National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 1999) and to link closely with the Schemes of Work produced by QCA (QCA & DfEE, 2000). Additional new features of the resources now include: full colour TOP Play cards; TOP Sport cards developed under families of activities (e.g. invasion, net and wall, and striking and fielding games); the incorporation of new activities (e.g. badminton, volleyball, baseball, softball); ways of making the games easier and harder using the STEP (an acronym for Space, Task, Equipment, People) format, and ways of including young disabled people (Curriculum Matters, 2002). Each revised card incorporates: illustrations of activities; safety points; ideas for delivering knowledge and understanding of fitness and health; examples of
inclusive practice; and guidance on how to adapt activities to help meet the different needs and abilities of pupils (see examples of a range of second phase TOPs cards in Appendix A).

The aims of the revised TOP Programmes are to:

- provide support and CPD for primary physical education teachers and assist non-specialist teachers in their delivery of physical education
- complement and support the delivery of QCA Schemes of Work and the National Curriculum 2000 (DfEE & QCA, 1999)
- support pupil learning across the curriculum
- raise standards of PE and school sport, by encouraging improvement of school based practice
- support and develop inclusive practice
- increase teachers’ confidence and knowledge in order to raise standards of teaching in physical education
- raise the status of physical education
- increase attainment of children in physical education
- provide enjoyable physical activity and sport for young people.


The second phase of the TOP programmes went ‘live’ in September 2002 within a number of LEA partnerships, followed by a ‘rolling’ programme of access across England. The training and associated resources were offered through LEAs to individual teachers (as opposed to schools which occurred in the initial phase); the YST also hoped that higher education institutions (HEIs) would build the new TOP programmes training into their teacher training courses (Curriculum Matters, 2002). Implementation of the TOP Programmes took place via Scheme Managers in the LEAs. Designated Scheme Managers were required on behalf of the LEAs to submit implementation plans to the Youth Sport Trust stating how the LEA intended to support
primary physical education through the provision of CPD for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and links with local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Following receipt and approval of implementation plans, the Youth Sport Trust allocated resources to LEAs. The LEA Scheme Managers selected trainers to attend national training organised by the Youth Sport Trust to enable them to deliver ‘TOPs’ training to teachers within their LEA. Once trained, these individuals were known as Scheme Trainers.

A re-structuring of operations occurred in September 2005 when the TOP Programmes were integrated into the Professional Development Programme within the PESSCL strategy (DfES & DCMS, 2003). This was managed by Local Delivery Agents (LDAs), these generally comprising LEAs working in partnership with Sports Colleges and HEIs within their geographical area.

1.3 Reports on the TOP Programmes

A number of professional articles have been published on the TOP programmes. Many have been predominantly descriptive such as Sabin’s (1997) examples of how the TOPs cards could be adapted for use within the curriculum, and Newton’s (1998) report on how TOPs had been implemented within her primary school. Roberts (an LEA PE Adviser) and his colleagues (1998) described and commented upon the models used to deliver the curriculum aspect of TOP Play and BT TOP Sport in the North West, and summarised the advantages and disadvantages of the TOP programmes. The advantages were considered to be: ‘ensuring physical education has an in-service training input even when schools are concentrating solely on numeracy and literacy; and all teachers being given the training’ (Roberts et al., 1998, p. 143). The disadvantages were stated as: ‘the large time commitment needed to train the cluster groups; providing on-going support for the programme without adequate funding; the number of initiatives available and how to integrate them into the schools; and, the rotation of the sport specific bags and their effect on the schools’ long term plan e.g. school using the cricket bag in the Christmas term’ (ibid, 1998, p. 143).
Graves (an LEA PE Adviser) (1999) reported on the implementation and evaluation of ‘TOPs’ in Hertfordshire, referring to over 450 schools, over 2,000 teachers and over 10,000 children enjoying the ‘Big Blue Bag’ phenomena. His own view was that ‘TOPs is without doubt the most impressive ‘product’ and catalyst that I have been involved with in physical education’ (Graves, 1999, p. 19). A partnership approach to TOPs delivery through Sports Colleges and the School Sport Co-ordinator network was presented as an innovative means of implementation which could be replicated by LEAs across the country (Dowling & Gough, 2003).

In 1997, Spode (an LEA Curriculum Adviser for Physical Education) reported on an evaluative case study into the effect ‘TOP Play’ and ‘TOP Sport’ had on the quality of games teaching within eight primary schools in the West Midlands. He found that overall the TOP programmes had a beneficial effect on the quality of games teaching in these schools, with the following perceived positive effects reported by teachers: higher expectations of pupils; clearer learning objectives; improved understanding of the principles of skill development; selection of more purposeful tasks; increased ability to aid pupils with differing abilities; provision of more specific, informative feedback; pupils more actively involved; and better use of available resources (ibid, 1997). Spode (1997) also reported positive responses from pupils who exhibited better levels of motivation, being able to stay on task for longer periods, and showing higher participation rates. However, only a small number of teachers considered that there had been any discernable improvement in pupil behaviour during PE lessons. Spode (1997) concluded that the TOP programmes, locally administered and supported, would have a substantial effect in improving the quality of games teaching nationally within the primary sector.

Hunt (an LEA PE Inspector) carried out a study a year later on the effects of the TOP Play BT TOP Sport schemes on approaches to games teaching in selected primary schools in Hereford and Worcester extending the work of Spode (1997). Similarly, Hunt (1998) concluded that, overall, the TOP programmes had a positive impact on games teaching in the selected
schools. In particular, teachers’ perceptions were that the programmes helped them to: increase their confidence and competence; raise their expectations of pupils resulting in the pupils being offered more physical and intellectual challenge; improved their lesson planning; use more effective methods of organisation, a wider range of teaching approaches and pupil groupings; make better use of time and resources, resulting in pupils being more involved in purposeful tasks and more active and enthusiastic.

Limitations of the TOP programmes were reported as them not assisting with: addressing the needs of high attainers; longer term planning; and the use of assessment. Hunt (1998) proposed that primary teachers required further support and development with: meeting the needs of pupils; linking the TOP schemes cards into schools’ physical education programmes; and developing skills of observation, understanding of games principles and knowledge of games play.

In 2003, Lawrence reported on a small-scale study which explored the impact of the TOP Play and TOP Sport programmes in schools in Milton Keynes. Her findings demonstrated a high level of involvement by schools in the programmes, with both staff and pupils benefiting from the resources, such as reporting more positive attitudes towards physical education and an increase in participation levels of some pupils. Some issues identified by Lawrence (2003) were the high proportion of staff who had not received training (approximately 50% of the teachers) and the number of courses that staff needed to attend to access all of the TOP programmes, a particular problem given the limited time available in primary schools and the fact that PE may not be a priority in school improvement plans. A possible limitation to the impact of the programme was considered to be a lack of understanding by some teachers of the potential use of the resource cards, based on the fact that there was little evidence to suggest that the programme was becoming an integral part of the schools’ PE curricula (ibid, 2003). Lawrence (2003) was of the view that the TOP programmes would benefit from formal monitoring and evaluation and larger scale research to investigate their impact.
The above summary of reports on the TOP programmes reveals that much of the published literature focused on descriptive accounts of small-scale, localised studies at a particular point in time, and it reinforced the need for an in-depth larger-scale longitudinal study of the effects of the TOP programmes on physical education provision in primary schools.

1.4  Aim of Research Project

The aim of this research project was to evaluate the impact of the TOP programmes on teaching and learning in PE in primary schools in England. Impact was considered in relation to perceived changes to teachers’ confidence, subject knowledge and competence, and to perceived and observed changes to aspects of whole school improvement such as pupils’ attainment, attitude to learning, behaviour, and engagement in healthy lifestyles. Baseline information was obtained from teachers on the provision of physical education in their school and their ability to deliver high quality physical education. Teachers were tracked through the professional development process and followed up some time later to ascertain any changes to teaching and learning in physical education in their schools.

A longitudinal perspective was adopted for the project as curriculum developments and initiatives are complex and consequent implementation and impact following training takes time if effects are to go beyond superficial change and extend into the realms of pupil learning (Cale et al., 2002). A variety of research methods were employed to monitor the impact of the TOP programmes in supporting the delivery of high quality PE and school sport and in raising standards of teaching and learning in PE at Key Stages 1 and 2 across a representative sample of LEAs in England. The research methods employed and the findings are presented in sections 3 and 4 of this report respectively. Prior to this, and during the course of the project, a review of relevant literature associated with primary physical education and professional development was conducted which is reported in the next section.
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The State and Status of Primary Physical Education Worldwide

In 1998 a worldwide survey on the state and status of physical education in schools was carried out by the International Council of Sports Science and Physical Education/International Olympic Committee (ICSSPE/IOC). The survey concluded that school PE was in a perilous position in all continental regions of the world and highlighted deficiencies in curriculum time allocation, subject status, material, human and financial resources, gender/disability issues and the quality of programme delivery (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). Whilst PE was a statutory subject in 92% of the 126 countries participating in the study, it was found that there was a credibility gap between statutory policy and actual delivery (ICSSPE/IOC, 1999). The survey also reported that:

Too often physical education teachers in primary or elementary schools are untrained for the subject and some conduct physical education lessons as supervised play. Physical education is taught by the classroom teacher who usually has had little or no training in physical education (ICSSPE/IOC, 1999, p.119).

Global concerns about physical education have been the stimulus for world summits on the subject. The first world summit in Berlin in 1999 confirmed a decline and/or marginalisation of PE in schools in many countries of the world and called upon governments and PE professional associations to work together to raise the status of and provision for physical education (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). This included: recognition that quality PE depends on well-qualified educators and scheduled time within the curriculum; investment in initial and continuing education for teachers, especially in primary schools, along with appropriate safe space and resources; and support for research to improve the effectiveness and quality of PE (Professional Matters, 1999).
These findings were reinforced in a subsequent Council of Europe Survey (2002) which acknowledged the decline in the quality and time allocated for teaching physical education and sport. Studies from a range of countries have also revealed that primary teachers tend to hold negative attitudes towards PE (Portman, 1996; Xiang et al., 2002) and would prefer to teach other subjects (Morgan & Bourke, 2004).

Marshall (2005) reported that the situation in Europe mirrored that of other continental regions of the world in which PE was marginalized, undervalued and under resourced. He went on to state:

*Reports and surveys from across Europe would suggest that, despite examples of positive political commitments to physical education, there still remain concerns over the actual provision and delivery in schools* (Marshall, 2005, p.2).

Whilst Hardman & Marshall (2005, p.17) have highlighted examples of good practice in many schools in many countries, they state that ‘equally there are continuing causes for serious concern’. A major common concern remains the inadequacy of primary school teacher preparation for physical education teaching. Other concerns include PE delivered without quality, with inadequate time allocation, facilities, equipment and teaching materials, and large class sizes. Whilst some improvements were noted with regards to inclusion within PE, barriers to ‘equal provision and access for all still remain’ (Hardman & Marshall, 2005, p.17).

Despite an increase in the number of initiatives focusing on PE and school sport in some countries (such as PESSCL in England), Hardman & Marshall (2005, p.16) reported that there is a ‘real danger that the initiatives will remain more ‘promise’ than ‘reality’….. Promises need to be converted into reality if threats are to be surmounted and the safe future for PE in schools is to be secured’.
The Sport in Education (SpinEd) Survey (Bailey & Dismore, 2005, p.8) similarly presented a worrying worldwide overview of physical education, stating:

At best, the findings emphasise the fact that PE and school sport occupies only a tenuous place in the school curriculum. There are reasons to believe that the future of Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) in many countries around the world is in peril.

The second world summit on physical education in Magglingen, Switzerland, in 2005 repeated the call for an urgent need for a review of and improvement in the initial and continuing education of teachers of PE, especially for those working in primary schools. However, disappointingly, Hardman and Marshall (2005) have reported that since the 1999 Berlin summit, the developments of school PE policies and practices across the world have been diverse and, whilst there has been a plethora of initiatives in some countries, there remains a gap between ‘hope and happening’.

2.2 Physical Education in Primary Teacher Education in England

Linked to worldwide issues about physical education in primary schools, a particular concern for well over twenty years in England has been the preparation of primary and junior school teachers to teach PE (Caldecott et al., 2006a, 2006b; Clay, 1999; Davies, 1999; Downey, 1979; Kerr & Rodgers, 1981; Morgan, 1997; Warburton, 2001; Williams, 1985; Wright, 2002). Carney and Armstrong’s (1996) survey of time spent on PE in primary teacher education courses found that the average time was 33 hours 40 minutes on four year undergraduate courses and 21 hours 26 minutes on post-graduate courses, which represented a reduction in time allocation from previous studies (Physical Education Association (PEA), 1984; Standing Conference on Physical Education (SCOPE), 1991; Williams, 1985).
Two years later, Ofsted conducted a survey of the preparation of primary generalists which revealed that the average time devoted to PE was 32 hours on four year undergraduate courses, and 23 hours on one year post-graduate courses (Ofsted, 2000). However, perhaps more alarming was the variance in time with the lowest time spent on PE being 7.5 hours (Ofsted, 2000). The report also revealed that the time for PE was often restricted to covering only games, gymnastics and dance, and concern was expressed that the training provided minimal experience of two of the most potentially high-risk activities, namely swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities (Ofsted, 2000).

