

The new sports strategy and the outsourcing of Primary Physical Education

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The new sport strategy ensures that outsourcing of Primary Physical Education (PE) will continue until 2020, meaning that external providers will access the PE and Sport Premium funding for the duration of the this period. As this context is set to continue It is now more important than ever to take a moment, reflect and in football terms, 'get our heads up' and see what is in front of us.

In recent research by [Parnell, Cope, Bailey and Widdop \(2016\)](#) published in the peer-reviewed journal *Sport in Society*, a number of challenges for external providers and primary schools, have been highlighted. Ultimately, we do not know what the real impact of PE and Sport Premium funding is – we do not know whether it works and at present, we are making policy based on weak evidence. This runs contrary to the government's position of basing policy on a strong evidence base. This needs to stop.

At best, we can continue to retweet, like and share those impressive (and growing) participation figures that are distributed widely, providing little more than some

breathing space for under pressure commissioners and managers whom are ill-equipped or unwilling to evaluate the impact of their work. At worst, we can continue to blindly accept the glossy reports, press releases, and annual reports that provide the most convincing narrative around the impact of Primary PE – such as improved concentration, behaviour, educational attainment and overall physical health – all of which lack evidence (Zwolinsky, McKenna, Parnell and Pringle, 2016).

Our research explores the role of sport/football coaches involved in the delivery of Primary PE, specifically professional football clubs. This is because professional football clubs are leading the way in this work; partly a result of experience and credibility of working in primary schools settings and partly a result of funding from the Premier League to develop and enhance this practice. Indeed, it could be argued this is more as a result of the scope of this work nationally by professional football clubs than a substantial amount of evidence.

The new sports strategy provides further context for the continued outsourcing of Primary PE. Moreover, the increased funding allocation for the PE and Sport Premium will be welcomed by many. Despite this, we argue that this increased funding should not be confused with increased impact and suggest the following urgent actions:

- Enhanced professional education and training is required to equip those sport/football coaches delivering Primary PE with the necessary skills;
- Enhanced education and training needs to be delivered and evaluated to analyse its effectiveness;
- Sport/football coaches and generalists need to work in partnership, to shared practice, skills and support their shared professional development (Parnell, Cope, Bailey, Widdop 2016; Parnell et al., 2016);
- We need to evaluate the current practice of those delivering Primary PE;
- This evaluation must go beyond asking people about their perceptions and must include children, capturing their experiences, and generate evidence (both qualitative and quantitative) of this provision and measurable outcomes.

This research was prepared with Dr Ed Cope (University of Hull), Dr Richard Bailey (International Council of Sport Science and PE) and Dr Paul Widdop (LeedsBeckettUniversity). The research can be cited using the following reference and be found [here](#):

Parnell, D., Cope, E., Bailey, R., & Widdop, P. (2016). Sport Policy and English Primary Physical Education: The role of professional football clubs in outsourcing. *Sport in Society*, DOI:10.1080/17430437.2016.1173911

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