Aims and dreams. A sideways look at the Physical Education programme of study for Key Stage 3 and attainment target, QCA National Curriculum document (2007)

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Abstract

The intention of this article will be to examine the QCA (2007) curriculum document as an aid or otherwise to students and teachers of Physical Education and thereby, indirectly to the quality of Physical Education and sporting experience of children in schools. The paper poses the view that aims in P.E. may appear as dreams; that is, they are unverifiable and perhaps unattainable psychological traits in a person’s behaviour rather than objectively identifiable features of performance or educational attainment. The paper goes on to question how learning outcomes; presented in the document as desirable traits in behaviour, and claimed to be resulting from this programme of education, might be structured more effectively in order to be helpful to students and teachers of P.E.. In anticipation of our conclusion the reference list compiled at the end of this paper may be a useful guide to some of the propositional knowledge about Physical Education, seemingly absent from the document (QCA, 2007), which students and teachers of P.E. might refer to, to make sense of it. The paper concludes that, as a document the Physical Education programme of study for key stage 3 and attainment target (QCA, 2007) may be merely a vacuous and poorly conceived attempt to make Physical Education look intellectual with relation to its subject partners on the school curriculum; a confusing form of window dressing, and consequently of little or no help, practical or otherwise, to teachers and students of Physical Education.

* Pedagogical note: It would be useful for the reader to regard this paper not only as a guided reading through a government document, but a guide to critical reading; critical thinking, reasoning and questioning through this government document. The authors have structured this paper to be read in conjunction with QCA (2007), allowing the reader to follow the section-by-section discussions below in relation to it. There is a web link to QCA (2007) in the reference list. It is a brief ten-page document on the internet (in pdf format).

Dogmatic claim: Chambers dictionary (2008) definition:

dogmatic adj 1 said of an opinion: forcefully and arrogantly stated as if unquestionable. 2 said of a person: tending to make such statements of opinion. dogmatically adverb.
claim verb (claimed, claiming) 1 to state something firmly, insisting on its truth • She claimed that she was innocent. 2 to declare oneself (to be, to have done, etc). 3 to assert that one has something • He claimed no knowledge of the crime. 4 to demand or assert as a right.

Preface

Any course of study in whatever area of curriculum knowledge may be seen to follow a pretty similar sort of model. Initially aims of some kind are set out to be the intentions of the course; and the teacher of that course asked to go along with, and believe that the prescribed aims are worthwhile. The course of the study may be pre-prescribed, as in the above National Curriculum course (QCA, 2007), or it may be teacher devised. Whichever the case, the teacher of the course needs to both understand and believe in the intentions of the course. Once determined, the intentions of the course outline the areas of, and forms of knowledge that are intrinsic to the course of study. In relation to Physical Education these forms of knowledge may be seen as “propositional knowledge” (Ryle, 1949), that is, intellectual knowing that “it is the case”; and “procedural knowledge” usually of a physical nature, knowing how “to go on” or how “to do”. Gilbert Ryle (1949) summarised these forms of knowledge to “knowing that and knowing how”. In the case of Sports Studies, where aims and intentions may be of purely deterministic nature, i.e. to win a gold medal, then “knowing that” need not necessarily enter the equation. For example, knowing that Force equals Mass times Acceleration may not help the shot putter to throw further. Although it might help the sports person involved it may not be a necessary condition of achievement. “Knowing how” becomes the necessary condition. Once decided upon, aims may be seen to determine and lead onto course objectives. Objectives being intentions determining behaviour in a Physical Education course, often being measurable in some way. They indicate what the teacher needs to teach and do and what the children need to learn to do in order to understand and achieve the intended aims. Again, in Physical Education the knowledge intrinsic to the objectives may be classed as both propositional and procedural objectives. Objectives indicate to the teacher both what explanations are necessary in relation to particular actions and the procedures and/or progressions that need to be structured, in order that children may have a chance of learning the particular action set down as an aim at the outset of the course. Note: the term “actions” and not “movements” may be significant in this context. The former indicates human intentionality whereas the latter may only indicate accidental occurrences. It therefore seems logical for a P.E. teacher to praise the [correct] deliberate actions of learners; to reinforce their attainment of physical skills. Thus, the child may be demonstrating what the teacher intended, moving towards the meeting of their aims. A consequence of praising “movements” may be that the P.E. teacher has little idea of what they intended for the children to learn, resulting in a situation, perhaps, that anything goes in P.E. as long as the pupils
don't hurt themselves, by chance.

Teachers probably need to make judgements about objectives in relation to the aims of the course of study. That is to ask the question, is this a valid course of study and a worthwhile thing to learn about, and to do within for example, a gymnastics course of study? If so, what do I need to both know and do as a teacher? What is my course of action, expectation and responsibility? What are the children's courses of action? Thus, the teacher's behaviour and teacher's knowledge may be regarded as propositional and procedural in nature. Consequently in planning, every aim has its own objective/s and each objective has its own content. To illustrate this, a basic action in gymnastics, the forward roll serves as a good example:

**Aim** - This gymnastics course intends to teach children to do a forward roll, in a tuck shape, starting and finishing in a standing position.

**Objectives (towards the aim)**

*(Propositional knowledge)*

- Explain the action. Depending upon the ages and stages of gymnastic development, it is clearly a different level of explanation offered to a junior school child than a P.E. undergraduate at university.

- Explanations might centre upon: Degrees of rotation, shapes and velocity in rotation, mechanical requirements e.g. how to control the radius of gyration (affecting speed)

*(Procedural knowledge)*

- How to structure a safe learning environment,
- How to set out stages of progression,
- The key coaching points of the skill at each stage of progression and shapes during the action,
- Ability to show the skills at each learning stage and the whole skill.

**Content (for the objectives)**

*(Propositional knowledge)*

- 360 degrees of rotation,
- Desired shapes during the action – (tuck shape in this case),
- How to control the speed of rotation and Radius of gyration,
- What the rules are and what is “correct”.
(Procedural knowledge)

- Stages of learning safely; from high incline rolling, to low incline rolling to horizontal rolling (set of learning environments).
- When to move on from each stage – accomplishment against criteria.
- What coaching points to teach and when to teach them,
- What to show and when to show,
- What counts as “correct” and “good” in performance – teach criteria for children to make their informed judgement of performances.

Each element of content leads on towards its own evaluation criteria and then on towards its own evaluation procedure in Physical Education. On such a basis assessment in P.E. may be said to have some accountable reasoning to support quality judgements of teachers.