This finding was reinforced by Chedzoy’s (2000) study which found that trainee teachers on a one year primary PGCE course felt competent to teach gymnastics, dance and games, but needed additional support to teach swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities.

Ofsted (2000) also reported that, particularly in post-graduate primary teacher education courses, very few PE lessons were taught during training and only a small proportion of school mentors had sufficient subject knowledge, understanding and confidence to offer fully informed support in the subject. Furthermore, PE subject co-ordinators in schools were often not usually consulted or used to develop trainees’ knowledge and understanding, unless the co-ordinator happened to be the general mentor for the trainee teachers (ibid, 2000).

Philpott’s (2000) survey of a small sample of primary teachers further reinforced concerns about the inadequacy of the time spent on PE within Initial Teacher Training (ITT), and Rowe & Champion (2000) made the point that physical education and school sport in primary schools was usually delivered by:

…”teachers who do not have a specialist PE qualification and do not have access to good quality sports facilities and equipment (p.24)."
Indeed, Warburton (2000) went further in stating that far too many primary teachers have received little more than an introduction to PE and that, in order for high quality physical education to be delivered in primary schools, there needs to be investment in the initial training of teachers and professional development opportunities once they have become qualified. Wright (2002) also expressed the view that primary PE training often amounted to little more than a token gesture.

Determining an adequate amount of time, however, is difficult as the quality of the training experience is not just about volume of contact time, but also about the content of the sessions and the philosophical approach to the subject (Pickup, 2006). Nevertheless, proposals have been made over the years as to what might constitute an adequate amount of time to devote to PE during primary ITT. For example, there has in the past been general agreement that there should be 60 hours spent on PE within primary undergraduate teacher training programmes (British Council for Physical Education, 1980; Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR)/National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), 1992; PEA UK, 1987). Warburton (2000) proposed a minimum of 36 hours on PE in ITT as a starting point for discussion, and in the same year the Physical Education Association (PEA) (2000) committed to lobbying for increased time. Later, Sport England (2002) proposed a minimum of 25 hours on PE during primary ITT, and the CCPR (an umbrella organisation representing voluntary sector sport and recreation) (2004) challenged the government to include a minimum of 30 hours initial training in physical education for all primary school teachers to ensure that they became confident, competent and committed to teach the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE). Since then, an Independent Sports Review (2005) has proposed a minimum of 50 hours.

However, a recent survey of the time devoted to the preparation of primary and junior school trainee teachers to teach PE in England (Caldecott et al., 2006a, 2006b) has revealed that the situation remains a concern, with one Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) provider offering only nine hours of PE, and one School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)
provider offering only five hours, with as little as half an hour on one activity area. The mean number of hours spent on PE was 15 hours for PGCE courses and approximately 11 hours for SCITT courses (ibid, 2006). As found previously by Ofsted (2000) and Chedzoy (2000), athletics, outdoor and adventurous activities, and swimming were often omitted from teacher education programmes. Caldecott and colleagues (2006) also found, as Ofsted (2000) did, that many ITT providers reported no requirement to teach PE during training. This issue was also raised by Rolfe and Chedzoy (1997) and Rolfe (2001) who expressed concerns about the lack of opportunity for primary trainee teachers to teach dance in schools and to learn from experienced teachers, and their consequent low confidence levels with respect to teaching dance.

Similarly, Pickup (2006) described trainee primary teachers’ school-based experiences as at best adequate and at worst non-existent. In particular, he argued that the apparent cycle of unenthusiastic and ‘avoiding’ class teachers mentoring similarly disposed trainees must be broken if the quality of teaching and learning of primary PE is to be increased within the next generation of teachers (ibid, 2006). Consequently, Pickup (2006) has called for a specific focus on school-based aspects of training in order for ITT providers to improve the quality of PE provision. However, as pointed out by Caldecott and colleagues, even Ofsted’s (2000) findings have to date failed to bring about any positive changes to PE in primary ITT.

2.3 Primary School Physical Education in England

In association with the long-standing and ongoing issues surrounding the inadequacy of primary PE ITT, concerns have been raised about the comparative low status of physical education in relation to other subjects in the primary curriculum in England (Shaughnessy & Price, 1995a, 1995b; Speednet, 2000; Warburton, 2000). Indeed, further concerns were raised when in 1998 the government suspended the order for National Curriculum physical education in primary schools in England and Wales for two years to allow schools to focus on improving standards in literacy and numeracy during
this period (Speednet, 1999). This pressure led to insufficient time for non-core subjects such as physical education (Harrison & Warburton, 1998). Indeed, a national survey calculated that the government’s literacy and numeracy policy initiative alone resulted in the loss of over half a million hours of physical education within primary schools over a two year period (Speednet, 1999). One third of primary schools were reported to have suffered reduced time for PE during the first year of the suspended order, and of these, half lost thirty minutes of PE each week and a further 20% lost sixty minutes each week (ibid, 1999). Some schools were providing only twelve hours of PE each year and many teachers reported ‘fighting for time’ for physical education in an ‘increasingly prescriptive and crowded curriculum’ (Speednet, 1999, p.19). In response to the government’s suspension of the order for NCPE in primary schools, the Physical Education Association of the United Kingdom (PEA UK) proposed a minimum of two hours (excluding changing time) of quality physical education per week at Key Stages 1 and 2, and it also called for adequate provision for PE in both initial and in-service training (1998).

Shaugnessy and Price (1995b) and Speednet (1999) also highlighted that the school timetable did not necessarily reflect the amount of PE actually taught due to teachers choosing not to teach it, or suspending teaching PE when they had other priorities. A survey by the National Association of Headteachers (1999) reinforced this point, stating that a quarter of primary schools could not provide adequate time for PE as a consequence of sharing the school hall for assemblies, dining areas, school concerts and examinations. The same survey concluded that the level of provision of facilities in many English and Welsh schools was grossly inadequate (ibid, 1999).

Perhaps not surprising given the context described above, Blackburn (2001) concluded that discrepancies in the provision and implementation of National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) in primary schools in the UK were ‘dependent upon the type of school, its location and how teachers and other educational policy makers view the subject’ (p.58).
2.4 Government Investment into PE and School Sport in England

As a result of concerns over the health status and physical activity levels of young people, government, commercial and charitable organisations have developed numerous school and community initiatives to improve and develop physical activity opportunities for young people in recent years (Cale & Harris, 2005). In England, arguably the most significant of these is the government’s PE, School Sport and Club Links Strategy (PESSCL) which was launched in October 2002 by the DfES and the DCMS in an endeavour to transform PE and school sport and enhance pupils’ sporting opportunities (DfES & DCMS, 2003). The overall aim of the strategy was to:

*increase the percentage of school children in England who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum to 75% by 2006* (DfES & DCMS, 2003 p.2).

This aim came to be reflected in a government Public Service Agreement (PSA) target. The PESSCL initiative comprises eight work strands: Specialist Sports Colleges; School Sport Co-ordinators; Gifted and Talented; QCA PE and School Sport Investigation; Step into Sport; Professional Development; School/Club Links, and Swimming (DfES & DCMS, 2003).

An initial investment of £459m was announced to deliver the PESSCL Strategy between 2003 and 2006. In December 2004, government announced a further investment of half a billion pounds in the Strategy for the two years to 2007/08, to achieve the following aim:

*By 2010 all children will be offered at least 4 hours of sport every week, which will comprise at least two hours of high quality PE and sport at school and in addition the opportunity for at least a further two to three hours beyond the school day (delivered by a range of school, community and club providers)* (DfES, 2004, p.1).
In addition, the government announced a £686 million investment into schools to improve sports facilities across England (DCMS & DfES, 2002). This was on top of £110 million invested by Sport England in the School Sport Coordinator Programme since 2000. The latter involved the development of a new infrastructure built around Sports Colleges involving families of primary, secondary and special schools in geographical regions working together to increase activity opportunities for young people.

A further initiative introduced in 2004 was a three year PE ITT project funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (formerly known as the Teacher Training Agency), the aim of which was to raise standards in PE ITT amongst both primary and secondary ITT providers in England. The project is managed by a consortium comprising Liverpool John Moores University, the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust, and is currently in its third and final year.

2.5 Implications, Challenges and Cautions

David Bell, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools, whilst welcoming the PESSCL Strategy, pointed to the challenge of its potential benefits reaching all schools:

> Physical education and sport are an important part of the school week and it is good to see that the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links Strategy has brought about improvements in our schools. However, the Strategy has yet to reach all schools. The challenge ahead is to ensure that the benefits felt by these schools are extended to all schools and all pupils (www.ofsted.gov.uk, July 2005).

Warburton (2001) also expressed similar concerns some years earlier about schools and teachers that were not yet involved in partnership clusters (which were set up prior to PESSCL and based around Specialist Sports Colleges).
Spencer (2003) expressed the view that the increased investment in PE and school sport and the increasing awareness of physical activity’s contribution to public health helped to influence future developments in physical activity promotion within school. Cale and Harris (2005) similarly considered that the growing number of initiatives being introduced within the primary school context demonstrated an increasing commitment to promoting young people’s physical activity participation (Cale & Harris, 2005). However, they also offered some words of caution with respect to the potential for initiative overload:

*It seems that teachers, health and other professionals have been bombarded with initiatives and resources, with little guidance on how to select, manage, co-ordinate and evaluate them to meet specific objectives and needs, or to translate them into meaningful, relevant and educational physical activity experiences and provision for young people* (Cale & Harris, 2005, p.261).

Hendley (cited in www.sportsteacher.co.uk, 2003) similarly stated that there were so many programmes and initiatives being introduced within schools that ‘even PE advisors admit that the different initiatives coming through various organisations are highly confusing’. Cale and Harris (2005) considered that PE teachers required guidance on the selection of the most effective initiatives for their school, and that future practice required a committed and strategic approach to programme implementation within primary schools.

With regard to the effects of initiatives on teaching and learning, relatively little is known about their impact. It has previously been documented, for example, that some teachers who attended TOPs training failed to implement the programme within their school in the first six months (Primary Issues, 2004, p.8). Indeed, it is considered that:
Teachers will only implement a new package of activities, resources and equipment when the climate is appropriate and this will of course vary for different institutions (Primary Issues, 2004, p.8).

The reasons why some teachers did not employ initiatives within their schools clearly needs further investigation. Cale and Harris (2005) suggested that it could be that the numerous programmes being targeted at schools may not all translate into good and high quality physical activity experiences for young people, due to the lack of co-ordination of the programmes.

The government’s major financial investment into PE and school sport certainly challenged the physical education profession’s accountability to deliver results both within and beyond the subject, as expressed by Cutforth (2003, p. 196):

The government, by investing in PE and school sport, is putting its faith in the profession to contribute significantly to the wider education policy agenda – citizenship, health, behaviour, self esteem, social responsibility, attainment - to name but a few. The cynics will say that it is more about these things than it is about physical literacy, skill development, competition – the traditional bastions of PE and sport in schools.

Flintoff’s (2003) study of the School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCO) Programme (one of the programmes within the PESSCL strategy) concluded that the programme had the potential to extend and improve the quality of PE and school sport opportunities for young people, but the nature of the developments depended heavily on particular contexts and the individual abilities, skills and positioning of the School Sport Co-ordinators. Flintoff (2003) made the point that the SSCO programme is being implemented in a policy space that is already crowded and one in which sport discourse dominates.
Despite the level of government investment, the CCPR stated that whilst ‘there is much to celebrate in the progress which has been made … the system is still fragile and under-resourced and there is still a long way to go….’ (CCPR, 2004). Consequently, the CCPR (2004) presented the government with a host of challenges, including a minimum of 30 hours initial training in physical education for all primary school teachers. Marshall (2005) also reinforced the point that, despite the government’s investment in physical education and school sport, concerns remain about the provision and delivery of PE in primary schools in England.

2.6 Reports on Primary Physical Education during PESSCL

Ofsted’s review of teaching and learning in PE in primary schools in 2002 revealed that planning, expectation and pace were all areas for development, and that assessment was the weakest aspect of teaching. However, the launch and implementation of PESSCL suggests a more optimistic future for primary physical education and this has been confirmed to some extent by subsequent Ofsted inspection reports. For example, the phase three (2003-04) evaluation of the School Sport Partnerships Programme confirmed that an increasing number of primary schools are benefiting from the PESSCL strategy:

This (PESSCL strategy) is having a positive impact on raising the profile of PE and broadening the range of opportunities within and beyond the curriculum (Ofsted, 2004, p.3).

