

Developing a coherent secondary physical education curriculum

Introduction:

What we know from research and practice has influenced many educational changes, not least the transformation of the secondary curriculum, pedagogy (teaching and learning approaches) and assessment for learning. This transformation has been based on thinking that shifts an overriding concern with content and coverage, to a real focus on learners and their needs. Curriculum content has been reduced, flexibility has increased and schools are encouraged to be autonomous in designing locally determined curriculum based on learners' needs. Assessment approaches have been developed around effective processes that produce reliable and valid information used for teaching and for learning. Pedagogical advances have been based on what we have learnt from brain research which has developed thinking and practice about learning styles and preferred learning channels. Learners have been placed at the heart of the education process.

Curriculum-assessment-pedagogy (CAP)

The curriculum-assessment-pedagogy inter-relationship is represented in the central diagram of the poster. Key to the inter-relationship is that learners are at the heart of everything we do:

- Curriculum** – what 'we' select for the pupils to learn
- Pedagogy** – the ways in which curriculum is communicated to meet pupil needs
- Assessment** – judging how well pupils have progressed because of the curriculum and pedagogy

Practical example:

A teacher noticed their group of learners was making less than expected progress in an outwitting activity. Children were struggling with replicating actions and this was compounded by their inability to work effectively together in groups. Following discussion with a representative sample of the class it also became apparent that learners did not like the learning activities that they were being asked to engage with. The teacher decided to bring forward the 'accurate replication' unit of work planned for later in the year and teach this through partner work. The focus on partner work in an environment requiring an increased awareness of safety helped learners develop trust and teamwork and their evaluating and improving skills. The teacher developed 'challenging' activities for the children and tasked learners to develop challenging activities for themselves and each other. For many children who also attended an after school games club (Hockey or Football) the learning focus was reinforced as 'team working' skills and 'accurate replication' were required to be applied in these contexts.

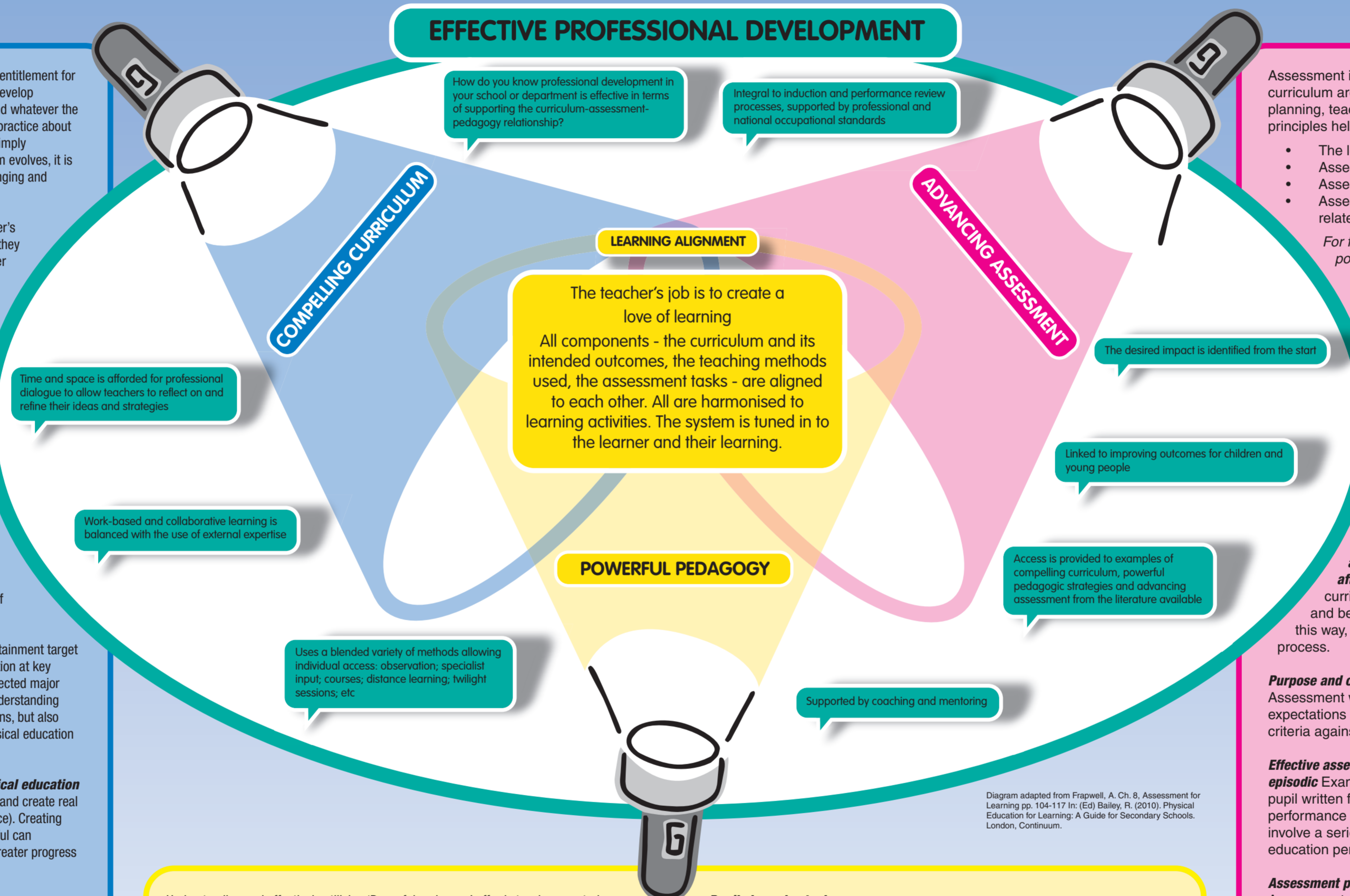
Why is this good practice?