Propositional knowledge, like any other form of intellectual knowledge may be tested via verbal explanation or via written examination. This may be done informally or formally. This asks the professional teacher or the school to decide upon the means of assessment they use in Physical Education. Procedural knowledge, “how to go on” and “how to do” indicates that a performance needs to be organised, with judgements made and feedback given about the performance of the learned skill. With technical and aesthetic criteria utilised and offered as a standard against which the performer was evaluated. Again such an examination may be organised as an informal showing, say within a lesson, or on a more formal practical examination basis. The point being that for an examination of physical abilities within P.E, a child seemingly needs to show “how to do” something, not only talk about “how to do” whatever it is. A possible consequence of over-emphasis upon explanation e.g. tell me how rather than show me how, (bias towards propositional “knowing that” knowledge) may be that the P.E. teacher reduces the physical capacities of the children. An important balance seemingly has to be found in order that, as a result of teaching within a course of Physical Education, children can in examination, demonstrate propositional reasoning for their procedural knowledge of knowing how to perform certain actions well.

The above seems to be straightforward in terms of its application to Physical Education courses of study in that it might be easily understood by teachers who plan and teach courses. Concentrating upon the behaviour of teachers and learners and upon a process that has discernable means and ends in education may bring about verifiable improvements in the physical and intellectual competence of pupils as a result of their physical education.
Introduction

This paper will initially examine the concepts of aims and dreams and their perceived roles in courses within P.E. and sport. Thereafter there will be an examination of the P.E. curriculum document that was published by the Crown and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2007. Conclusions will be drawn after this examination with implications presented and recommendations made.

Aims and dreams

Chambers English dictionary (2008) tells us that amongst the definitions of aims can be found; “…to direct a course”, “…to design an intention”, and “…to direct one’s intention and endeavours with a view to attainment”. In relation therefore to courses of Physical Education and sport in schools it may be deemed desirable that aims prescribe and describe learning endeavours. Dreams are defined by Chambers (2008) amongst others as, “…a distant hope or ideal, probably unattainable”, and “…to think as possible”, and “…to contemplate an imaginary possible”. Whilst thinking about the outcomes of some Physical Education and Sports courses of study, to dream, “…to contemplate an imaginary as possible” may be a desirable feature of a planning process. Indeed, in any sporting endeavour it may be realistic and desirable to couch aims in the form of dreams; “…to think as possible”. How else could any athlete sustain the dedication and the work ethic needed over many years to achieve an Olympic Gold medal? For example, Becky Adlington’s successes in Olympic swimming were reported in the press recently:

“I have been training since the age of six” [now nineteen years old]…

“It is a dream come true”…

[Becky Adlington, on returning to training after Beijing]

“I was a bit scared getting back in that I wouldn’t have the same drive because I had achieved my dreams”… “But as soon as I got in the pool I wanted to push on, and I knew that this was still what I wanted to do”.


Within the world of Physical Education, whilst perhaps not requiring the sustained level of physical actions of Sport’s goals, aims may become couched as dreams for children and students in order to maintain their commitment to the achievement of, for example, academic goals such as, GCSE, A Level, Degree, Masters and Doctorates in the subject. In either case, once the aims are set and the “dream into reality” course of action undertaken, clear objectives may be identified for the coach and the athlete or teacher and student. The type and form of behaviour required by both parties delineated; and the knowledge base established. That is, what the coach or teacher needs to “know about” and “know how to do” and equally, what an athlete and stu-
dent needs “to do” or to “know about and do”. The content, in all its varied aspects logically follows from the setting of objectives. The dream is kept alive even though the goal is far distant and the prospect of failure ever present. The physical aspects of body conditioning, skill levels, technical requirements etcetera, become content knowledge for coach and athlete. The intellectual knowledge of the subject matter and then, “how” to teach and learn it becomes the content of an academic course for teachers and students. Behaviour delineated for all concerned with success or failure objectively verifiable. Perfectly acceptable in academic or sporting walks of life, the behaviour of driven commitment to the perhaps achievable, if as yet out of reach, may provide the motivation to strive towards a (dream-like) challenging goal, “… a distant hope or ideal, probably unattainable”.

However, to couch dreams in the form of aims perhaps sets courses of study off in the direction of dreamland and into a dream world of illusion. Perhaps setting goals that are unattainable at best, and unverifiable at least; worthy ideal thoughts yes, but still dreams. It seems to send courses of study into areas of subjectivity, which may express outcomes as desirable wishes, rather than attainable goals. Aims that are concerned with mental states, emotional responses, personality traits or social interactions, whilst perhaps desirable are probably untestable and unverifiable; a chimera – a wild fantasy. Whilst it is certainly possible to articulate various intentions about aims to do with psychological outcomes, social outcomes, emotional outcomes or creative and imaginative outcomes of courses, it is probably questionable whether these sorts of ideas are objectively verifiable as outcomes. Neither might such descriptions of outcomes/dreams/desires sustain teachers to maintain the level of commitment needed to win a Gold medal or to study long and hard for a doctorate degree. One then has to ask what are the objectives that flow from dreams as aims. To illustrate with an example, a reasonable objective may be for a pupil to perform three gymnastic shapes, say a tuck shape, pike and a straddle on three pieces of apparatus. With criteria for appearance and quantity the outcome may be verifiably assessed and perhaps shared with others to aid learning. However, if the objective is “…to develop the confidence to have a go” (QCA, 2007: 192) at these things, then how much of this psychological trait confidence are we to recognise, and how much is the teacher to guess that the child has developed in confidence as a result of attempting this task? If the aim is for “… regular physical activity to have the greatest impact upon a child’s physical, mental and social well-being” (QCA, 2007: 191) what might be the objectives for this aim? What does he teacher have to do in order to achieve the aim? What has he or she got to teach? What does the learner have to do? If the objectives of such an aim are difficult to identify then finding the content of such dreams-as-aims becomes impossible. What again are the criteria against which success or failure may be measured? How does the teacher know if they and their pupils have achieved the goal? What constitutes the educational equivalent at Key Stage 3 of the Gold medal or the degree?
You cannot be serious”, John McEnroe once famously exclaimed to a Wimbledon umpire. This curriculum document might elicit such a response. Unfortunately, the QCA are serious so one has to examine the Programme of Study for Key Stage 3 and its Attainment Targets and ask seriously, if it is fit for purpose, or even, is it a “programme of study” at all?