The report also stated that the quality of teaching of physical education within primary schools demonstrated great improvement, with almost 75% of physical education lessons rated good, and 33% very good (Ofsted, 2004). Leadership and management within physical education were also found to be good in almost half of primary schools and satisfactory in most of the rest (Ofsted, 2004).
A report one year later (Ofsted, 2005) reinforced the view that the majority of primary schools in England had improved their provision for physical education, and that, in two schools out of five, the improvement was significant. This report (Ofsted, 2005) also stated that most schools met the National Curriculum requirements for PE and that pupils’ achievement was satisfactory in the majority of schools and good in just over half. Furthermore, pupils were experiencing more variation in activities within PE lessons, though most time was still devoted to team games (Ofsted, 2005).

Despite the improvements, however, the report stated that raising expectations of pupils’ achievement in PE was an area for development and that assessment of pupils remained an area that was judged to be poor and not well established within primary schools (Ofsted, 2005). The report (Ofsted, p.3) also commented that:

*PE is frequently perceived by teachers to require a different approach to teaching and learning compared with other subjects. Yet teachers could do more to adapt and transfer their approaches to teaching the core subjects to PE.*

Pickup’s (2006) study also reported problematic issues for primary PE including limited evidence of plans, little linkage to other subjects, unclear expectations of pupils, and no use of teaching assistants.

Although the Government’s PSA target was that by 2006 three quarters of pupils would be receiving two hours of physical education and sport within and beyond the curriculum every week, Ofsted revealed that currently well over a third of pupils (38%) were receiving less than two hours of physical education and sport (Ofsted, 2004), and that the time allocation for PE in some schools was insufficient to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum (Ofsted, 2005). Indeed, Ofsted (2004, 2005) considered that developments were needed in planning, teaching, curriculum design and assessment in order for
schools to meet the Government target of two hours of high quality provision for 75% of pupils by 2006, and 85% by 2008. Pickup's later (2006) study also revealed that the frequency of PE in primary school was often below the PSA target of two hours a week advocated through PESSCL due to lessons being cancelled for various reasons (such as the hall being used for other purposes). In the same year, however, the ‘2005/06 School Sport Survey’ (DfES, 2006) reported a significant increase in the number of children doing at least two hours PE and school sport each week. The survey revealed that 80% of pupils were taking part in at least two hours of high quality PE and sport a week, exceeding the 75% target set for 2006, with the greatest improvement reported to be taking place in primary schools.

That said, a new issue emerged in 2005 which raises additional concerns about the quality of PE provision in primary schools. From September 2005 all teachers in primary schools in England became entitled to be released from teaching for 10% of their timetabled teaching commitment for planning, preparation and assessment time (referred to as ‘PPA’ time) (Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group, 2003). PPA time was introduced to reduce the workload of teachers by providing guaranteed preparation and assessment time through increased use of support staff in schools. Workforce reform and the introduction of PPA in particular has impacted on the curriculum in many ways, one of which is the possibility of external support (from, for example, sports coaches and dance instructors) for the delivery of physical education, with the aim of ‘providing cost effective cover for PPA guaranteed time’ (Sport England, 2005). The introduction of PPA time has created opportunities for external agencies to support the delivery of PE and school sport and for new career avenues to be opened up for coaches, instructors and support staff in schools.

Some local organisations such as the County Sports Partnership for Somerset (SASP) have responded by putting in place recruitment and quality assurance procedures to ensure that all individuals contributing to the provision of primary physical education and school sport have appropriate qualifications, professional development portfolios (including child protection) and the
required Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks to permit them to work with children (Sport England, 2005). Ofsted (2006) similarly has commented that individuals delivering PE and school sport must have the professional competence, including subject knowledge, to target pupils’ learning as an aid to improving their standards. Worrying though, Ofsted (2006, p. 4) has also noted that:

...an increasing number of headteachers make indiscriminate use of coaches to deliver physical education and school sport as a strategy for providing preparation, planning and assessment time for teachers. This is threatening high quality provision in these schools.

Pickup (2006, p. 14) has expressed similar concerns, stating:

A consequence of using specialist teachers is to belittle the subject’s worth for the class teacher, particularly where low levels of confidence and enthusiasm are demonstrated.

Spence (2006, p. 12) has also urged caution, stating that in cases where outside agencies are being employed to deliver PE, the experiences of children in physical education lessons were ‘at best improving the skills of some in a few activities, and at worst condemning another generation to inactivity and negative attitudes towards physical activity’. Pickup (2006) also noted that in some schools which deployed ‘outside specialists’ to provide cover for PE, there were reduced opportunities for trainee teachers to observe and teach PE. His view was that this negatively impacted on the perceived importance of the subject as part of the school-based training experience (Pickup, 2006).
2.7 Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been defined as ‘all types of professional learning undertaken by teachers beyond the initial point of training’ (Craft, 1996, p.6). It is considered that teacher development underpins pupil development (Armour & Yelling, 2002), and that providing high quality CPD for teachers is a key part of the process of raising educational standards (Day, 1999; Reynolds et al., 2000). The National Foundation for Education Research (NFER, 2001) has reported that CPD is most effective when: teachers have some autonomy over the choice and direction of their personal development; CPD activities are delivered with appropriate expertise; and the content is challenging, up-to-date and relevant to classroom practice.

Baseline research conducted into teachers’ perceptions of CPD highlighted that: most teachers were satisfied with their CPD over the previous five years; key features of worthwhile CPD were perceived relevance and applicability to school/classroom settings; negative feelings were especially associated with ‘one size fits all’ standardised CPD provision; most CPD was focused on teaching skills and subject knowledge, and was led primarily by school staff; most teachers worked with traditional notions of CPD (such as courses, conferences, INSET days); and that most teachers felt that school development needs and national priorities had taken precedence over individual needs and that many teachers considered they needed additional opportunities for ‘professional control and self regulation’ (Hustler et al., 2003, p.1).

Ofsted’s (2002b) report on CPD for teachers in schools revealed however, evidence of a growing awareness amongst teachers of the value of other forms of CPD such as sharing the expertise of teachers in the same school, sharing knowledge and skills with teachers in other schools, and using consultants to provide in-school programmes of support to tackle a specific need. However, the report also stated that teachers, line-managers and CPD
co-ordinators rarely assembled an array of CPD activities to form coherent individual training plans, and schools on the whole failed to allow enough time to support effective professional development and to ensure that newly acquired knowledge and skills were consolidated, implemented and shared with other teachers (Ofsted, 2002b).

Traditional patterns of CPD such as off site, one off courses are considered by some to be ineffective in changing teaching practice (NPEAT, 1998; NFER, 2001; Pritchard & Marshall, 2002). Sparks (2002) claimed that often they result in:

- fragmented and incoherent teacher learning that lacks intellectual rigour, fails to build on existing knowledge and skills, and does little to support teachers in the day-to-day challenges of improving student learning (9.1).

With respect to primary physical education, it has been suggested that it has suffered from the provision of initial teacher training that has been ‘too brief, superficial, inaccessible and inconsistently delivered’ (Green & Hardman, 2005, p.230) and has been described as an aspect of the curriculum that also suffers from low levels of teacher confidence (Duncombe and Armour, 2004, p.141). Newman (2000) believes that, if standards of physical education are to be raised within primary schools, there must be an entitlement for all primary teachers to CPD and life-long learning in physical education (Newman, 2000).

In England, the government has published a strategy for structuring teachers' CPD (DfEE, 2001) and, within physical education, a major investment has clearly been made in the form of the Professional Development Programme within PESSCL (DfES & DCMS, 2003). This particular programme set out to: raise the quality of teaching and learning in PE and school sport; improve understanding of how high quality PE and school sport can be used as a tool for whole school improvement; promote healthy, active lifestyles; encourage more innovative interpretation of the PE programme of study; and enhance
cross-phase continuity (DfES & DCMS, 2003). The programme offered free professional development for all teachers of PE in primary, secondary and special schools, managed by Local Delivery Agents (LDAs) comprising a menu of opportunities including delivered workshops, online resources and mentoring.

Traditionally, physical education teachers have participated in comparatively little CPD compared to other subjects (Armour, 2001). Furthermore, when teachers have attended PE-related CPD (PE-CPD), it has been suggested that they regularly encounter relatively ineffective types of training (Connelly & James, 1998) such as ‘one off’ one day courses (Armour & Yelling, 2002). Furthermore, PE-CPD in England has been described as lacking coherence and relevance, with a gap between teachers’ ambitious aspirations for pupils and the CPD available to support them (Armour & Yelling, 2004). Research has shown that for CPD to be effective in improving both teacher and pupil learning, it should ‘more often, be rooted in the day–to–day complexities of teaching’ (Armour, 2005, p.3). Armour and Makopoulou (2006) have also commented on the need for an infrastructure within national professional development programmes for follow-up, sustained learning opportunities for teachers.

For improvements to be made in the standards of teaching and learning in primary schools, it is considered that new forms of CPD for teachers are needed (Stein et al, 1999). Guskey (2002) argues that for CPD to be effective, more needs to be known about how and why teachers change as ‘significant changes in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs occur primarily after they gain evidence of improvement in student learning’ (p.383). Guskey (2002) claimed that it was pointless to attempt to change teachers’ attitudes and beliefs in the hope that this would lead to changes in practice; rather, teachers are more likely to change beliefs after they have seen the impact of an initiative upon pupils.
There has thus been a call for new ways of developing teachers and a need to ‘rethink the nature and type of provision of CPD for PE teachers to match teachers’ priorities for pupil learning in the subject and to cater more broadly for teachers’ learning needs’ (Armour & Yelling, 2004, p.87). As explained by Armour (2005), unless teachers are:

...engaged in a sustained, progressive, coherent learning programme, it is unlikely that they will adjust their pedagogies and practice in any significant ways over their careers. This in turn makes it unlikely that pupils’ learning will be enhanced (p.3).

Armour (2006, p.206) states that ‘if new forms of PE-CPD are to flourish, many things need to change, including professional learning in initial teacher education, the traditional practices of CPD providers, and inhospitable school and departmental structures. She also believes that ‘we need to think about PE-CPD differently, so that teachers are taught to demand the professional development they need to support them in their work with pupils’ (Armour, 2006, p. 207). Furthermore, simply increasing teachers’ CPD opportunities does not necessarily result in ‘better’ CPD (Guskey, 1998). Currently, there is ‘little systematic research on the effects of professional development on improvements in teaching or on student outcomes’ (Garet et al., 2001, p.917).

Duncombe and Armour (2004) considered that, whilst teachers would value further opportunities to engage in collaborative professional learning (CPL) (i.e. the learning of new skills or knowledge by one or more members of a group that occurs when professionals work together), schools need to radically alter their structures, processes and priorities to enable it to happen effectively. Also, CPL may not prove to be effective in the context of primary physical education as most teachers simply do not feel knowledgeable enough about PE to share learning with professional colleagues, even after specialist input (Duncombe & Armour, 2005). They argue that if CPL within PE-CPD is to be encouraged and used effectively by teachers, time must be
taken to ‘cultivate’ communities of practice in primary schools around the teaching of PE, such that CPL has a framework within which to flourish (Duncombe & Armour, 2005, p. 2). Armour and Makopoulou (2006) also consider that CPD providers may need further support to understand fully the potential of collaborative learning and the concept of professional learning communities. Indeed, they ‘view the professional development needs of CPD providers as central to the success of the National PE-CPD Programme’ (Armour & Makopoulou, 2006, p. 8).

In addition, PE-CPD needs to be given priority within schools. Ofsted (2005) has pointed out that whilst many primary school teachers are keen to improve their subject knowledge, weaknesses in initial teacher training and subsequent lack of CPD create and reinforce the problem. Limited opportunities for teachers to attend appropriate professional development will prevail unless PE-CPD is prioritised within school development plans and schools commit to this development.

The Association for Physical Education recently reviewed the induction support provided by Local Delivery Agents (LDAs) in physical education and school sport for newly qualified primary generalist teachers (Woodhouse, 2006). The review confirmed the belief that limited time on PE in ITT left many Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) feeling ill-equipped to provide high quality PE and school sport. Example quotations from PE advisers/inspectors working in the LDAs included:

*They (NQTs) have very little time whilst training dedicated to PESS (most quote 6 hours) and therefore lack confidence to deliver.*

*Many of them (NQTs) have had very little training during their ITT and lack confidence in the delivery of HQ (high quality) PE.*
The vast majority of primary NQTs feel extremely lacking in confidence in PE, due largely to its non-existence in their training.

