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An examination of the correlation and compromises of Ofsted, The National Curriculum, and Physical Education in British Schools

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Abstract: *Physical Education (PE) is a core national requirement in the English National Curriculum (NC) that is timetabled for all children up to the age of 16. It requires students to acquire a mix of physical, social, and cognitive competence through sports. This study reports on levels of inclusiveness within the PE curriculum in a sample of 30 British secondary schools that had recently undergone an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection. This was done through close document analysis of the PE curriculum maps of these schools, which are available in the public domain. Using a grounded theory approach, inductive thematic analysis was applied to identify themes such as sporting activities, teaching methods and pedagogy, opportunities within the curriculum, and skills and knowledge taught. The primary findings show that the information available through the school websites was disseminated mainly through the sports that the NC highlighted, implying that the schools' best approach to spreading PE knowledge is through organised sports, as well as secondary curriculum designs, knowledge, and assessments, that are more concerned with NC aims and objectives rather than considering inclusive practice and alternative sporting activities for their students.*

Keywords: *National Curriculum (NC); Ofsted Inspection Framework; Physical Education Curriculum; Sporting Activities; Pedagogy; Key Stage (KS)*

1. Introduction

The National Curriculum (NC) for Physical Education (PE) in England was last reviewed in 2013 to build on the changes made in 2007 by clarifying inclusion expectations and practices. The primary goal of the 2013 curriculum is for physical education to help every student improve their physical health, social skills, and self-development. However, the lack of precise advice on the NC, staffing requirements for PE, and delivery to promote aims and objectives creates a confusing environment, as schools have the freedom to construct a curriculum using the NC guidance as a proposal (Fletcher and Meir, 2019).

Attention to PE came in 2022, when the England women's football team, called Lionesses, reached the Euro 2022 final. Due to this success, the Lionesses wrote to the UK government

requesting that all schoolgirls have access to football and two hours of physical education [PE] per week. The letter emphasised the importance of PE and sports in schools, as outlined in the National Curriculum [NC] (DfE, 2013), which mandates that secondary school students aged 11 to 16 participate in PE as a core subject. The Lionesses' extraordinary success was recognised with a £30 million fund that was aimed at approximately 30 new facilities to support more women and girls in grassroots sport. Thousands of women and girls across England are set to benefit from this cash injection that was approved by the government and The Football Association (FA). This meant to turbocharge the development opportunities for the next generation of Lionesses. In 2023, the Youth Sport Trust Foundation completed a survey with over 18,500 girls aged between 7 and 18, with the data showing only 64% of all girls enjoyed PE in comparison to 86% of all boys. The gap is particularly pronounced at secondary school, where just 59% of girls say they enjoy PE. As a result, a national study was conducted examining gender practices in secondary school PE in England highlighted that single-sex arrangements in core PE were the most common setting (Wilkinson and Penney, 2023). It was suggested that the arrangements were based in positively supporting gender diversity within PE, with a small number of schools organising PE in mixed-sex classes to be more inclusive. Equally relevant topic is that not all schools give it equal priority to PE, with some only providing 96 minutes of PE per week. Quality PE should meet NC standards and promote physical activity, but this is contingent on the school's understanding of PE and compliance with the NC and Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (2023). . Ofsted, a regulatory body for education in England, carries out inspections to assess consistency and discrepancies against the NC for PE and Ofsted's framework for educational quality. The 2019 revamp of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework renewed emphasis on a critical area: ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education. This framework emphasises three crucial aspects:

- **Education Quality:** This assesses curriculum design, implementation, and impact, striving for an ambitious and inclusive curriculum that equips all students with the knowledge, skills, and cultural capital they need to succeed.
- **Behaviour and Attitudes:** This evaluates students' well-being, aspirations, and the overall school environment, fostering a positive learning space where students feel safe, supported, and motivated.
- **Personal Development:** This examines how the curriculum goes beyond academics to nurture holistic development, encompassing social, emotional, and

physical growth, ensuring students acquire the necessary life skills to navigate the world beyond the classroom.

Ofsted uses objective, outside assessments to pinpoint areas that need improvement. These evaluations follow predetermined standards, such as equality and safeguarding considerations, and are grounded in evidence. When it comes to delivering education, schools must design curricula that meet a variety of needs while maintaining high standards of learning. In PE, there are concerns regarding whether to emphasise fundamental motor abilities or use game-based activities, as well as whether or not students with various learning difficulties make equivalent progress to those without special educational needs. These factors emphasise the necessity for ambitious and all-encompassing curricular strategies to serve all students. Since it lays the foundation for expectations, the framework is a crucial part of the study and curriculum designs.