Curriculum aims – P.E. Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 189)

The curriculum aims of the document as they are stated do not seem to be statements of intent. Rather, they are dogmatic claims that may or may not be the case at best, wishes and dreams perhaps at worst, whilst appealing to that weary old “process of becoming”. Where is the evidence that participation in P.E. will make children “…successful learners who enjoy learning”? The psychological and emotional aims and dogmatic claims continue, stating; will become “responsible citizens” and “contribute to society” – wow!

Granted that these “dreams in the form of aims” statements for P.E. are linked to the wider notion of curricular aims, it still begs the question, what now are the objectives that follow such aims statements and what does the teacher have to teach? What do the pupils have to learn? What is the knowledge content of a “successful learner” or, “becoming a confident individual” or a “responsible citizen”? What are the criteria of evaluation for these aims? How does a teacher and pupil know if they have achieved the ‘Gold medal’ from their Physical Education experience? Difficult to know.

The importance of physical education – P.E. at Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 189)

This section of the document may be an attempt to justify the subject and its place within a curriculum, or it may be a set of wishes, dreams as aims, based upon a perceived cause and effect link. This section becomes nothing more than a set of unsubstantiated dogmatic claims that could apply equally well to a circus or agricultural education. Clearly, this section does not seem to be set out as series of intention statements and therefore seemingly it is not a bunch of aims, only wishes or dreams perhaps. If it is an attempt to justify P.E. then one has to ask why it is needed (at all) in a curriculum document that is supposed to guide young teachers, not brainwash them. Whichever is the case this statement needs to be challenged at every turn by simply asking the question, “How do you know this to be the case?” Cite the research, give the evidence, do not speculate.
Statement/dogmatic claim one: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…P.E. develops pupils competence and confidence”. Does it? One may question that claim in terms of its verification. Does it apply to 100% of pupils? Against which criteria may such a claim to be evaluated?

Statement/dogmatic claim two: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…P.E. becomes a central part of their lives”. Does it? Have they been asked or is this merely speculative spin?

Statement/dogmatic claim three: (QCA, 2007: 189) “… both in and out of school”. Could it really be that 100% of pupils so love P.E. in school that they spend their out of school time doing P.E. type activities. On what grounds can this be claimed?

Statement/dogmatic claim four: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…A high quality P.E. curriculum enables all pupils to enjoy and succeed”. This begs the question of what constitutes a high quality P.E. curriculum? How might one be recognised? Perhaps all schools believe that they present such a thing to their pupils, but by implication here the QCA does not seem to accept this belief. As for the claim that, “…all pupils enjoy and succeed in many kinds of P.E. activity”. This is false! Some children seem not to enjoy physical activity and some children are just physically unable to succeed by sheer dint of the fact that they may lack the simple hand-eye coordination to hit a shuttle in Badminton, or to catch a ball in Rugby, or even have the desire to do so. Consequently, as far as “enjoy and succeed” goes there may be growing scope in the light of this new curriculum document to ask pupils, what they actually enjoy about P.E. and what is there to succeed at in P.E.? To claim that “all” pupils “enjoy” P.E. may be questionable and to claim that “all succeed” may be a dream. Current participation rates in P.E. may be some indicator (see Roberts, 1996; West, Reeder, Milne, and Poulton, 2002; Peterson 2003; Casbon and Walters 2004) that the proposed increased range of choice in P.E. (QCA, 2007) might legitimately include the choice not to do P.E. at all, and do something else curriculum related instead.

Statement/dogmatic claim five: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…They develop a wide range of skills”. This is a definite maybe. Some might and some might not. Either way, how wide is wide and further, how might the teacher evaluate sensibly what skills development in the pupil actually resulted from their teaching.

Statement/dogmatic claim six: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…They develop the ability to use tactics, strategies and compositional ideas”. Dream on! Some may if they are skilful and gifted enough to think abstractly whilst taking part in a physical activity. Some may not! The latter may just want to hoof the ball up-field and not bother about how or why.

Statement/dogmatic claim seven: (QCA, 2007: 189) “…When they are performing they think about what they are doing”. We read minds now, do we? That is, if we
have minds. At one level this claim becomes trivial when one asks can we ever not think about what we are doing in any situation in life? Unless we are daydreaming. On a more philosophical level the statement reveals that the authors of the QCA document subscribe to a Dualist philosophy of mind and body. That is, two separate entities inherent to the human condition. One then has to ask the Dualist, how can a metaphysical thing like a mind interact with a physical thing like a body? How can one think about acting?

**Statement/dogmatic claim eight:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “...Analyse the situation and make decisions”. About what? Mental events again causing physical actions, or are mental events flowing from physical actions? Do they? Can they? How? Children may or may not choose the correct pass within a games situation but to claim “thought before the act” might be difficult to accept.

**Statement/dogmatic claim nine:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…They reflect on their own and other’s performances and find ways to improve them”. Always? By all children in all P.E. situations? This is a definite maybe. Perhaps they may know when they played well and when others on their team played well, sometimes, but again this claim seems to be at best, speculation.

**Statement/dogmatic claim ten:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…As a result (- of what?) they develop confidence to take part in different physical activities”. This is dubious logic at best. By taking part in Rugby or Hockey they gain the confidence to take part in springboard diving, trampolining or rock climbing? The claim seems to be that there is a transfer, cause and effect, from participation in one activity to participation, with confidence, in another P.E. activity. How might one be able to justify such a claim? This is pure speculation.

**Statement/dogmatic claim eleven:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…As a result they learn about the value of healthy active lifestyles”. Do they? And if they do, which may or may not be the case, does it stop children experimenting with alcohol or cigarettes? By implication of the “result of participation” claim, it should.

**Statement/dogmatic claim twelve:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…P.E. helps pupils to develop personally and socially”. What does this claim mean? What are the criteria that would enable a teacher to say that a particular child, so-and-so, has “developed personally” this week, this term, this year? How would the teacher or the child know that they had developed in this way? What goal had been achieved? Similarly, how would a teacher identify whether or not a child had “developed socially”? What would count as evidence that this was the case?

**Statement/dogmatic claim thirteen:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…They work as individuals, in groups and in teams”. As a statement of fact, and within the practical need to organ-
ise P.E. activities in some way this may be the case; but to infer that as a direct result of this organisational necessity children automatically develop, “...concepts of fitness and personal and social responsibility” becomes to say the least, questionable.

**Statement/dogmatic claim fourteen:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…They take on different roles and responsibilities”. Probably, but why is this special to Physical Education?

**Statement/dogmatic claim fifteen:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…including leadership coaching and officiating”. Some children may at some period of their school lives do these things, but probably not all children will, or even want to. Is seems to be assumed that physical competence is associated with leadership and decision making. What is the evidence for this?