NQTs often lack confidence, also lack knowledge of simple techniques, are not able to model performance, lack subject knowledge, organisational skills and behaviour management in the hall, playground.

Whilst this situation was viewed as frustrating for NQTs, LDAs and ITT providers, it was considered that it was unlikely to change, and hence there was a need for LDAs to place increased emphasis on induction support and further professional development. The following quotation from a PE adviser in an LDA typifies the description of the PE experience generally offered by primary NQT generalist teachers:

*Given concerns over health and safety, lessons tend to be ‘safe’ and structured in a way that aids class control and management but does not meet the needs of children. As such, lessons observed can be dull and lacking in fun, enjoyment and pace.*

A high proportion of LDAs considered that primary NQTs needed support to teach all six activity areas of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) (DfES & QCA, 1999), as well as further training in the aims and structure of the NCPE, and health and safety considerations. In addition, over 50% of the LDAs considered that primary NQTs needed support with lesson planning, schemes of work, progression, organising and leading lessons, and assessment. Some LDAs reported positive responses from NQTs when the four strands/aspects of the NCPE were explained to them as this often had the effect of allaying fears about the need for in-depth knowledge of the activity areas.
Finally, the review reported that induction support varied across LDAs from ‘nothing’ to ‘a five day programme spread over three terms, complemented with resources to support practice’ (Woodhouse, 2006). It was proposed that the Association for Physical Education promotes a model of induction support at three levels of development offering a graduated and differentiated programme running across ITT, induction and further professional development (Woodhouse, 2006).
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Approaches and Sampling

A mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted to gain breadth and depth of impact data. The research employed a variety of research methods including: pre-course audits, course evaluations, telephone interviews, and post-course self-evaluations, focus groups and individual interviews. The methods were designed to obtain data on the impact of the TOP Programmes on teachers’ confidence and competence in planning, delivering and assessing the primary PE curriculum, and on pupil learning.

The research project involved a representative sample of case study Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England. Six LEAs were selected from the 112 that submitted implementation plans to the Youth Sport Trust during 2003. The selection criteria ensured inclusion of LEAs of varying size (in terms of the number of primary schools), a range of emphases/foci with respect to implementation and management structures for TOPs, links with primary ITT, and geographical spread within England. Consideration was also given to the stage at which the LEA became involved with the Professional Development Programme within PESSCL (DfES & DCMS, 2003); two LEAs were selected from the initial 30 invited to participate in the first year of the Professional Development Programme; a further two were chosen from the next 70 LEAs which joined the programme in year 2, and the final two were from those LEAs joining the programme in year 3. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was responsible for the selection of LEAs entering the Professional Development Programme in each of the three years. One of the case study LEAs withdrew from the research project during 2004 due to the Scheme Manager leaving her post and there being no immediate replacement. Details of the five remaining case study LEAs are presented in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA</th>
<th>Location in England &amp; Number of Primary Schools</th>
<th>Programme Management</th>
<th>Main Focus within Implementation Plan</th>
<th>Link with Primary ITT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Case Study A | North West 241 | LEA Active Schools Development Officer. | • Begin roll out of training and distribution of resources.  
• All activity areas equally included in plan.  
• Large allocation planned. | The local University was approached but limited interest was expressed. A local college was undertaking its own programme with ITT. |
| Case Study B | West Midlands 322 | The development of PE and sport was strategically managed. The Health Education consultant had a joint Scheme Manager/Co-ordinator role to help embed physical development into the health agenda. Physical development was a key priority for the Health Education consultant. | • Embed TOPs training within the LEA, NQT and CDP programmes.  
• Ensure continued development linked to health.  
• Update training. | Local University |
| Case Study C | South West 232 | Managed through County Activity and Sports Partnership via:  
1 Scheme Manager  
2 TOPs Trainers  
3 Trainers  
Funding secured for Scheme Manager and trainers for 5 years so programme was fully supported and sustainable.  
Additional funding secured from County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) which would provide opportunities to professionalise coaching, including the delivery of TOPs. | • Continuous training and support. | Local Colleges and University; link between PGCE students and Children’s Fund Project. |
| Case Study D | North East 52 | Sport Development Manager worked closely with PE Inspector and Leisure Services. Scheme Manager liaised with Partnership Development Manager and Sports Colleges. | • Enhance provision for TOP play within KS2.  
• Support NQTs.  
• Links with School Sport Co-ordinator Programme. | Local University |
| Case Study E | London 49 | Permanent PE Advisory Teacher (also Scheme Manager). | • Target groups: Newly Qualified Teachers, overseas teachers, teachers new to the borough.  
• Involvement of School Sport Co-ordinators. | Local University |

Table 1: Details of Case Study LEAs
3.2 Pre-Course Audits, Course Evaluations and Telephone Interviews

A Pre-Course Audit (Appendix B) was designed for completion by teachers prior to attending the TOP programmes training in order to secure baseline data on teachers' backgrounds, experiences, confidence and competence in teaching PE. In addition, a Course Evaluation (Appendix C) was designed for completion immediately following the course in order to obtain data relating to the initial perceived effectiveness and potential impact of the training on teaching and learning. The Pre-Course Audit and Course Evaluation were piloted prior to use in the case study LEAs. Following this, minor amendments were made to both to improve clarification and response rates.

Multiple copies of the Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations were posted to the Scheme Managers in the five case study LEAs prior to the TOPs courses being delivered. Scheme Trainers were asked to send the Pre-Course Audits (and guidelines for completion) along with the pre-course information usually sent to teachers prior to the TOP programmes training. The intention was that Pre-Course Audits were to be collected in by the Scheme Trainers who delivered the TOP programmes to teachers on the day of the course, in addition to the Course Evaluations when completed at the end of the training day (see Appendix D: Letter to Scheme Trainers). Scheme Trainers were requested to return the completed Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations as soon as possible after the training to a named researcher based at the Institute of Youth Sport at Loughborough University. However, on some occasions, due to limited time on the training day, Scheme Trainers allowed teachers to take Course Evaluations away from the training venue and unfortunately few of these were returned to the researcher.

There was considerable variation in the number of Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations returned from each LEA and there were several reasons for this. For example, the number of planned training programmes varied according to the number of primary schools within the LEA; and, it was found that TOPs courses were frequently postponed or cancelled within some LEAs.
which delayed data collection and hindered the progress of the project. This latter problem was further exacerbated by changes in personnel at the Youth Sport Trust resulting in delays in establishing all of the training dates. This led to Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations not being distributed at some training courses because the dates were not made known to the researcher.

At the end of September 2005, all five Scheme Managers were contacted and participated in short telephone interviews to establish if any changes were planned for the implementation of TOPs during the following year (see Appendix E: Telephone Interview Schedule). This helped to establish effective ways of distributing questionnaires within each of the LEAs. In addition, once the TOP programmes were integrated into the Professional Development programme, it proved easier to obtain training dates via the programme managers within the Local Delivery Agents (LDAs).

3.3 Focus Groups and Interviews

The next stage of the project involved conducting focus groups within the five case study LEAs in order to obtain detailed information about teachers’ views on the longer term impact of the TOP Programmes on their teaching of physical education and its effects on pupil learning. Focus groups are considered to enable attitudes, feelings and beliefs about a subject to ‘more likely be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails’ (Gibbs, 1998, p.2). Focus groups also provided an opportunity for clarification of data from the Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations.

Prior to involvement in the focus groups, teachers were asked to complete a Self-Evaluation (Appendix F) to encourage them to reflect upon the effects of the TOP programmes on specific aspects of their teaching and on pupil learning. The Self-Evaluation predominantly contained statements to be categorised by respondents on a Likert scale. The Self-Evaluations were completed and collected in by the researcher at the beginning of the group discussions and provided a focus for the discussions. The researcher also
used a Focus Group Schedule (Appendix G) which was designed to prompt and encourage discussion relevant to the study. This schedule and the Self-Evaluation were piloted in a local LEA prior to their use in the case study LEAs. The teachers involved found the process clear and straightforward and no revisions were considered necessary.

The intention was to conduct focus groups at a central location within each LEA with teachers invited from different primary schools. However, this proved impossible as headteachers were often reluctant to release staff to attend during the school day due to the difficulty of arranging and funding supply cover. Teachers were also reluctant to travel to attend twilight sessions due to other personal and professional demands on their time. Consequently, focus groups were conducted at individual primary schools, thereby reducing the need for teachers to be released from curriculum time or to travel in order to participate.

Primary schools in which between four and ten teachers had attended the TOPs training were identified and the designated PE Co-ordinator at each of the schools contacted to ask if they and their colleagues would be willing to participate in a focus group discussion of approximately 40 minutes duration (Appendix H). Finding a convenient time for the focus groups proved challenging in some schools due to teachers being involved in lunchtime and/or after-school activities and meetings. In these cases, focus groups were replaced with small group or individual interviews (Appendix I: Interview Schedule). For the individual teachers involved in the focus groups and interviews, a time period of between two to eighteen months had elapsed since attending the training.

Within each focus group, all teachers were encouraged and facilitated to participate to avoid a small number dominating the discussions. All focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed, and all verbal and non-verbal information from the focus groups and interviews was recorded. Each transcript was read and reviewed several times to optimise accuracy. A ‘member checking’ technique was employed to determine the reliability and
validity of the data. A random sample of two of the primary school teachers received a transcript of their individual interview to verify its accuracy. Both confirmed that the transcript was a fair and accurate representation of the interview (see Appendix J for an example excerpt from one of the transcripts).

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the completed Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This allowed descriptive statistics (such as means, standards deviations and variance) and cross-tabulations to be obtained. Qualitative data in the form of responses to the open-ended questions in the Pre-Course Audits and Course Evaluations were analysed by means of the generation of themes using constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2000).

Data from focus groups and interviews were organised into emerging categories and themes (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher maintained an open mind, seeking passages of importance and interest arising from the transcripts. Data were coded and categorised to assist the evolution and development of the theory (Charmaz, 2000). The researcher constantly compared new and emerging data, exploring how the data added to or changed the patterns of existing information.
Data analysis was also aided by employing the Logic Model (Kellogg Founda-
tion, 2001) (Appendix K) and the Theory of Change Logic Model 
(Kellogg Foundation, 2001) (Appendix L) to enable identification of success 
indicators in terms of context, implementation and outcomes. The basic 
model involved the identification of the following aspects of a programme: 
resources; activities; outputs; short and long-term outcomes; and impact. An 
expansion of the Basic Logic Model was the Theory of Change Logic Model, 
which helps identify ‘the factors that will impact upon your program and enable 
you to anticipate the data and resources you will need to achieve success’ 
(Kellogg Foundation, 2001, p.27). The Theory of Change Logic Model 
involves identification of the following six aspects of a programme: problem or 
issue; community needs/assets; desired results (outputs, outcomes and 
impact); influential factors; strategies; assumptions. Employment of these 
models permitted an emphasis on ‘evaluation for improvement’, thus helping 
not only to provide evidence of impact, but also data that could be used to 
improve the nature and effectiveness of future CPD provision.

Table 2 provides information about the volume of data obtained from each of 
the LEAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study LEA</th>
<th>Number of returned Pre-Course Audits</th>
<th>Number of returned Course Evaluations</th>
<th>Number of returned Self-Evaluations</th>
<th>Number of Focus Groups</th>
<th>Number of Small Group or Individual Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Volume of Data from Case Study LEAs
4.0 Results

This section provides a collective summary of the findings from the Pre-Course Audits, Course Evaluations, Telephone Interviews, Self-Evaluations, Focus Groups and Interviews from the five case study LEAs.

4.1 Baseline Data from Pre-Course Audits

4.1.1 The Context

Teachers from a mix of infant, junior and middle deemed primary schools were involved in the research project. This included a number of special schools. Over 60% of the schools catered for 100-300 pupils (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Primary Schools %</th>
<th>Size of School</th>
<th>Primary Schools %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Infant</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Up to 100 pupils</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Junior</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100-300 pupils</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Deemed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>More than 300 pupils</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Type and Size of Primary Schools Involved

Most of the responding teachers (82%) were female, with just 18% being male. The vast majority (89%) had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), 7% were trainee teachers and 4% non-qualified teachers. Most (82%) did not hold a PE/sports science related degree although nearly a fifth (18%) did. Just over a third of the teachers (34%) held other PE/sport/exercise related qualifications. There was a range of teaching experience amongst the group:
37% had taught for ten or more years, 19% for six to ten years, 25% for one to five years, and 19% for less than a year. There was also a range and mix of teaching roles held by the teachers: 30% were Key Stage 1 classroom teachers; 50% Key Stage 2 classroom teachers; 20% PE Co-ordinators; 21% Core Subject Co-ordinators; and 38% Co-ordinators or Subject Leaders of non-core curriculum areas.