The 2019 framework portrays the expectations for educational quality using three 'i's: intent, implementation, and impact. It is anticipated that the department curriculum will incorporate the requirements for each area. These standards promote an approachable curriculum that helps students grow and succeed regardless of their characteristics. The benefits and drawbacks of PE have been the subject of numerous studies that have concentrated on instructional strategies and evaluation (Caena, 2014; Herold, 2020; Simmond and MacLean, 2018; Foster and Nerys, 2019), but have neglected to discuss the underlying ideology of curriculum designs. With an emphasis on how the designs adhered to PE NC recommendations and the Ofsted (2019) inspection framework, which is used to analyse and evaluate the quality of education inside schools, the current study aimed to examine PE curriculum and their designs. According to Brown and Penney (2017), curricular reforms and frameworks have an impact on pedagogy, or the practice technique, which in turn affects curriculum designs and summaries of how a subject should be taught. Overall, the NC recommends consistent physical activity [PA] to boost confidence, knowledge, and abilities in PE, as well as providing a variety of sports experiences to all students (DfE, 2018). The NC provides guidelines for various sports that can be taught, but they are not mandatory

The Physical Education National Curriculum in England

The revised NC introduced key features to support inclusion, such as adapted activities: guidelines on how to modify physical activities (PA) to be inclusive of all students with special educational needs and disabilities, which included the use of adaptive equipment and the creation of an environment conducive to participation for all. The NC recommended inclusive

teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction and collaborative learning, to effectively support students with diverse needs in the PE setting. Furthermore, improved methods for assessing and monitoring the progress of students with special educational needs and disabilities in PE were introduced with the intention to ensure that all students have equal access to physical education and receive appropriate support. PE is the only discipline where the major emphasis is on the body and the development of physical competence. As a result, PE curricula must address both the NC and the impact of a variety of physical and social opportunities such as confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth (Harris and Cale, 2018). All of these are taught through a practical environment but may not be explicitly outlined and drawn within the curriculum (Griggs and Fleet, 2021). Previously, curriculum designs were based on a variety of underpinning philosophies, ranging from sports education, which focuses on the development of sports and skill acquisitions, to personal, learning, and thinking skills, which are promoted through sports, with little emphasis on sport and physical literacy. However, Westbrook et al. (2013) debates that the underlying philosophy of curriculum design must consider a wide range of factors, such as inclusivity, while remaining unique to the school.

2. Theoretical framework

Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory can offer important insights into the coherence and integration of curricular components when analysing PE curricula in light of the NC and the Ofsted framework. Grounded theory can be used by researchers to examine how different teaching methods conform to national regulations and to pinpoint the underlying links and structures that influence the curriculum. This theoretical framework does not define the concept of reality about a piece of research, but rather the moment and focal point(s) within it; the theories developed are an attempt to define and understand a phenomenon, in this case, the term inclusion within PE. The framework was used to monetize critical data-driven assumptions by extending existing knowledge (Grant and Osanloo, 2014). Therefore, the thirty widely available documents were analysed to reveal patterns and differences in how teachers understood and implemented inclusive practices.

This approach helps to clarify the complex relationships between policy requirements and classroom procedures, which advances teachers' knowledge of how successful education is in the context of PE (Breckenridge, 2009). There are obstacles in the way of implementing a national physical education curriculum, notwithstanding the potential advantages. Different sociocultural contexts and local control over curricula are two examples of factors that could

make a standardised strategy difficult to adopt (Herold, 2020), thus suggesting the importance of using a subjective approach when exploring curriculum documents. Subjectivism is the philosophical view that truth and knowledge are not objective facts that are independent of human perception (i.e., leaders who create the curriculum documents) but rather are essentially based on personal experience (Al-Saadi, 2014). This relationship between the individual and society emphasises how context shapes moral judgements and subjective truths, underscoring the interdependence of individual experiences and social influences (Hossain and Ali, 2014), which in this case focuses on the design of a curriculum map to promote PE holistically for students.

3. Methodology

Using the NC and Ofsted Inspection framework policies as quality assurance viewpoints, the study aims to determine the differences and trends between the PE curriculum designs for Key Stage 3 (Ages 11 to 14) and Key Stage 4 (Ages 14 to 16) in England specifically looking at the contrast between adherence to NC requirements. Additional aim is to examine a personalised approach that allows for effective inclusive practice. Curriculum maps from 30 recently Ofsted inspected schools were studied to obtain a thorough grasp of curriculum design in PE (DfE, 2019). The "three I's"—intent, implementation, and impact—are highlighted in this approach. With an emphasis on the justification for educational objectives (intent), the strategies used to provide information (implementation), and the results obtained (impact), these components provide an organised framework for evaluating the efficacy of curricula. This method of data collection is rather structured and can be numerical which strengthens the research aims. Questionnaires may be able to offer additional way to gather a great deal of information in relatively short time which can offer considerable advantages in administration; however, due to timeframe given to carry out this research the curriculum mapping proven to be the best option.