**Statement/dogmatic claim sixteen:** (QCA, 2007: 189) “…Learn how to be effective in competitive, creative and challenging situations”. What does this mean? What counts as being effective in competition, or being effective in creative situations or even being effective in challenging situations? What are the criteria of “effectiveness”? Who judges this “effectiveness”, the child, the teacher, the referee, the umpire, who? Against what stock of knowledge do they make their judgement and how will that judgement be understood, shared and interpreted? How might such judgements of effectiveness make a meaningful contribution to the education of the child?

If the section of document relating to the Importance of physical education (QCA 2007: 199), whether presented under the banner of aims or as a justification for P.E., had been handed in by any student of Physical Education to their academic tutor it probably would have been judged as a failed piece of work. The writing style is horribly dogmatic and the claims made are speculative at best; certainly unsubstantiated by research.

**1 Key Concepts – P.E. at Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 190)**

Yes, there are number of key concepts that underpin the study of Physical Education to state dogmatically an agreement with the opening claim of this section. However, there are probably far greater number than the four selected which merely reflect the claims made in the previous section of the document; the importance of Physical Education (QCA, 2007: 189). One may venture to suggest that some of the following might equally underpin any study of Physical Education:

- Skill learning and fun as a serious endeavour.
- Respect and tolerance in play and games.
- Beauty and physical action.
- Ethical actions and winning.
• Obesity, lifestyle and diet.
• Dedication and love of sporting action.
• Appreciation and spectatorship.
• Risk taking and preservation of self and others within sporting actions.

Their claims go on “…pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen (how deep is deep?) and broaden (how broad is broad?) their knowledge skills and understanding”. Of what? At least qualify the claims! Might there not be some connection between knowledge and understanding? Knowing “how to do”, say, a particular dance gesture might be evidence that one understands its meaning and significance in a dance work. Similarly, knowing “that” one plus one make two and writing 1+1=2 in an exercise book is a limited but sure demonstration of an understanding of addition in mathematics? To this end, stating that competence, performance, creativity and healthy active lifestyles are key concepts that the children need to know about is either very basic or may even irrelevant to them. All they may wish to know, is what to do?

1.1 Competence

However, let us examine the section 1:1 on Competence (QCA, 2007: 190) as a key concept. Chambers dictionary (2008) indicates that competence means “fitness; adequate”. Somehow the explanatory notes of the component parts of competence; again written in dogmatic claims that within P.E. competence means “…skill selection appropriate to tactics, strategies and compositional ideas, requiring and understanding of how these combine to produce effective performances”. This does not seem to square with the dictionary meaning “adequate”. Perhaps one would have to be more than adequate to fulfil this definition in P.E..

1.1a) Developing control (QCA, 2007: 190). It may be accepted that involvement within P.E. seems to be about learning physical skills that are not natural to human behaviour (unlike the natural examples given in the explanatory notes) and that they may be of a gross-motor or fine-motor nature. But whichever they are, how can they not involve the “whole body” assuming that we may be referring to able-bodied, as opposed to paraplegic young people. This statement might benefit from further detail given the recent agenda to increase inclusive education in school and therefore P.E. (Smith and Thomas, 2006).

1.1b) Skill selection (QCA, 2007: 190) and the utilisation of skills seems to be the whole point of participation in any P.E. activity and should presumably, flow naturally from any learning process of any area of P.E. activity. Learning to long jump in athletics does not seem to require any sort of discrimination or selection of tech-
nique, it merely needs one to run faster and jump higher at take-off once a particular jumping style has been learned. The choice of a chest pass or bounce pass as a tactic in basketball does not seem to be of any great significance as an “effective means” of beating an opponent. It is just learned during the basketball lessons which children take part in. It is a simple decision. As for compositional ideas further confusion seems to be promoted by their statement, “...this includes the design principles (whatever they are understood to be?) that inform the composition of a sequence or the choreographing of a dance” (see explanatory notes section). Lilla Bauer (see Boyd, (2005) for context) famously wrote and claimed that that “…composing means creating form”. This referring to the notion of artistic form and thereby makes a plea for, and a case for, the learning of artistic compositional form notions such as, theme, variation, repetition, inversion or reversion within a concept of expression. To merely repeat Laban’s “Effort Theory” (Hutchinson, 1974) and label them as “principles” may be to do an injustice to an artistic subject like Dance and to ridicule an aesthetic subject like Gymnastics. It may equally be a great injustice to teachers and children who by implication, if they follow this document, are being short-changed by its lack of guidance and knowledge through the impoverished knowledge children might receive when being taught and the impoverished knowledge teachers might have to set up a teaching situation.

1.1c) Responding with body and mind (QCA, 2007: 190) “...responding with body and mind to the demands of an activity”. On a trivial level, how can one not do this? After all, it seems a fairly innocuous request that in layman's terms, seems to be urging P.E. teachers to develop the cognitive as well as the physical abilities of the learner. On the face of things this may seem a reasonable request, however it may reveal a serious misconception about the human condition which could make teaching and learning in Physical Education even more superficial than it seemingly already is. As indicated earlier this body and mind notion presents a dualist position that if one believes in this philosophical stance, separates the human condition into two entities; one physical body and one metaphysical mind. This in turn leads into issues beyond the scope of this particular article to do with interaction (between mind and body), location (where is your mind?), recognition (what does a mind look like?), existence (do minds like God exist?) and decision making (thought before the act or vice versa?). See also theories of being (ontology) and theories of knowledge (epistemology) for an appreciation of the much wider/deeper/broader mind body problem in philosophy. Some further research in this area might help to bring a well-reasoned knowledge base to interpret this P.E. National Curriculum (QCA 2007) (for example, see Descartes, 1637,1641; Hume, 1777; Husselr, 1931; Ryle, 1949; Cassier, 1957; Hamlyn, 1970; Dretske, 1994). Then to look across at the explanatory notes and get a list of physical body conditioning qualities followed by a list of psychological traits might be helpful in meeting this aspect of the curriculum. However, with no relevant
explanation of their meaning, nor their application to P.E. it is rather off-putting. One presumes that teachers automatically know about “strength, stamina, suppleness” and they know how to develop these [physical] qualities. Equally they know about “confidence, determination, and mental alertness”, but knowing how to develop these traits in children may be problematic. In the former case it may be a valid assumption perhaps that students and teachers have, during their course of study, learned about theories of overload to build strength and stamina and about stretching theories to increase mobility such as PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation), the importance of end positions, motion range and hyper extension etcetera. All of which have processes to go through, that is, means and objectively verifiable, testable and measurable ends. In the latter case, even if they have studied psychology as part of their studies there does not seem to be a recognised “process” (that could be referred to in QCA, 2007) through which children may be led to achieve the desired outcomes of “confidence, determination” etc. that the document highlights (QCA, 2007: 192). Nor are there any means for testing and verifying “developments” of determination or alertness. The problem becomes even more complex in relation to the language of emotions and intelligence. A philosopher like Chomsky believes that such psychological traits are “hardwired” into our brains (McGee, 1978: 205). They are not he believes “…merely conditioned responses learned from exposure to repeated stimuli”, but in the genes, in the DNA, inherited from our ancestors. If this might be the case, how could any course in P.E. interfere with such traits?