The subjects the teachers felt most competent teaching varied. Some felt most competent teaching PE whilst others felt least competent teaching PE. Similarly, there was variation in the subjects the teachers enjoyed teaching. Some stated that they enjoyed teaching PE the most whilst others considered this to be the subject they least enjoyed teaching.

4.1.2 The PE Curriculum

Over 80% of the schools (81%) involved in the study provided Key Stage 1 pupils with 2 lessons of PE per week, 11% provided just one lesson, 5% provided three and 3% four lessons. The duration of these PE lessons ranged from 20 to 120 minutes, with the most frequently cited length of time being 40 minutes (21%) or 45 minutes (29%). Nearly 90% of the schools (87%) provided Key Stage 2 pupils with 2 lessons of PE per week, 9% provided just one lesson and 4% three lessons. The duration of these PE lessons ranged from 20 to 200 minutes, with the most frequently cited length of time being 45 minutes (26%) or 50 minutes (18%).

Over sixty per cent of teachers (61%) considered the time devoted to PE at their school to be ‘adequate’ at Key Stage 1, 13% described it as ‘more than adequate’ and over a quarter of teachers (26%) considered it ‘inadequate’. Similarly, nearly two thirds (64%) of teachers considered PE time to be ‘adequate’ at Key Stage 2, 13% described it as ‘more than adequate’ and over a fifth (23%) believed it to be ‘inadequate’. Just over a quarter of teachers (26%) stated that more than three quarters of their pupils received two hours per week of high quality PE and school sport, within and beyond the curriculum. A further quarter estimated the proportion to be 50-74%, just over a fifth (21%) estimated it to be 25-49%, and 18% reported that fewer than a
quarter of their pupils received two hours per week of high quality PE and school sport, within and beyond the curriculum. With respect to PE, the teachers described the outcome of their school’s most recent Ofsted inspection as good (48%), satisfactory (40%), very good/excellent (11%) or unsatisfactory (1%).

Most schools had written or revised their PE scheme of work in the past five years, either during the current or previous year (42%) or between two and five years ago (51%). In terms of the composition of the PE curriculum at Key Stage 1, nearly all schools provided games (92%), dance (92%) and gymnastics (89%), most included health and fitness (69%), just over half offered swimming (53%) and athletics (52%), and just over a quarter included outdoor and adventurous activities (27%). With respect to the PE curriculum at Key Stage 2, nearly all schools provided games (98%), swimming (97%), athletics (95%), dance (91%) and gymnastics (90%), most included health and fitness (84%), and just over three quarters included outdoor and adventurous activities (76%).

4.1.3 Teachers’ Confidence Levels and Perceptions
Teachers were asked to describe their confidence levels with respect to teaching the following areas of the PE curriculum: athletic activities; dance activities; games activities; gymnastics activities; outdoor and adventurous activities; swimming activities and water safety; health and fitness. The findings presented in Table 3 reveal that teachers were most confident about teaching games and least confident about teaching gymnastics and dance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not Confident %</th>
<th>Reasonably Confident %</th>
<th>Very Confident %</th>
<th>Subject Not Taught %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Activities</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Activities</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games Activities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics Activities</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor &amp; Adventurous Activities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Activities &amp; Water Safety</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Fitness</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Confidence Levels of Teachers with Respect to Teaching the PE Activity Areas

Teachers were also asked to describe their confidence levels with respect to addressing the following issues in PE: planning; continuity and progression; classroom management; behaviour management; differentiation; inclusion; assessment, recording and reporting; child protection; and safety. The findings presented in Table 4 reveal that teachers were most confident about behaviour and classroom management in PE lessons and least confident about assessment, recording and reporting, child protection, differentiation, continuity and progression, and inclusion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Very Confident</th>
<th>Reasonably Confident</th>
<th>Not Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and Progression</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Management</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment, Recording &amp; Reporting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Confidence Levels of Teachers with Respect to Issues in PE

Table 5 summarises teachers’ perceptions about the extent to which high quality PE and school sport can contribute to a range of whole school improvements. The findings revealed that all teachers considered that high quality PE and school sport could contribute to pupils’ attainment in PE and school sport and nearly all (99%) to pupils’ engagement in healthy lifestyles. In addition, 98% indicated that high quality PE and school sport could improve pupils’ attitude to learning, 97% considered it could improve their behaviour,
95% believed it could improve pupils’ citizenship skills, and 93% considered it had the potential to impact positively on pupils’ attainment in other subjects across the curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent teachers considered that high quality PE and school sport could contribute to improvements in:</th>
<th>Not at all %</th>
<th>To some extent %</th>
<th>A great deal %</th>
<th>Don’t know %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ behaviour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ attitude to learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ attainment in PE and school sport</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ attainment in other subjects across the curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ engagement in healthy lifestyles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils’ citizenship skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Teachers’ Perceptions about High Quality PE and School Sport’s Potential to Contribute to Whole School Improvements

Half of the teachers (50%) described their teaching colleagues as ‘reasonably supportive’ of PE/sport, 47% described them as ‘very supportive’, whilst 3% stated that they were ‘not at all’ supportive.

4.1.4 PE ITT and CPD

Just under half of the teachers (43%) considered that their ITT course was ‘inadequate’ in preparing them to teach PE, 42% considered it to be ‘adequate’, whilst 9% described it as ‘more than adequate’. A quarter of the teachers (25%) reported having less than 10 hours allocated to PE during their ITT, 27% reported receiving 10 to 20 hours, 11% 21 to 40 hours, and 13% more than 40 hours of PE during their ITT. The remaining 24% could not recall how much time had been allocated to PE during their training. The PE areas covered in ITT were: games (87%), gymnastics (83%), dance (77%),
athletics (48%), health and fitness (33%), swimming (25%), and outdoor and adventurous activities (25%).

Two thirds of teachers (66%) considered that they needed further CPD in PE. Over half of the teachers (51%) had previously attended TOPs courses: TOP Sport (22%), TOP Dance (18%), TOP Play (15%), TOP Gymnastics (11%), TOP Start (9%), TOP Outdoors (7%), TOP Athletics (6%), TOP Swimming (5%), Fit for TOPs (2%) and TOP Sportsability (1%). Less than a quarter (24%) had attended additional CPD in PE (excluding TOPs) during the current or previous academic year. Over half of the teachers (55%) described their headteachers as ‘very supportive’ of CPD in PE, 41% described them as ‘reasonably supportive’, and only 5% stated that they were ‘not at all’ supportive.

Nearly 80% of the schools (79%) were involved in the School Sport Coordinator Programme (re-named the School Sport Partnership Programme) and just over three quarters of the schools (76%) had links with secondary schools with regard to the provision of PE and/or sport.

4.2 Findings from Course Evaluations

The vast majority of teachers (97%) considered that the TOPs training was relevant to their needs, with 45% describing it as ‘excellent’ in this respect, 40% stating it to be ‘good’ and 12% ‘satisfactory’. Almost all teachers (99%) considered the training to have developed their confidence to teach PE either ‘a great deal’ (45%) or ‘to some extent’ (54%). A similarly very high proportion of teachers (98%) considered the TOPs training to have extended their knowledge of PE either ‘a great deal’ (48%) or ‘to some extent’ (50%).

Virtually all teachers (99%) considered that the TOP programmes would support teaching and learning in PE in primary schools either ‘a great deal’ (75%) or ‘to some extent’ (24%). The same high percentage of teachers (99%) perceived that they would be able to effectively use the TOP programmes at their school either ‘a great deal’ (56%) or ‘to some extent’
Similarly, 99% believed that the programmes would support their own delivery of the PE curriculum either ‘a great deal’ (64%) or ‘to some extent’ (35%).

The vast majority of teachers (99%) indicated that the TOP programmes could assist them in the implementation of the National Curriculum requirements either ‘a great deal’ (68%) or ‘to some extent’ (31%), and that it would support the progression of all pupils ‘a great deal’ (69%) or ‘to some extent’ (30%). For example, 96% considered that the TOP resources linked with the programmes of study in the National Curriculum for PE (NCPE) ‘a great deal’ (36%) or ‘to some extent’ (60%), and 95% considered that the TOP programmes effectively linked with the four aspects/strands of the NCPE ‘a great deal’ (59%) or ‘to some extent’ (36%). Furthermore, 98% believed that the programmes could help in setting suitable learning challenges for all pupils either ‘a great deal’ (68%) or ‘to some extent’ (30%).

Most teachers (97%) considered that the TOPs resources could be used to support core skills either ‘a great deal’ (44%) or ‘to some extent’ (53%). The TOPs resources were also considered to be useful in supporting inclusion either ‘a great deal’ (56%) or ‘to some extent’ (41%). Overall, the TOPs resources were considered by all teachers to be helpful in raising standards in PE either ‘a great deal’ (62%) or ‘to some extent’ (38%).

Table 6 summarises teachers’ perceptions about the extent to which the TOP programmes could contribute to a range of whole school improvements. In particular, it reveals that 99% of teachers considered that the programmes could contribute to pupils’ attainment in PE and school sport. In addition, 98% indicated that the programmes could contribute to improvements in pupils’ attitude to learning, 97% considered they could contribute to pupils’ engagement in healthy lifestyles, and 92% believed they could improve pupils’ behaviour. Furthermore, over 85% considered the programmes had the potential to impact positively on pupils’ attainment in other subjects across the curriculum and on pupils’ citizenship skills.
Table 6: Teachers’ Perceptions about the TOP Programmes’ Potential to Contribute to Whole School Improvements

The majority of the teachers (88%) intended to pursue further TOPs courses (e.g. TOP Dance, Top Gymnastics, TOP Athletics, TOP Outdoors).

4.3 Findings from Post-CPD Self-Evaluations

All teachers had integrated TOPs within their PE programme to a greater (29%) or lesser extent (51%), and all had used the TOPs resources to a greater (22%) or lesser extent (62%). Following the TOPs training, teachers felt more confident to teach PE to a greater (27%) or lesser extent (44%). They also considered that the training had increased their enthusiasm for PE to a greater (16%) or lesser extent (44%). In addition, all teachers felt more knowledgeable about PE to a greater (38%) or lesser extent (40%), and they perceived their competence to teach PE to have improved to a greater (18%) or lesser extent (59%).
All teachers highlighted that the TOPs training had supported their planning in PE to a greater (27%) or lesser extent (34%). However, 12% of them had not made any long term changes to the way in which they planned PE. Despite this, all teachers considered that the TOP programmes had supported their delivery of the PE curriculum, with 41% considering this to a greater extent and 34% to a lesser extent. A high proportion (95%) had also made changes to the way they delivered PE, with 18% stating they had made major changes and 47% stating some changes. Only 5% of the teachers had not made any changes.

Over three-quarters of teachers (78%) considered that the TOP programmes had helped them to be more inclusive in PE lessons, with 23% considering this to a greater extent and 49% to a lesser extent. However, 14% stated that the programmes had not helped them in this respect. Over half of teachers (56%) also considered that the TOP programmes had increased children’s participation in PE lessons, with 11% considering this to a greater extent and 45% to a lesser extent. However, a fifth (20%) stated that the programmes had not helped them to increase participation.

In terms of assessment, over half of teachers (58%) considered that the TOP programmes had changed the way they assess PE, with 8% considering this to a greater extent and 43% to a lesser extent. However, nearly a third (30%) stated that the programmes had not helped them with assessment.

All teachers considered that the TOP programmes had improved children’s attainment in PE, with 12% considering this to a greater extent and 60% to a lesser extent. Most (90%) believed that the programmes had raised the profile of PE within their school, with 12% considering this to a greater extent and 58% to a lesser extent. However, 10% did not believe this to be the case. Finally, all teachers considered that the TOP programmes had positively impacted on PE in their school, with 18% considering this to a greater extent and 53% to a lesser extent.
4.4 Findings from Telephone Interviews with Scheme Managers

Overall, Scheme Managers considered that the TOP programmes had been successful within their LEAs as the courses were welcomed by teachers. In particular, TOP Dance was reported to be very well received by teachers, and the Scheme Managers felt that the majority of teachers had benefited by learning how to adopt a structured approach to delivering their PE lessons. One of the main issues encountered by the Scheme Managers was related to the training of TOPs trainers. They explained that often individuals were trained, increased their expertise and experience, and then moved out of the role. For example, in one of the case study LEAs, many of the trainers either moved out of the LEA or were promoted within the LEA and consequently did not have the time to deliver the training. Thus, new trainers had to be found and trained. However, many LEAs did not have the budget to do this. Furthermore, as a result of the increasing number of initiatives placing demands on Scheme Managers’ and Scheme Trainers’ time, this left some LEAs reducing the amount of training that they were able to deliver to teachers. The Scheme Managers did not make any significant changes to the way that the TOP programmes were implemented within their LEAs in light of PESSCL, however, the majority of them did use an audit to identify areas where schools needed extra support. Gymnastics, outdoor education and dance were the areas identified as requiring further CPD provision.