Informed decisions about learner needs and appropriate planned experiences are linked to progress, standards & personal development. These provide the key ingredients which demonstrate:

- successful transition in children's learning journeys
- how the curriculum can be evolved to increase individuality and flexibility
- learners becoming better at how to learn
- consideration of the balance of knowledge, skills, thinking, learning skills and understanding.

Since 1988 and the Education Reform Act there has been a National Curriculum entitlement for all learners. There have been many subsequent changes which have sought to develop coherent and continuous learning opportunities for all. Whatever the changes, and whatever the future changes, the wealth of knowledge and understanding from research and practice about what it is to be physically educated, as opposed to being coached in a sport or simply experiencing a recreational activity, will still remain valid. However the curriculum evolves, it is possible to use trusted principles from research and practice that guide our changing and evolving practice.

- 1. Meet the learning needs of all learners.** One approach in meeting learner's needs is to map out and tailor a learner's journey from first contact to when they complete their journey and move on. This process involves listening to learner voice and involving them in decision-making for change. Meeting learner's needs moves from a viewpoint that locates the deficit within the individual learner - to focus instead on the capacity of the institution or department to support not only the learner's requirement but their learning.
- 2. Be driven by three key questions** (What do we want to achieve? How do we organise learning? How do we know we've achieved what we set out to?). The most important thing is to keep on asking questions. QCA (2008) produced a useful guide "Disciplined curriculum innovation: Making a difference to learners" which further develops these three key questions into a seven step cyclical process.
- 3. Have clearly defined learning objectives and outcomes** - know what the pupils need to learn. If we believe in and are committed to the principle of meeting the learning needs of all pupils, then the learning objectives planned will focus on the learning skills required to engage effectively with the content. In a physical education context this is about developing: all physical education key concepts and processes (not just developing skill); personal learning and thinking skills; functional skills and behaviours for learning. So as to restrict the planning of an overabundance of objectives and outcomes, an integrated approach is required.
- 4. Identify anticipated progress** - know how to develop the learning. The attainment target offers a framework for progression for learners in secondary physical education at key stages 3 and 4. The descriptors include qualitative language that outline expected major milestones. Actual learner progress however is not necessarily linear and understanding and identifying anticipated progress can not only help create high expectations, but also contribute to decisions about the order and level of challenge of various physical education planned units.
- 5. Create authentic, compelling learning situations conducive to physical education objectives and outcomes being met** - decide how best pupils will learn, and create real and meaningful situations (QCA 2007 core tasks are a useful support resource). Creating curriculum opportunities that are integrated and lead to something meaningful can contribute not only to greater interest and learner engagement, but also to greater progress and higher standards.
- 6. Recognise progression in learning** - determine whether pupils are progressing as expected in their learning (Physical education outcomes, not just sport outcomes).
- 7. Adapt planning as appropriate** - decide whether to extend the unit, reinforce certain learning in the next unit or move on.



Assessment is central to ensuring an integrated approach to designing a curriculum around the needs, capabilities and aspirations of pupils. It can inform planning, teaching and ultimately promote learning. QCDA (2009) four key principles help schools take a fresh look at their assessment practice:

- The learner is at the heart of assessment
- Assessment needs to provide a view of the whole learner
- Assessment is integral to teaching and learning
- Assessment includes reliable judgements about how learners are doing related, where appropriate, to national standards

For further information see afPE, scUK, YST consortium Assessment poster.