1.1d) Adaptation (QCA, 2007: 190) “…adapting to a widening range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts”. Adapting what? No explanatory note offered here. How are teachers meant to understand his claim? What are children meant to do? Is the document implying that it is pedagogically prudent and ethically correct to introduce pupils to skills in a false and closeted situation and expect them to transfer those skills to a real and hazardous situation upon the assumption that they have the ability to look after themselves? Is this what becoming independent in education means? For example, one assumes that children are meant to learn rock climbing skills, learn body condition qualities and the psychological traits on an indoor climbing wall and thereafter, go to a natural rock face and put these ideas into practice in an “unfamiliar context”. Perhaps this is how it works? What is the context and boundary for “familiar” and “unfamiliar” in an educational context? Unfamiliar to whom? And are there degrees of unfamiliarity? As this phrase in QCA (2007) is so unhelpfully vague one has to wonder when the accountability of the P.E. teacher for teaching pupils to cope with the “unfamiliar” will cease? For the pupil intending to conduct a “fit and healthy lifestyle” does mere physical survival of this particular National Curriculum Key Concept denote an “effective performance”.
1.2 Performance

Moving onto section 1:2 on Performance (QCA, 2007: 190) as a key concept, initially one has to ask what counts as performance in any given P.E. context? The range seems so vast from a full blown dance or gymnastics presentation to the school and parents which may take weeks of preparation and hard work, to a three aside kick-about within a lesson or inter-school games at the weekend. The explanatory notes are not much help here to a teacher; “…having a desire to achieve and improve”, improve what? There being no qualification of this claim offered. It seems to be left up to the teacher to assume that it perhaps means, improve children’s games skills or dance technique, but in order to achieve what? Better GCSE grades? The explanatory notes continue, “…be willing to take part in a range of competitive, creative and challenge type activities”. So performance here seems to be simply a willingness to take part and not something special at all? So all participation becomes performance? This claim seems so at odds with “…understanding how components of competence combine”.

How could any outcome produced really be judged to be effective or otherwise? Quite an intellectual undertaking; if one could list and identify what the individual components of competence may be, a bit like the ingredients of a bread-cake; flour, water, honey, butter, yeast etc., now what? Mix them up and apply them to produce effective outcomes. If it becomes difficult to identify the components, how might it be possible to understand how to “apply them” let alone produce “effective outcomes”. With the bread-cake it becomes a process of mix it up, allow it to rise, bake in an oven at a given temperature for a set time and the product is a bread-cake. How the ingredients combine over time and under different conditions perhaps a baker or a chemist might explain the process, otherwise it becomes merely follow the instructions.

Knowing and understanding (QCA, 2007: 190: 1.2b). Do children playing a game “…know and understand what needs to be achieved” apart from the obvious outcome of winning the game? Do they critically evaluate (an intellectual task) apart from the obvious that they either played well or poorly? Might there be a consequence that “knowing and understanding” is reduced to these obvious outcomes which are predictable and basic? Do they find ways to improve? How can they? Any process of learning and improving depends crucially upon being taught correctly. Any technique and practice of that technique seemingly needs to be executed under expert guidance, and the pupil given feedback about their attempts, and then evaluated against an ideal standard of that technique. If these things were actually carried out for each pupil at their level of ability, teachers might actually improve the performance of each pupil. This level of attention is seemingly required for such a claim if “knowledge and understanding” to be deemed anywhere near meaningful in education. One can teach one-self to ski and undertake as many critical self-reflections as one likes, “appreciate and make adjustments” till the cows come home, “adapt to
different contexts” but never ski properly because of all the self taught faults in ones technique. One cannot automatically know what is right and correct if one has never been taught, particularly in relation to physical skills. A thought from Ben Shahn (1957) comes to mind here that, intuition becomes the result of years of tuition. Being willing to take part, then, becomes a mere starting point to ultimately reach a level of intuitive action that a virtuoso might display. This requires a long and hard road of disciplined training to be followed which may be beyond the bounds of a school based curriculum. Performing may be a key component of any P.E. curriculum and its extended circle into sports participation. Indeed children love to perform and have been seen to practice for hours to improve their skill levels in order to show off to parents and peers on, for example, a gym and dance evening. However the concept of performance as presented in QCA (2007) make wish or dream claims that are not objectivity verifiable.

1.3 Creativity

This section creativity (QCA, 2007: 191) presents a further example of aims as dreams or aims as wishes. It places claims upon P.E. that at best may be the case, and at worst be superfluous. Yes it may be the case that a good dance education may become a valid, creative arts experience and children may learn to express and communicate dance ideas. Beyond dance it may become more difficult to justify any claim for creative or imaginative endeavours. The movement Gurus of the 1960-70s (e.g. Morison, 1969) made claims for Educational Gymnastics on the grounds of its creativity, but one only has to ask about the level of creativity to realise that for example, only a world class gymnast may design and perfect the performance of a new gymnastic action, that is, to be creative in the true sense of the word. And have this new action [element] named after him or her in their honour as recognition of their unique contribution to the sport. That for a child in school finding “new ways” to stretch and curl the body whilst perhaps being new to the child are certainly not new to the world. The ability to imagine a new action (gymnastic element for example), to conceive of its possibility and then to devise a safe means of learning and performing that action needs “knowledge about” and a conditioned physical “ability to do” of the highest order. As might be achieved from for example, the close collaboration between a coach and a gymnast. It is hardly believable that anything of this order could happen within a school’s gymnastic curriculum. Similarly, skills and tactical manoeuvres in a games context that may be deigned “imaginative” or “creative” seem to belong to the higher reaches of playing games. Coaches work day in and day out with highly skilled games players to outwit opposition defences or create attacking options; again a collaboration of experienced coaches and very skilful players. Maybe something of this nature may happen with school games teams, but with a Games Curriculum one has to question this possibility. Children may be asked to “create a
game” within a given context: set limits upon equipment, special zones and time allocation, clearly perhaps a valid task but hardly exercises of creativity or imagination of the highest order. It might be speculated that this particular concept might not be an appropriate key concept with which to underpin a National Curriculum in P.E.. As the statement 1.3a (QCA, 2007: 191) raises the issue of problem solving, one has to ask here, what counts as a “problem” in Physical Education? 1970s Educational literature (for example, Mosston, 1966 [1st ed] to Mosston and Ashworth, 2002 [5th ed]; Kane, 1976) would seem to indicate that abstract problem solving may be the highest level of intellectual endeavour, and within other aspects of a curriculum one might go along with the notion. But what and where are the problems in Physical Education? Games, gymnastics, dance, swimming or outdoor pursuits all demand levels of physical ability but little by the way of abstract thought. The teacher might adopt a problem solving approach to the teaching of Educational Gymnastics and as a teaching style Educational Gymnastics may be successful, but to ask “how many ways can you roll across a mat” seems to be of limited physical or intellectual use as a task.