4.5 Findings from Post-CPD Focus Groups and Interviews

4.5.1 Perspectives on the Training

Overall, the teachers were positive about the TOPs training and there was general agreement that it had positively contributed to and enhanced their teaching of PE. Some teachers considered that the training had positively impacted on their overall attitude towards PE in that it had increased their enthusiasm for, and confidence to deliver, PE. For example, one teacher stated:
I have never enjoyed teaching PE. To be honest, I never really saw it as worthwhile as subjects such as English and Maths, and so my enthusiasm for the subject was poor. Since going on the TOPs course though, I feel far more confident in what I’m doing, and can see the importance of doing certain things. I wouldn’t say PE is now my favourite subject, but I don’t mind teaching it anymore. And the cards really do help (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006).

Some of the more experienced teachers stated that the training had increased their enthusiasm for PE and acted as an effective ‘refresher’ of good practice. One such teacher commented:

_It gives a lot of reassurance, especially when you have been teaching for a long time. I have experience, but you are never sure if what you are doing is current. The TOPs course has helped me to know this_ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

Another experienced teacher stated:

_It (the TOPs course) was useful as a refresher, as a reminder of authentic good practice. It was helpful being able to take kids through the rhythm of a good lesson_ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006).

The majority of teachers believed that the TOP programmes had improved their knowledge and understanding of PE. One teacher stated:

_From my university training I didn’t learn very much at all, and this has made me more aware of why you do certain things and what skills the children are getting from the activities that they are doing. It (the TOP Gym course) was really clear in telling us that there are five basic shapes that you had to teach the children and none of us knew the five shapes. Just my having that knowledge is one example of how TOPs_
has made a difference to my teaching (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

It seems that subject knowledge was particularly enhanced by TOPs in ‘less familiar’ activity areas such as gymnastics. For example, two teachers commented on the impact of the TOP Gymnastics course that they had attended:

**TOP Gym focuses on areas that you wouldn’t even consider were gym, so that is really beneficial, learning new ways of developing the children’s core skills ready for more complex skills** (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

As a result of looking at the cards and looking at new ideas, I know that it has changed the way that we approach gymnastics. Before, we would get the children doing forward rolls and things like that in much younger years than they should do, and the training and the cards show about developing core stability which will enable the children later on to perform these types of movements in a better way. So it has enabled us to think that in year one and year two, there is no need in worrying about them doing forward rolls, which they often do poorly anyway; we can focus on other activities such as the bean bags on the back, and you wouldn’t even think that that was gymnastics. The children have got a positive attitude towards it and see it as games and they don’t really realise that they are preparing their bodies for year three and year four (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study D, 2007).
The TOPs training was also appreciated, to varying degrees, in the activity area of dance, as exemplified by the following two teachers:

*With things like dance, you are actually hanging onto those cards for dear life for their ideas. I think that you get more from some and so incorporate them. I wouldn’t say that I necessarily use the cards for games, I don’t take them in with me but I do look at the ideas and some of the activities in my planning so I incorporate them and I incorporate them in my schemes of work* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study E, 2006).

*The dance ones are not so easy to use and that’s because of the nature of the subject though. It takes a lot of work to structure it all really, and I think you do need some experience in dance to be able to use them effectively* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study E, 2006).

Some teachers stated that their increased knowledge had helped them to better explain to children what they were doing and why, and aided more accurate feedback to pupils. However, other teachers believed that the training had merely prompted them to look more closely at their PE schemes of work.

Many teachers commented that, following training, their planning was better able to support learning due to a clearer understanding of intended learning outcomes. One teacher explained that her PE lessons were now more focused on specific learning objectives and the content more varied, and admitted that, prior to the TOPs training, she often: ‘*churned out the same old thing each lesson*’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005).
Another teacher, however, considered that there was insufficient attention to planning within the training and stated:

*The training is very practical and doesn’t really go into anything about how you would use the cards in planning a lesson, they don’t really talk about that. They just give you out the cards with the ideas on them and it’s up to you about how you then go away and use them. So I don’t think that they are particularly supportive of planning, although they are mentioned in the schemes of work that we get from SASP (County’s Activity and Sports Partnership)* (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

Thus, whilst the training appeared to improve short term planning for some teachers, it proved less successful in terms of supporting longer term planning and most teachers were unable to give specific examples of how they had integrated their learning into their medium and long term planning. Indeed, some teachers specifically highlighted longer term planning as a weaker aspect of the training, as exemplified by the following quotations:

*It’s difficult to tell if it made any changes to my planning because I’ve been on these other courses. Certainly yes, I have changed how I plan PE but I wouldn’t necessarily say the TOP programmes have influenced this because I think they tend to focus more on activities rather than the planning side of things* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study E, 2007).

*The TOPs cards are a great idea as a source of activities and have great ways of making them easier and harder and keep the kids active and they are good fun but they don’t provide planning...* (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005).
It would have been useful if it actually homed in on particular units or schemes of work (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

Despite some apparent shortcomings with regards to planning, many teachers commented that the training had provided useful additional content ideas for PE (e.g. new ideas for warm ups and cool downs). For example, one teacher stated:

*I think that just by giving some ideas that are really simple has been really good. I probably should have known them myself, but not being trained in the area of PE, it was really beneficial having people tell you what is the right thing to do* (Female Primary School Teacher, 2006, Case Study C).

Many teachers also considered that, as a consequence of the training, their pupils had been enabled to learn a wider variety of new skills and enjoyed their PE lessons more.

A number of the teachers commented on how they found PE a difficult subject to teach due to the wide range of abilities amongst the pupils, and the level of organisation required. For these teachers, the TOPs training had given them more ideas and enabled them to structure and organise their lessons more effectively. The teachers highlighted that being able to select from a range of different activities for PE lessons, and knowing how to progress these helped them to feel better prepared to deliver PE.
Some teachers compared the TOPs training to other CPD in PE that they had experienced and commented that TOPs was different because, as one teacher stated:

It is totally practical and you tend to remember it more because you are actually doing it whereas other training has been more theoretical and focused on analysing why we do things’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study D, 2007).

Many considered that the TOPs training had helped them to provide more purposeful and challenging activities in PE lessons which kept pupils more actively involved and developed their skills. In contrast though, some of the more experienced teachers stated that the TOPs training had minimal impact on their teaching of PE.

In some schools, teachers observed that the TOPs activities the pupils had been taught during their PE lessons were being played during school playtimes. Thus, the effect of the training appeared to go beyond curriculum time. One teacher commented:

*I think that it has spilled over to playtimes as well, the things that they have been taught, not so much the dance and that, but the games. They (the children) seem to be enjoying it enough to carry on* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

Interestingly, teachers within the same LEA reported varying experiences of the training due to different foci and delivery methods adopted by Scheme Trainers. Some teachers considered that the training had focused too much on one aspect of the programme (e.g. playing the activities on the resource cards) but others had benefited from the practical ‘hands on’ experience. Some teachers considered that there was too much emphasis on Key Stage 1
and that the content did not effectively cover the wide age range within Key Stage 2. For example, one teacher commented:

*I think it was too Key Stage 1 based for me. It wasn’t really what we thought we would get. It was too basic. I think that there were some good ideas for warm ups and that, but we never really got on to other things, because of the focus around Key Stage 1* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2005)

Some teachers suggested that it would have been beneficial to focus on specific year groups such as years three to four, and years five to six within the training. Overall, however, teachers commented that the tutors had been good and that their communication had been effective:

*It was at the right pace, it wasn’t too quick and there were plenty of opportunities for people to stop and say, hang on, I’m not sure about this* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005).

Some teachers were of the view that a one day course was insufficient for teachers to effectively raise standards in PE. However, they acknowledged that the TOPs training had been a good starting point in helping them to teach PE effectively. Teachers had benefited from sharing experiences with other teachers during the training as they rarely got this opportunity and it had helped to generate useful ideas that they could use in their PE lessons. This was exemplified by one teacher who stated:

*I think getting us to do lots of activities was good. The fact that we were from lots of different schools was good as we were able to discuss ideas about the cards etc* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).
Only one teacher had attended further CPD in PE since attending the TOPs training. Most teachers seemed grateful for the PE-CPD on offer – one teacher commented:

*I think that as we are not PE specialists or PE minded, we are all grateful for extra input. When the TOPs training was last offered, the majority of teachers at my school attended. I think we would have got more people to go, but there was just a financial limit to it* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

The training seemed particularly beneficial when teachers from the same school had attended as this had provided them with support from colleagues. Many of the teachers explained how they shared information that they had gained from the TOPs training with other teachers within their school. Teachers seemed keen and willing to disseminate their learning to other teachers in their school but there was some confusion as to whether this was their responsibility or that of the PE Co-ordinator.

A limitation of the TOP programmes identified by the teachers was the lack of support following training from the Scheme Trainers. As one teacher commented: ‘you are just left alone to get on with it’ (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005). Many teachers considered that post-training support would have allowed any subsequent implementation problems to be identified and resolved. Some teachers also suggested that it would be helpful if the training was ongoing throughout the year and involved support from peers, for example, through sharing experiences and good practice with other teachers using TOPs. One group of teachers proposed annual ‘refresher’ training on different aspects of PE to keep up-to-date with new ideas. Another group suggested that all the TOPs cards could be placed on a CD-Rom which would allow them to be screened via an overhead data projector for pupils to visualise what they were being asked to do within PE lessons.
In two out of the five LEAs, teachers had made only minimal use of their learning on the TOPs training due to the employment of ‘specialist’ coaches to deliver PE in their schools (in order to create time for class teachers to plan, prepare and assess (PPA)). Teachers in one LEA were required to teach the same amount of curriculum time PE as the coaches so that ‘teachers aren’t just handing it over to coaches’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006) and some teachers used PPA time to plan PE and/or observe the coaches’ teaching. However, according to one teacher: ‘this has been the choice of individuals, and to be honest not everyone has used this time for planning PE’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006). Other teachers stated that they did not feel that they were encouraged to work alongside the coaches during PPA time.

The teachers considered that the coaches had as much, if not a greater, positive influence on PE in their school as the TOPs training. For example, teachers felt that there had been noticeable improvements in the children’s skills within PE which had been influenced mainly by the coaches. One teacher stated:

*The coaches are specialists you see, we can see a big difference in what they (the children) can do generally and their games and ball skills and that sort of thing, so what the coaches are teaching can make a big difference to the children* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

Many teachers valued the coaches’ contribution to the delivery of PE and some stated that it had informed and developed their PE ideas. For example, one teacher stated:

*We have been fortunate this year with the sports coaches. It’s helpful, because we are just stealing bits from them. We are seeing things that sports coaches are doing and we’re thinking we could have that idea. They are doing the same things that*
are on the TOPs cards and it’s really nice to see them playing
games from the TOPs cards and see how the coaches are
adapting it for the older children (Female Primary School
Teacher, 2006, Case Study C).

Another teacher commented:

In an ideal world, we would all be specialists in every field,
but in primary that’s not the case. If we can get people in to
help with delivery, then I think that is a positive step (Female
Primary School Teacher, Case Study E, 2006).

However, not all teachers considered the involvement of coaches to be
entirely positive. One teacher stated:

I think with a lot of primary teachers, they don’t like PE, so in
some respects we are really enthusiastic at this school. We
don’t get to do as much PE as we would like, because
(County) Sports Activity come in and take some of our
lessons as PPA time. As a result, it means I only ever teach
indoor PE because the coaches come in. So, as a PE
leader, I feel that children are getting high quality PE across
the school; however, personally I feel unhappy because I
don’t get to teach the subject that I enjoy teaching. Also
other teachers are breathing a sigh of relief because they
don’t have the skills and the subject knowledge to be able to
teach certain things which is why I did the INSET on
gymnastics because the importance of the indoor PE
amongst the staff we have will become greater because the
outdoor PE and the sports and games are taught by outside
coaches (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study C,
2007).
And another teacher stated:

*How are we supposed to improve our delivery of PE to pupils if we are getting less and less time to teach PE to our classes? The TOP programmes was beneficial but I have found it difficult to progress and use it in the one hour of PE a week that I teach* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

### 4.5.2 Views on the TOPs Resource Cards

The resource cards were viewed as a particularly successful component of the TOP programmes. The cards were considered to be adaptable, clearly laid out and ‘user friendly’. Many of the teachers had integrated them into their PE curricula. One teacher stated:

*I think TOPs has enriched the PE curriculum as a resource* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2005).