The primary purpose of assessment is to advance learning and learner performance as well as judging how much learning has occurred. Recent curriculum changes have refocused attention to the aims of education, the outcomes that express those aims, and assessments that can best provide evidence of their achievement. Assessment needs to be aligned to advancing and judging that significant learning outcomes in physical education – the five key process outcomes - are catered for in the assessment methods utilised.

Assessment is fit for purpose
A range of Assessment methods that focus on improving physical education and wider outcomes (not just skill) places the emphasis on learners and their learning.

Assessment should be an integral component of curriculum design and furthering teaching and learning - not something that is added afterwards Before we can report learner progress we must first plan a curriculum that best allows for progress, before teaching for progress, and before assessing how much progress has been made. Examined in this way, assessment becomes an essential integral part of the whole process.

Purpose and clarity of criteria
Assessment works best when it is based on clear statements of purpose, goals, expectations of the standards which pupils are expected to achieve, and the criteria against which to monitor or measure success.

Effective assessment requires a variety of measures and is ongoing rather than episodic Examples of assessment measures in physical education might include pupil written feedback sheets, observation tasks, discussion tasks, role play, or performance scenarios not usually encountered, and that these measures involve a series of linked assessment activities which build a picture of physical education performance overtime.

Assessment processes and methods used should be valid, reliable and consistent. Assessment should include a moderation process towards standardisation between teachers and this process will enhance objectivity and contribute to a shared understanding of the judgments that are made. Effective processes should promote a professional dialogue that is above all honest, and form part of effective teacher professional development. Teacher assessment when standardised is far more reliable and valid than any FFT data in physical education.

Assessment for improved performance involves effective questioning, feedback and reflection, the sharing of clear success criteria and peer and self assessment All assessment methods should promote effective interaction between pupils & teacher and pupils & pupils. This allows pupils to think more deeply, understand how learning occurs and to receive feedback on their learning and performance. In this way assessment serves as a developmental activity aimed at improving the learner and their learning. Assessment should also provide pupils and teachers with opportunities to reflect on both their practice and their learning overall.

Understanding and effectively utilising 'Powerful pedagogy' affords teachers control over the extent and coherence of curriculum change. Innovation based on powerful pedagogy results in teachers being the agents of change, rather than the subjects of change, because teaching in a way that pupils learn best initiates a process of informed and conscious trial and error which can lead to more effective evolving 'classroom' interactions and consequent improvement in pupils' learning.

Pedagogy is far more complex than just teaching. Teachers need pedagogical content knowledge – knowledge about how to teach to promote learning, as well as knowledge about a particular subject matter. Pedagogy includes:

- pedagogical content knowledge (PCK);**
 - teacher values and beliefs about physical education and school sport;
 - 'classroom' practice in a variety of settings; and
 - listening to, observing and taking action in responding to the pupils' response
- PCK** refers to knowledge of:
- pupils' learning (how they learn, progress and achieve);
 - various approaches, strategies and methods. For example a teaching games for understanding approach using guided discovery and problem solving strategies and visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning methods; and
 - physical education the subject (as defined in research and as outlined in the national curriculum)

Pupils learn best when:

- 1. The learning environment is supportive and productive.** Communication with learners focuses on progress, achievement and next steps rather than constantly emphasising a deficit gap in learning. Learner success and positive behaviours for learning are promoted.
- 2. The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self motivation.** Irresistible learning or learning for learning's sake is characterised by the challenge and enjoyment of learning, and this is starkly contrasted to learning that is motivated by grades, levels and syllabus or curriculum coverage. Plentiful opportunities are provided to experience and learn about a variety of roles and responsibilities.
- 3. Their needs, backgrounds, perspectives aspirations and interests are reflected in the learning programme.**
- 4. They are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application.** Key questions promoting the 'How' and 'Why' of something for example, are preferred to questions promoting the 'What' and the 'When'.
- 5. Assessment for learning practices are an integral part of teaching and learning** and allow teachers to provide feedback that is both timely and appropriate.
- 6. Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom.** Authentic or real world learning experiences are more realistic and meaningful and this promotes a deep engagement with the subject matter.

Diagram adapted from Frapwell, A. Ch. 8. Assessment for Learning pp. 104-117 In: (Ed) Bailey, R. (2010). Physical Education for Learning: A Guide for Secondary Schools. London, Continuum.