1.4 Healthy active lifestyles

Section 1.4 on Healthy active lifestyles (QCA, 2007: 191). Yes, it may be essential for children to understand that physical activity is a component of health and well-being. The problem may not be their lack of awareness but their implementation of the ideas to maintain a healthy lifestyle; they know what’s wrong but don’t know how to change things. This is a simple explanation to a complex social problem which the curriculum document (QCA, 2007) seems to face teachers and pupils with (see also Lear and Palmer (2008) for a relevant debate on this area). The claims in this section, couched in a dogmatic language style, again indicate a dualistic philosophical stance; have to be agreed with at a physical level. How the claims may be verifiable at a “mental” level or a “social” level may be problematic, particularly the claim about having “the greatest impact”. The complications of diet, home environment or economic circumstance seem to be placed way behind “…physical activity that is fit for purpose”. It might be of interest to note that there are no explanatory notes for sections 1.3 and 1.4 to guide the teacher on these points. Why is this? On can only agree with the sentiments of section 1.4 even if one questions the style of writing and substance of the claim. It may be that ineffectual.

2. Key Processes – P.E. at Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 192)

This section proudly opens with the dogmatic claim that “…these are the essential skills and processes in P.E. that pupils need to learn to make progress”. Surely one goes through a process in order to learn a particular skill. The teacher or coach needs to “know about” a particular process and “know how” to construct a safe, progressive learning environment and lead the learner through that process. It is unclear whether
the pupils need to learn these processes as stated in the document or just experience them on their [correctly] ignorant passage through this key stage of their Physical Education, placing value upon whatever emerges at the end of that process, if that can be identified by any party.

2.1) Developing skills in physical activity (QCA, 2007: 192). The claim that pupils should be able to “…refine and adapt skills into techniques” seems to forget that the first problem may be to learn the skill initially. To learn a skill or a range of skills pertinent to a particular game may take years of practice and physical application. How long does it take a gymnast or a dancer to reach the stage of personal technique evidencing itself within a gymnastic routine or choreographed dance performance? Not merely the ability to precisely control and execute the skill but to impose their personal signature upon it over and above the technical requirements of the skills within the routine (for more detail and context see, Palmer and Sellers, 2008; Thombs and Palmer, 2008). An exceptional young person may occasionally do this, the majority probably will not. It begs the question whether the training and education to become a P.E. teacher may be sufficient to allow the teacher to recognise when a child may in fact be evidencing “personal technique”.

2.2) Making and applying decisions (QCA, 2007: 192). Making decisions in this context may be viewed as mental events made in relation to the physical context and situation of a game or other P.E. activities. I.e. That mental thought guides the physical action. Consequently, the resulting action may stem from a time duration of prior significant thought, for example pausing for thought before a chess move is made. Alternatively, it may stem from a learned “intuitive response” to the game situation imposed upon the individual at a split second within a game. Thus, decisions may manifest themselves as physical actions, that is, the action is the decision, and the decision is the action. Seemingly therefore, because of the prior “process” of planning to make decisions and the regressive consequence of planning to plan to make decisions, the curriculum should not actually include games type situations, dance type situations, and outdoor activities all lumped together under one banner as they seem to be in this section. The class and type of decision making seem to very different from each other. The ability to plan and implement “in-games” decisions probably results from lots of games playing experience over a considerable duration of time. During this time players may move from making “tutored/tuition” responses to “intuitive/intuition” responses. That is, to read the game situation and respond by making a play of some kind within the game. This may undoubtedly be a “process” of becoming for games orientated children. The processes of composition (Copeland, 2004 [on Merce Cunningham]) and the varied phases of the creative process (Newton, 1950) are probably of a very different nature and demand aesthetic and artistic decisions of a different order than those of sports and games. The process of selection
and rejection into theme-creation and then on into Form-making, via repetition and variation, becomes a type of thought process more akin to art than sport. Planning for one's own safety and that of others seems to involve a level of forethought that again seems to be of an entirely different nature from those of sport or art. The ability to “recognise hazards” seems to be a long way along the continuum of learning a particular activity, let alone being able to “control the risks to self and others”. The level of knowledge “about” and “how to do” the particular activity probably needs to be of the highest order, as does the ability to reflect and act upon appropriate safety procedures. Perhaps learning to make decisions might be a P.E. process. However, one has to question the need to place three differing “thought processes” under one umbrella, and regard the claim that all pupils should be able to cope with such sophisticated and diverse thought processes as dubious.

2.3) Developing physical and mental capacity (QCA, 2007: 192). One may have expected the physical aspect of this so called key process may have been the first on any hierarchy of P.E. processes. After all, this area of P.E. historically (then called P.T. - Physical Training e.g. Board of Education 1927; 1933), was always the raison d'être of the subject in schools. How realistic the claim may be in relation to the actual time spent on physical conditioning within any school lesson becomes questionable. The claim that the “…development of mental determination” is both a “process” and is possible becomes very questionable. As a personality trait it may be argued that such a quality may be inherited, in the genes and as such may not be open to development, and even if it was, what would be the evidence to show that a child's determination has indeed been developed? What might the stages of such a process be? Physical conditioning may be tested, measured and evaluated as an indicator of progress. Mental states and conditions surely cannot be subject to such verification.