All teachers considered the cards to be a valuable asset, helping them to structure their lessons more effectively and to vary the content. In particular, they were considered a useful support for non-specialist teachers of PE (also referred to as ‘generalists’). For example, one teacher stated:

*I think especially for people who haven’t got a PE degree, the TOPs cards are so important as they are easy to read, and it’s there ready for you. You don’t get a big folder that you have to read through to find the information. You can just look and it’s there. You can look at the picture and you have a general idea within five minutes of what to do* (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005).
Many ‘non-specialist’ teachers of PE (‘generalists’) stated that they often referred to the cards during PE lessons. However, some teachers commented that a few of the cards were ‘basic’ and did not contain sufficient content to last a whole lesson, particularly at Key Stage 2. More experienced teachers claimed that they already had numerous ideas for games, and made more use of the TOP Gym and TOP Dance resource cards, activity areas with which they had less expertise. However, one teacher expected more from the TOP Dance resources, stating:

*I’ve looked at the TOPs Dance stuff and I wouldn’t say I particularly understood it. The biggest issue I’ve had with dance is getting the music that actually works. I thought it was strange that you get TOPs Dance cards without any real stimulus. There is stuff about the seaside in year one and it’s like get a collection of sea shells, and it would be nice if there was something available that would help a little bit* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study E, 2007).

Many teachers highlighted the usefulness of including the four aspects of the National Curriculum for PE on the cards. This was seen to be an effective planning tool for the teachers, supporting the National Curriculum framework. A number of teachers also appreciated the separate card focusing on ‘knowledge and understanding of fitness and health’ as it clarified the subject knowledge for them and presented some ideas on how to integrate this aspect of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (DfES/QCA, 1999) into their PE lessons. The teachers admitted that, prior to the TOPs training, their PE lessons were more focused on skill development, and included very few, if any, references to health and fitness.
The majority of teachers perceived the TOPs resource cards to be particularly helpful in relation to differentiation and inclusion. Several teachers commented on the usefulness of the STEP framework which is a feature of the resource cards. STEP is an acronym (Space, Task, Equipment, People) associated with inclusion and it provides a framework for adapting activities to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers appreciated being helped to adapt activities as it made them feel better prepared to teach all pupils within PE lessons. In one special school, the cards were considered easy to use, and the teacher felt she was able to use the information on the cards quickly to deliver a lesson. However, he commented ‘the rate of progression needs to be broken down a bit more, and structured more for use in special schools’ (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006). Similarly, another teacher stated:

One of the things, in view of the fact that we have a lot of autistic and language impaired children, is that perhaps we need some way of showing how you can shorten the instructions given. With special children, key/special words for autistic and language impaired children would be really helpful on the cards (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

A small number of teachers working with children with disabilities also commented that more specific information about special needs could have been included. One teacher stated: ‘there are good inclusive aspects included in the resources and the training; however, these are very limited’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006).
The use of the resource cards varied, often depending on the teachers’ experience. Some teachers explained that they used the resources occasionally for activity ideas, others utilised them to involve pupils in their own learning, while some teachers relied on them to plan and structure their PE lessons. For example, one teacher stated:

*I find the cards very useful as you don’t want to be weighed down with tons of paperwork, and you can get them out every lesson and just look at the picture and it gives you lots of ideas of activities to do* (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006)

In contrast, another teacher explained:

*Using the TOPs cards, you can get the children into teams, and then let them devise their own games, and the TOPs cards provide a lot of scope for this* (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study A, 2005).

These examples demonstrate the variable needs of primary school teachers and the adaptable nature of the resources. However, some teachers expressed concern that in cases where teachers lack confidence in their subject knowledge, they may rely too heavily on the cards and therefore be unable to respond to the diverse needs of their pupils.

A specific weakness of the cards highlighted by the teachers was their limited attention to assessment. The teachers considered this to be an important issue as they were of the view that many primary schools do not have experienced teachers co-ordinating PE and most non-specialist teachers have little understanding of how to assess pupils in PE. Teachers thought that assessment guidance on the cards would enable them to more easily detect children’s progression between lessons. One teacher stated:
The school is working on the school sport coordinator scheme, where we are linked with our neighbouring high school and one of the things that they have helped us with is assessment. It’s all very well picking out the gifted and talented, but you have got to have a particular example of the progress children make, and I don’t think that there is anything on the cards that really helps you do that (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2006).

Some teachers mentioned that in their Ofsted inspection they were asked how the school identified gifted and talented pupils within PE. They considered that some assessment pointers on the TOPs cards would make the process of identifying such children ‘less daunting’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2005).

One problem encountered by some of the teachers was a delay in receiving the resource cards following the TOPs training. This had led to some waning of the enthusiasm the teachers experienced following the training, and teachers feeling that they could not immediately ‘build upon the ideas that they got at the TOPs training’ (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study B, 2005). Nevertheless, once they had received the TOPs cards, most of the teachers made use of them, primarily as a teacher-led resource.

Another issue raised by the staff of one primary school was the problem of trained teachers moving on from the school and taking the TOPs cards with them. The headteacher felt that the school should receive its own set of TOPs cards to alleviate this problem. As explained by one teacher:

Staff move on so quickly, so very often once a teacher has received the TOPs training, they move onto other roles. It’s nice that you get a set of cards that are yours to keep, but it would also be good to have a central lot of cards for the school, that are given to the school if
members of staff attend the TOPs courses (Female Primary School Teacher, Case Study C, 2006).

One teacher also considered that the resources should be more readily available and not necessarily be accessible only via training:

*It would be good if we are able to give TOPs cards to everybody. Only interested people go on courses and so if the cards were more readily available and you didn’t have to go on the course in order to get them, I think it would help. I love going on the courses and I think that they are great, but I think that if they were just made readily available, then I think that people would use them more than they do* (Male Primary School Teacher, Case Study D, 2006).
5.0 Discussion

5.1 The Effects of the TOP Programmes

The TOP programmes were successful in increasing teachers’ enthusiasm for PE and confidence to teach it, both immediately following training and over a period of time. This is consistent with the findings of Hunt (1998) and Lawrence (2003) and is significant given the variable amount of time spent on PE in primary ITT (Caldecott et al., 2006; Ofsted, 2000), the limited experiences of teaching PE during PE ITT (Caldecott et al., 2006; Pickup, 2006; Rolfe & Chedzoy, 1997), and the low levels of confidence of primary NQTs in teaching PE (Woodhouse, 2006). However, how sustainable these positive changes in teachers’ attitudes are over a longer period of time, especially in the absence of specific follow-up support which the teachers themselves requested, has yet to be established.

The TOP programmes clearly increased the teachers’ knowledge of PE which led to them feeling more competent to teach it. Their enhanced knowledge assisted many in setting suitable learning challenges for, and some providing more accurate feedback to, their pupils. This no doubt led to teachers’ views that attainment in PE had improved and that standards had been raised, outcomes which indeed have been reported by Ofsted (2004, 2005). Given the inadequacy of PE ITT (Warburton, 2001; Caldecott et al., 2006; Pickup, 2006), it is probably of little surprise that the TOP programmes developed teachers’ subject knowledge.

The TOP programmes were particularly successful in providing ideas for teachers, especially generalists, to help them vary the content of their lessons. The resources associated with the training, comprising a set of colourful illustrated cards, were also appealing to, and welcomed by the teachers. A particular strength of the programmes was undoubtedly their ready acceptance and rapid take-up by primary school teachers. Without exception, all teachers had integrated TOPs into their PE programmes, albeit to varying degrees, and were using the TOPs resources to support their own delivery of
This suggests that the TOP programmes demonstrated features of worthwhile CPD in that they were considered relevant and applicable to school/classroom settings (Hustler et al., 2003; NFER, 2001) and were successful in targeting a cohort of primary teachers with particular professional development needs in PE. There is little doubt that, in the context of inadequate primary PE ITT (Warburton, 2000; Pickup, 2006) and limited primary PE CPD (Armour & Yelling, 2004), the programmes recognised and filled a gap in the market. This was also recognised by PE advisers and inspectors working in LEAs and teacher educators who generally welcomed TOPs (Graves, 1999; Hunt, 1998; Lawrence, 2003; Spode, 1997), although considered that they needed further local support and development to help teachers integrate them into schools’ physical education programmes (Hunt, 1998; Lawrence, 2003; Spode, 1997).

Consistent with the findings of Hunt in 1998, the TOP programmes supported many teachers with short-term lesson planning and content ideas. However, one could argue that they did not sufficiently address longer-term planning which was identified as a limitation in Hunt’s (1988) study of the programmes, and had also been recognised by Ofsted (2002) as an area for development. Indeed, even recently, Pickup (2006) has referred to the limited evidence of planning in PE and this is in schools which are involved in ITT. Issues associated with continuity and progression were also considered to be inadequately addressed by the TOP programmes. These issues were identified as areas of concern for teachers prior to the training.

Assessment was also identified prior to training as an issue of concern for primary school teachers. However, whilst the TOP programmes did assist many teachers with short-term assessment issues (such as identifying pupil outcomes), other teachers identified the absence of more detailed assessment guidance as a specific limitation of the associated resources. This could be viewed as a missed professional development opportunity given that assessment was previously identified as a limitation of the TOP programmes (Hunt, 1998), and the weakest aspect of primary physical education at the time the second phase training and resources were being
revised (Ofsted, 2002). It is not surprising that assessment continues to be recognised as a particular weakness in PE (Ofsted, 2005).

On the other hand, given that inclusion and differentiation within PE were also identified as issues of concern for primary school teachers prior to the training, it is reassuring that, for most teachers, the TOP programmes were successful in addressing these issues through the use of the ‘STEP’ acronym. Teachers generally found that this helped them to think of ways of adapting tasks to make them more inclusive. Perhaps not surprisingly though, some individuals teaching in special schools found the generic nature of this approach less useful for their particular circumstances. Somewhat in contrast, Hunt (1998) previously identified a limitation of the TOP programmes being that they did not assist teachers with addressing the needs of all pupils (in particular, high attainers). The reason for the contrast in findings is likely to be that the ‘STEP’ acronym was not introduced until the second phase of the TOP programmes in 2002 and its inclusion clearly did help teachers cater for a range of abilities, including more able pupils.

It is undoubtedly a credit to the TOP programmes that many of the teachers considered that they had a positive impact on PE and raised the profile of the subject. Furthermore, a high proportion of teachers considered that the programmes supported whole school improvements such as improved attitudes to learning, behaviour management and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. This points to the real possibility of physical education and school sport rising to the challenge of positively contributing to the wider education policy agenda (Cutforth, 2003). The view of the majority of the teachers was that, following TOPs training, their PE lessons were more inclusive and more actively engaged the pupils. These benefits were also noted in earlier studies evaluating the impact of the TOP programmes (Hunt, 1998; Lawrence, 2003; Spode, 1997) although Spode (1997) reported limited impact on pupil behaviour. The view that the TOP programmes assisted with the promotion of healthy lifestyles may in part be due to the reference to ‘knowledge and understanding of fitness and health’ on each of the phase two resource cards, plus a particular focus on health and fitness on an additional resource card.
Further, there was some evidence of a positive effect on the promotion of healthy lifestyles in terms of the pupils voluntarily using activity ideas from the ‘TOPs influenced’ PE lessons during break and lunch times. This is good news given the drive towards increasing the uptake of activity opportunities by children and young people (DfES & DCMS, 2003).

Interestingly, despite most teachers holding positive views about the TOPs training and associated resources, many were unable to articulate precise changes that they had consequently made to the planning and delivery of their PE programmes. This may reflect the fact that most primary teachers simply do not feel knowledgeable enough about PE to clearly express changes and associated outcomes (Duncombe & Armour, 2005). Lawrence similarly (2003) found limited evidence of TOPs becoming an integral part of PE curricular design. Indeed, one teacher in our study reflected on the overall impact of TOPs in the following way:

*I wouldn’t say the TOP programmes has had a dramatic effect, more of something that is useful and is there to give you ideas of what to teach and how to teach it. But really they are over too much of a limited sort of an area and only deal with a small number of skills that they couldn’t really have a dramatic effect on what you teach in PE* (Female Primary School Teacher, 2006, Case Study D).

This would suggest that the TOP programmes could not be considered a panacea for the inherent problems associated with primary PE (Pickup, 2006; Warburton, 2000).
5.2 PE ITT and CPD

It is a real concern that nearly half of the teachers considered their initial teacher training in PE to be inadequate, and that a quarter of them reported having less than 10 hours allocated to PE during their training. Given this, it is hardly surprising that some teachers perceived PE as a difficult subject to teach predominantly due to the organisational requirements of the subject and the demands of meeting the needs of a wide range of abilities. These findings are not new and are consistent with those of Speednet (1999) and, more recently, Caldecott and colleagues (2006) and Pickup (2006). However, they are disappointing given that this issue has been raised by a number of national organisations over a sustained period of time (British Council for Physical Education, 1980; CCPR, 2004; CCPR/NAHT, 1992; PEA UK, 1987, 2000; Sport England, 2002) and by the government’s own inspectorate for schools (Ofsted, 2000). Indeed, one is left wondering what it will take to improve the situation. Furthermore, induction support for NQTs in PE appears to be somewhat of a lottery, given that it can range across the LEAs in England from ‘nothing’ to a ‘five day programme spread over three terms, complemented with resources to support practice’ (Woodhouse, 2006).