2.4) Evaluating and improving (QCA, 2007: 193). It seems not to be evident from the document whether the content of this section actually relates to the “processes” above or that it indicates a set of desired outcomes. In either case the dogmatic claims need to be challenged by simply asking whether children could do these things, except only in a very limited way. The quality of any analysis seems to depend crucially upon the level of knowledge of the critic. Otherwise no one would be able to evaluate that which he or she knows little about; their evaluation would be baseless or superficial at best. So either as a process or a desired outcome, yes, it may be possible to teach children to make limited critical judgements in relation to their own or other's performances, but only as part of an ongoing educational process both “about” and “how to do” say, gymnastics skills and routine building. It becomes part and parcel of good teaching to indicate to children what counts as good and correct and indeed to show them. On an intellectual level, “knowing about” things seems possible for all children but to physically “do” and “…know what to do to improve their own perfor-
mance” for all children needs thinking about! Whether they can be “...clear about what they want to achieve in their own work” when they do not have by any means a full picture of what is available and possible seems questionable as part of either a process or a desired outcome. It may be worth remembering that young learners are pupils by definition; they are in school because they have in the main, only a partial understanding of any subject. As to whether it is possible for children to evaluate the dualist body-mind problem; i.e. evaluate “...the effectiveness of body and mind to respond to challenges” (see explanatory notes) there may be no reasonable explanation other than to say that it may be theoretically mistaken and practically very confusing, this being a central issue in philosophical debate since the seventeenth century (Dupre, 1981). As a result of promoting this dualist dilemma within the curriculum it begs the question of how pupils and teachers may be able to make such evaluations. They might recognise a well trained body able to execute skills or rise to the challenge of climbing a rope. But an effective mind? How would they know one if they could ever see one?

2.5) Making informed choices about healthy active lifestyles (QCA, 2007: 193). Even though, again written as dogmatic claims and aspirations, these ideas do seem to be rational and attainable. Children do seem to take part in games activities, gym and dance with gusto if they enjoy the particular activity. The “but” comes in this section with the mis-match between dream and wish and reality. The government may wish all it likes, but the reality seems to be that the minority of children take up sporting activities out of school and in the community. It may even be a wish and a dream for two hours of P.E. (see Houlihan, 2006: 73-74 for interesting commentary on this) for all children in all schools during a school year. Dreams as aims; children do seem to “…make choices about their involvement in healthy physical activity” and the majority seem to choose not to participate.

3. Range and content – P.E. at Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 194)

a) Outwitting opponents. It might be difficult to understand the “breadth of the subject” when a produced list of characteristic features reduces a proud subject area to absurdity. Playing bridge fits the “outwitting opponents” feature, being chased by a bull may “…create a performance at maximum level”; trying to cross a busy road would “…identify and solve” a problem of an adventurous nature; copying a policeman on point duty may count as accurate replication of actions, none of which have the remotest connection with Physical Education but all adequately fit the given characteristics. Why does one need such pretentious twaddle at the expense of any sensible content, all in the name of formal guidance? It is as if history has been totally forgotten and the wheel has to be reinvented again. Was there never such a document as the 1933 Syllabus (Department of Education, 1933)? This is in the authors’ views a
very useful and practical document applicable to teachers today; it may be dated only
by the language style within, not the intent of the pedagogical wisdom or its content
to engage children physically.

b) Accurate replication. The explanatory notes for this section are just as pretentious
as for the above but they do have the merit of naming some recognisable games which
could feature in a P.E. curriculum. However, the reduction of gymnastics, or any of
the other activities in the “accurate replication” notes, to an “ability to repeat actions”
may be both a great disservice to the subject, and incidentally a counter claim from
earlier in this document (QCA, 2007) when gymnastics was characterised as “crea-
tive and imaginative”. To merely “copy and replicate” devalues the intrinsic merit or
any gymnastics, or diving, or trampolining or ballroom dancing experience.

c) Exploring and communicating ideas. To reduce the range and content of a dance
syllabus to “…success in relation to how well a performer or choreographer expresses
ideas, feelings concepts or emotions to an audience” (explanatory notes) seems to to-
tally miss the point of a dance education. The need to have “an audience” may be only
a very small proportion of the totality of time given over to a dance education. Inci-
dentially, not all of the examples given as “dance styles” lend themselves to expressing
ideas, feelings, concepts or emotions.

d) Performing at maximum levels. Equally, to reduce the point of an athletics edu-
cation to the achievement of personal bests as the measure of success seems to negate
the need for the learning of throwing, jumping or running events for there own sake.
Not all children need or seem to want to compete in athletics or any other kind of
physical activity. They may or may not be interested in setting personal bests, so to
make this the measure of success (i.e. one's “maximum level”) may not be an appro-
priate criterion.

e) Identifying and solving problems. How are procedures problems? Learning to
canoe, navigate, life-save, sail or swim seem to be the processes of becoming more
skilful and efficient at such pursuits, rather than being problems. How may one
identify swimming as a problem? Learning “to do” involves a procedure to be gone
through during stages of practice and progressions of learning. They are clearly not
“problems” in any meaningful sense of the word.

f) Exercising safely and effectively. As for exercising safely! One would suspect that
such a goal has been the whole point of P.E./P.T./Drill on a school curriculum since
it was conceived of as necessary to have one. By whatever means the ends should
seemingly be for exercising, to gain cardio-vascular and physiological improvement.
Emotional states or feeling states as mental entities (a feeling of wellbeing?) probably
have nothing to do with anatomical or physiological improvements.

“...Children should be offered opportunities that are integral to their learning”. Learning of what? And about what? Once this is decided upon it presumably should be a given that children are offered opportunities that are integral to their learning. However, with this decision seemingly unmade perhaps the opposite is what is currently happening? And then, to progress on to “...enhance their engagement with concepts processes and content”! Please give us examples beg the authors. How might one enhance one’s engagement with a concept like fair play, or a process like learning to swim or the content of a trampoline course? Children may or may not enjoy P.E. lessons, but it becomes difficult to understand what these claims may mean in practice. What are the teachers and the students being told over and above the notion that a P.E. curriculum should be varied; that children should be allowed to play centre-forward or be goal keepers; that children should be allowed to play in team games; that children should be encouraged to play sport out of school time and if they are confident enough, to be able to referee sometimes. What is new? Maybe the use of computers to record training data as a “development” from using hand-written record cards as it was in the old days?

Attainment Targets – P.E. at Key Stage 3 (QCA, 2007: 196)

How many different ways might one be able to say the same thing? Simply add more descriptive adjectives, to presumably make it appear as if there is more detail required as the attainment targets go up in number. For example, taking the notion of “tactics and composition” as a common strand through the attainment targets, if they are at all related which is questionable, one may begin to detect that each level demonstrates an increasingly convoluted way of saying the same thing. For example:

**Attainment Target Level 4**

“...They show that they understand tactics and composition”.

**Attainment Target Level 5**

“...They show that they can draw on what they know about strategy, tactics and composition to produce effective outcomes”.

**Attainment Target Level 6**

“...When planning their own and other’s work they draw on what they know about strategy, tactics and composition in response to changing circumstances”.

**Attainment Target Level 7**

“...They apply principles of advanced strategies, tactics and compositional ideas in their
own and other’s work, and modify them in response to changing circumstances”.

**Attainment Target Level 8**

“…Drawing on what they know of principles of advanced strategies, tactics and composition, they apply them with proficiency, flair and originality in their own and others’ work”.

**Exceptional Performance**

Drawing on what they know about the principles of advanced strategies, tactics and composition, they consistently apply these principles with flair and originality in their own and others’ work”.

How are young teachers or students to make sense of targets which are set out as, “skills”; “advanced skills”; “even more advanced skills”; and “even even even more advanced skills” which seems to be how these targets are set out. There are no indications of what counts as satisfactory, poor defer and fail, or good, very good and excellent at any level. There are no examples to show us, nothing to lead us to an informed judgement in these assessments of attainment. The document just takes for granted that teachers know this and are well able to distinguish between “advanced composition” and “even more advanced composition”.

**Conclusion**

After an examination of the key stage 3 document (QCA, 2007) what conclusions may be drawn about its worth and value to P.E. students and teachers? Its initial claim is that of it being a “programme of study” for key stage 3 pupils. The Chambers dictionary (2008) indicates that a programme of study should be, “…a scheme of proceedings arranged for a course of study, with relevant details, a plan of things to be done”. It seems not to fit this latter mould of a plan of things to be done. It merely refers to areas of study that offers teachers and schools a choice of four out of six vaguely stated “ranges” of characteristics, desired outcomes, or wishes. The document seems to be clearly lacking in relevant detail, if anything it simply seems to sketch out what might be included under the banner of for example, “outwitting opponents”.

Academic courses of study to be found in schools or universities seem to concentrate upon the knowledge requirements of the subject being studied and the unfolding nature, perhaps of any hierarchy of learning, i.e. the need to learn about “A” in order that one might grow to understand “B” later on in a course. Key intellectual concepts may have to be understood in order to progress and aid the process of learning. This simple idea that seemingly underpins a pedagogical process may be taken for granted, a “given” inherent of good teaching practice. Consequently there seems little need to highlight any other forms of “process” or indeed, any other concepts of
a “physical” nature. So why bother here? (QCA, 2007). Why are the so-called “key processes” and “key concepts” any more special to P.E. than in drama, science, music or art to which they may equally apply? They appear to merely “dress up” P.E. and to make claims about P.E. that at best are dubious, in order to seemingly upgrade the status of P.E. as a curriculum subject – which may prove superficial and unhelpful in the longer term.

No so called normal programme of study seems to need to justify itself as this one seemingly does. Neither does a normal programme of study need to highlight “key concepts” or “key processes”, they are probably irrelevant to the pupils who are learning about history or science, just as they are probably irrelevant here. These sections of the document (QCA, 2007) may be seen to take on the status of red herrings as does the curriculum opportunities section. Departments of Physical Education in schools may find this section insulting. Do they really have to be told to do things they seem already do very well?

If this document QCA (2007) does not fulfil the criteria for a programme of study, might it be a scheme of work? A scheme of work logically sets out from premise to outcome and then on to evaluation; a process of learning. During a practical and an academically intellectual course aims, objectives, content and evaluation are both cerebral and physical in nature. This has to be the case at any level of learning endeavour where the physical “doing” is central to the study, whether it be an apprentice plumber, a student P.E. teacher, a dental student or a heart surgeon. So, on the face of things this document might actually be a scheme of work. It certainly sets out with aims even though they may be all-embracing curriculum aims. Very broad intentions are stated. However, there are no objectives set out to match up with the aims. There is a range and content section that sets out characteristic features of possible activities which might come under these headings. This is accompanied by explanatory notes that hardly do justice to games, gymnastics, dance, fitness, swimming, athletics and outdoor pursuits; activities that have traditionally formed the content of the curriculum. One assumes that they do mean for these activities to be done? Why not just say so? The intellectual aspects that may underpin any one of the above areas of study is either assumed or not rendered visible. Who decides what to do and how to do it? If it really is the teachers who decide these things then what use is the document? The demise of this document (QCA, 2007) may have been sealed as soon as it was published.

Whilst there are outcomes set down, they are not linked particularly to any activities but generally seem to be of a practical nature. They indicate something of skill level, linkage, compositional understanding and tactical understanding as targets or outcomes. But exactly how children are expected to demonstrate these things is unclear. Is it assumed that the physically fit young pupil in the school [football] team automat-
ically demonstrates his high level of skill, linkage, compositional understanding and tactical understanding? Is this the assumption to be made? Intellectual understanding is seemingly being tested by forms of verbal description, explanation or analysis; all in relation to practical performances as targets. There are no criteria of evaluation offered about children's physical or intellectual endeavours apart from descriptive adjectives like fluency, control and precision in relation to practical work. Children are asked to show that they understand tactics and composition; this is an intellectual task. How are they to show this kind of understanding at the various stages of key stage 3? Equally on an intellectual level children are asked to “explain”, “describe”, “comment on” and “analyse”, one presumes verbally? Children are expected to plan courses of action in order to bring about improvements of themselves and others. How these endeavours are to be evaluated the document does not give any indication. It presumes that teachers just understand the meaning of the jargon and know how to set up appropriate practical and intellectual examinations. It presumes that they know what criteria are appropriate to test “advanced compositional knowledge” or “principles of advanced strategies”.

If it seems not to be a programme of study and not to fit the profile of a scheme of work, then what is it? It may be at best a sketchy guide to one possible way of looking at the range and content of P.E. with key concepts, key processes and curriculum opportunities sections being not at all relevant to such a guide. Hoped for outcomes are rose-coloured at best and dream aims at worst in a physical education. If the QCA and the Government think this is a document of worth and a valuable aid to teachers then they are wrong. It is pretentious twaddle and it is not worth the paper it is written on, and that is a dogmatic claim.

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