The teachers’ variable training and local support clearly contributed to most of them feeling in need of professional development in PE. The one reassuring aspect of this is that the vast majority of their headteachers were generally supportive of PE-CPD which may reflect the influence of government attention to and investment in CPD to help raise educational standards (DfEE, 2001; DfES & DCMS, 2003). It does appear though that not all primary teachers were being encouraged and permitted by their headteachers to take up CPD opportunities in PE which Newman (2000) believes essential to raise standards of PE in primary schools. The schools these teachers worked in would perhaps be those described as ‘inhospitable’ in relation to professional development (Armour, 2006, p.206) and in need of radical change to their structures, processes and priorities (Duncombe & Armour, 2004).
The TOP programmes were generally well received by their target audience but there was some variation in their delivery. They clearly met the needs of teachers of Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 pupils, generalist teachers of PE and those with less experience more than the needs of upper Key Stage 2 teachers, subject specialists, teachers from special schools, and those with more teaching experience. The diversity of the needs of the target group was exemplified to some extent by the range of ways in which the training content was used. For example, some of the more experienced teachers embedded it within their programme and used the resources to develop independent thinking amongst their pupils, whilst others merely used it for activity ideas. The training resources certainly proved to be adaptable in that they accommodated this range of needs. However, whilst variation in delivery can be viewed positively in the sense that trainers have the flexibility to adapt the training to meet the needs of their audience, it may also have reflected a lack of consistency across the programme and/or limitations of the trainers to meet the challenge of addressing such a broad range of needs. Indeed, the importance of the professional development needs of CPD providers has been highlighted by Armour and Makopoulou (2006) as central to the success of the national professional development programmes within PESSCL.

Teachers very much appreciated the TOP programmes especially given limited opportunities for CPD in PE and also access issues associated with the ongoing challenge of the cost and availability of supply cover and the desire to minimise disruption to pupils’ learning. However, some of the teachers recognised the inadequacy of one day training courses and many expressed the need for follow-up support (from, for example, their Scheme Trainer), in addition to continued contact with teachers in similar circumstances in other schools. A minority of teachers did, therefore, recognise some of the limitations of the CPD offered to them (Armour & Yelling, 2004; NFER, 1998; NPEAT, 1998; Pritchard & Marshall, 2002). The teachers clearly gained though from sharing ideas with other teachers and some also expressed a willingness to pass on their learning to colleagues in their own school. This demonstrates the growing awareness amongst teachers of the value of non-traditional forms of CPD (Ofsted, 2002b).
However, it does not resolve the problematic issues associated with most schools failing to allow enough time to ensure the consolidation and implementation of newly acquired knowledge and understanding and the sharing of this with teacher colleagues (Ofsted, 2002b). This is further compounded by the fact that collaborative professional development may not be effective in the context of primary physical education due to teachers’ low knowledge base, even following specialist input (Duncombe & Armour, 2005). The request from some of the teachers for further support is nonetheless encouraging and consistent with a call for new ways of developing teachers (Armour & Yelling, 2004), and the recommendation for follow-up, sustained learning opportunities for teachers within professional development programmes (Armour & Makopoulou, 2006).

5.3 Additional Issues and Concerns

Given the recent government investment into PE and school sport in the form of the PESSCL strategy (DfES & DCMS, 2003), it is somewhat surprising that only about two-thirds of primary school teachers described the amount of time devoted to PE in their school as ‘adequate’. Furthermore, only a quarter of the teachers considered that 75% or more of their pupils received two hours per week of high quality PE and school sport, within and beyond the curriculum. This seems somewhat at odds with the reported success of the government’s strategy in terms of meeting and even exceeding the 75% PSA target set for 2006, with the greatest improvement reported to be in primary schools (DfES, 2006). The findings from our study and that by Pickup (2006) raise questions about the validity of the data supporting the government’s PSA target. This could be because the PE recorded within formal school timetables may not necessarily be an accurate reflection of the amount of PE actually taught, especially in primary schools (National Association of Headteachers, 1999; Pickup, 2006; Shaugnessy & Price, 1995b; Speednet, 1999). It certainly points to some discrepancy between the rhetoric and reality of the ‘quantity’ and ‘quality’ of primary physical education and school sport, and implies that there remains a gap between ‘hope and happening’ (Hardman & Marshall, 2005).
The emergence within some LEAs of outside interest groups such as coaches formally contributing to the delivery of curriculum PE (partly to resolve ‘PPA’ issues) brought mixed responses from the primary school teachers. Many recognised the potential positive benefits for pupils (and some for their own professional development) of involving enthusiastic, knowledgeable ‘specialists’, whilst others considered that it had already or would negatively impact on their professional development within physical education. Consistent with the findings of Pickup (2006) in relation to trainee teachers, the involvement of outside interest groups such as coaches reduced opportunities for some teachers to deliver PE. This is unfortunate as it could be used (and in some cases has been) to increase professional development opportunities for teachers and PE/sport specialists to work together and learn from each other. It could be argued that the primary school teachers are specialists in pedagogical matters and the overall development of their own pupils, and the outside agencies/personnel are specialists in sports-specific subject knowledge. If appropriately managed, the former could develop their subject knowledge, confidence and competence, and the latter could enhance their understanding of child development and pedagogical issues such as continuity, progression, inclusion and assessment. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue and whether concerns expressed about it threatening high quality provision of primary physical education (Ofsted, 2006; Pickup, 2006; Spence, 2006) will be realised. Any potential negative impact may be reduced to some extent by quality assurance interventions from local partnerships (Sport England, 2005) and the Association for Physical Education (Woodhouse, 2006).
A number of logistical problems were encountered during the study which delayed its progress and ultimately resulted in limited opportunities to pursue corroborating data to support the self-reported evidence of impact from the primary teachers. In particular, the intention was to explore the impact of the TOP programmes on teachers’ pedagogies and practice and on pupil learning through, for example, analysis of school documentation (e.g. PE schemes and units of work, resources, assessment information), school Ofsted reports, lesson observations, and focus group and/or individual interviews with pupils. One logistical problem related to frequent postponements and alterations to training dates partly due to re-structuring of the TOP programmes and delays associated with their integration into the National Professional Development programme within PESSCL (DfES & DCMS, 2003). This greatly reduced teachers’ access to the programmes within the case study LEAs. A second problem related to communication issues arising from staff turnover at all levels of the programme, including Youth Sport Trust staff managing the programme at a national level, Scheme Managers and Scheme Trainers at regional level, and primary school teachers working at a local level. Whilst some degree of staff turnover is inevitable over a four year period and probably to be expected given the increased career opportunities created by PESSCL, its frequent and repeated occurrence caused disruption to the research process and to the effectiveness of being able to evaluate the impact of the TOP programmes.

Employment of the Logic Model and Theory of Change Logic Model (Kellogg Foundation, 2001) permitted an emphasis within the study on ‘evaluation for improvement’, with the intention of positively influencing the nature and effectiveness of future CPD provision. This highlighted that assumptions about how and why strategies work cannot be taken for granted, and consequently desired outcomes cannot be guaranteed from planned inputs. For example, there were issues with the following assumptions: all primary teachers in the selected LEAs will be able to access the TOP programmes; the TOP programmes will meet the needs of the primary teachers; the primary teachers will be teaching PE and thus be able to implement their learning; the
primary teachers will be able to pass on their learning to their colleagues; the primary teachers will be willing to be involved in the research process. Future CPD in primary PE clearly needs to address the climate and framework within which primary PE and PE-CPD takes place in order to maximise benefits and improve sustainability.

5.4 Limitations

One limitation of this study was the absence of data from ITT providers and trainee teachers on the perceived impact of the TOP programmes on teaching and learning in primary PE. This was due to the fact that, despite all the selected LEAs stating an intention to work with ITT providers in their implementation plans, this did not occur in these LEAs during the course of the study.

A further limitation was that the composition of the focus groups and interviews may not have been as representative as intended due to the reported difficulties of accessing teachers in some schools and engaging them in the study. Communication links proved difficult with many telephone calls and e-mail messages not responded to. Securing supply cover during school time proved problematic and some teachers could not find the time to be involved beyond curriculum hours due to the volume of school work. Pressures on teachers’ time inevitably resulted in a loss of valuable data. This may have resulted in some bias in the results as primary schools whose staff had more positive views on physical education and school sport may have been more inclined to be involved in the study. Engagement in research is understandably not a priority for busy primary school teachers.

Another limitation could be the varying (and occasionally short) length of time from teachers attending the training to monitoring its impact. Change, especially deeper level change, takes time (Cale et al., 2002) which is difficult for primary teachers in particular to secure, even with PPA.
Finally, whilst teachers considered that the TOP programmes had positively impacted upon teaching and learning in PE, this obviously could not be attributed primarily or solely to the TOP programmes. A range of initiatives prior to and within the PESSCL strategy (such as the School Sport Coordinator Programme, later re-named the School Sport Partnerships Programme, and the TDA-funded PE ITT Project), coupled with the use of ‘specialist’ coaches in some LEAs, could also have directly and indirectly influenced teaching and learning in PE in primary schools in England. Separating out the differential effects of these initiatives was not possible, especially as some (e.g. the School Sport Partnerships Programme and the PE and School Sport Professional Development Programme) involved primary teachers accessing additional professional development opportunities during the course of this study.

5.5 Recommendations

Recommendations arising from this study include:

1) Future professional development should:

   a. ensure that teachers have localised on-going support and development to help them contextualise and integrate their learning;
   b. provide teachers with follow-up, sustained learning opportunities;
   c. consider the professional development needs of those responsible for providing the CPD as central to the success of a professional development programme;
   d. put in place contingency plans for staff turnover (at all levels) to ensure minimal disruption to the management, administration, delivery and evaluation of the professional development and any associated monitoring, evaluation and research;
   e. avoid taken-for-granted assumptions about teachers’ access to, engagement with, implementation and sharing of PE-CPD;
   f. address the climate and framework within which primary PE and PE-CPD takes place in order to maximise benefits and improve sustainability.
2) The following areas are worthy of further research:

a. investigation of corroborating evidence to support teachers’ perceptions of the outcomes of professional development;

b. exploration of the impact of teachers’ professional development on pupil learning;

c. the sustainability of changes to teaching and learning, following professional development, over a long period of time.

3) Future research on professional development for primary teachers should:

a. consider ways of helping teachers to value research and to entice them into and engage them in the research process.

6.0 Conclusion

The TOP programmes were successful in their intention, focus and format – they contributed to the professional development needs of primary school teachers and were generally well received and utilised. They had positive effects on teachers in terms of enhancing their attitudes towards PE and increasing subject knowledge, both of which were at a relatively low baseline due no doubt to the limited time spent on PE in ITT and few other opportunities for CPD in PE. Other positive effects of the TOP programmes related to improvements in short-term planning and a clearer understanding of how to vary PE lessons and differentiate tasks to help meet varying pupil needs, and of what to assess in specific PE lessons. These positive effects were particularly felt by Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 teachers, generalists, and those with less teaching experience.
Despite the TOP programmes demonstrating some features of effective CPD, their impact was, however, restricted due to their limited ability to address pedagogical issues of particular concern (such as medium and long term planning, continuity and progression, special needs, and assessment) and to meet the variable needs of such a diverse group of teachers. In addition, the absence of follow up support for teachers, the problematic nature of cascade training and collaborative professional learning within primary schools, and the introduction of coaches in the delivery of PE in some local authorities, further reduced their impact on the teachers involved, their colleagues and the pupils they taught.

Indeed, whilst the professional development offered in the form of the TOP programmes could be described as reasonably progressive and coherent in that it was part of a planned developmental series and well packaged, its impact could arguably be described as somewhat short-term and superficial in terms of depth of understanding and level of change (Cale et al., 2002). This was supported by the difficulty the teachers had in articulating specific examples of positive changes in teaching and learning in PE, and the lack of evidence to support their perceptions of progress. However, it is perhaps too much and even unreasonable to have expected the TOP programmes to have remedied the long-standing, ongoing and inherent problems within primary PE. Future CPD in primary PE needs to address the climate and framework within which primary PE takes place in order to maximise benefits and improve sustainability.

Finally, given the government’s major investment into PE and school sport during the life of the research project and the more recent involvement of coaches in PE curriculum delivery, it is clearly not prudent to attribute outcomes in primary PE, positive or otherwise, solely to the TOP programmes. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that the TOP programmes did make a positive contribution to teaching and learning in PE in England for the primary teachers involved at a time when they were in great need of support.
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