The main goal in evaluating these curricular maps was to understand more about how these schools prioritise and organise PE lessons, particularly concerning inclusion and promoting pedagogical development. Curriculum maps and related documentation were crucial to this study because they document the expected learning process for students and are consistent with educational theories and previous research. Additionally, this method was convenience and it was freely available on the school's website. This also ensured that the research was more ethical, as it did not involve human participation. According to research by Richards (2013),

these documents are essential for showing how teaching methods and learning objectives have changed over time because they reflect the methodical, step-by-step approach to curriculum design that encourages ongoing pedagogical development. A department's overall approach to teaching physical education is reflected in these materials, which range from particular sports skills to more general learning goals like physical literacy, teamwork, and personal growth.

Although the grounded theory approach offers an unequalled approach to learn about programme impacts and outcomes, curriculum maps have limitations, according to Bryman (2004) and Karl (2010). It was claimed that they do not provide enough specific information about teaching methods, student needs, and larger school policies that affect instruction. For example, a curriculum map might include the sports or subjects that are taught each term, but it might leave out important details about instructional practices, differentiation tactics, or how school policies affect the classroom's atmosphere. Curriculum maps are frequently made by school administrators and leaders rather than classroom teachers, which can result in documents that emphasise alignment with the NC guidelines but may not fully capture the nuances of classroom interactions and adaptations made by teachers to meet diverse student needs. This discrepancy is especially significant. Despite these drawbacks, curricular maps are nevertheless useful tools for this research. They offer a structured, hierarchical perspective of how physical education departments organise and rank their instruction. Through analysing these documents, the grounded theory are fashioned directly from the emerging analysis of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) more can be learnt about the department's goals for the growth of PE students, such as the variety of sports available, the term-specific themes, and any particular knowledge or abilities that students should eventually learn.

3.1. Sample

Thirty recently inspected secondary schools were included (between 2019 – 2023) in this study. Schools were identified using the Ofsted search engine ("Find an Ofsted inspection report," 2017). To preserve sensitive information, the names and identities of the schools were kept anonymous. Out of the forty-three schools that were recently analysed, only thirty have curricular maps that are easily accessible in the form of Microsoft Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, or Portable Document Format (PDF). A sample size of 30 represents the number of schools that were recently inspected before, during, and after COVID pandemic since the 2019 Ofsted framework is pertinent. From the 30 schools listed, a total of 38 papers were gathered, stored, and uploaded to the NVivo 12 cloud.

3.2. *Data analysis*

NVivo 12 is important for inductive coding because it can effectively handle and evaluate large policy documents. Mikuska (2021) particularly highlights its usefulness for managing large amounts of text data and facilitating systematic analysis within a research. For academics looking to assess the effects of policies and provide information for decision-making processes, this software is a vital resource since it facilitates the methodical investigation of themes, connections, and patterns in qualitative data (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021). Coding is an essential stage in converting unprocessed qualitative data into conclusions because it makes it possible to categorise and characterise the results' relevance. The curricular documents, as previously stated, were given as qualitative data. Each segment can be named and identified, enabling the researcher to present the research findings (Saldana, 2015). While deductive coding uses pre-existing codes that offer a framework-like approach to study, inductive coding necessitates the researcher to generate codes directly from the data (Linnerberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Inductive analysis was more suitable for the current study due to the volume, diversity, and openness of the research topics and data gathered, as it enabled the examination of a broad range of features present in the maps. By using NVivo 12, it enabled to save curriculum documents and use inductive coding to create themes that mirrored the goals and objectives of the study. The freedom to examine the data was made possible by inductive coding, as was previously explained. The research was able to systematically aggregate the data because the codes included specific tags or highlighted colours. This is where application of the grounded theory proven to be useful, as it intends to free the researcher from pre-conceived or a priori assumptions. Seventeen sub-codes were established after the six fundamental codes including sporting activities, skills and knowledge, lesson objectives, teaching style and, and curricular options. As it looks for and understands the events, processes, opinions, and worldviews that lie behind the data, the inductive technique seems to be far more flexible (Cooper & Endacott, 2007; Cresswell, 2009).

Data-driven decisions were the main focus of the first coding round, and the information collected was based on concepts of physical education and the secondary school criteria established by Ofsted. The following phases were finished via a hybrid approach akin to that employed by Joffe (2019) and Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) becoming acquainted with the data; (2) creating preliminary codes using conceptual information from NC guidelines and Ofsted Criteria; (3) evaluating the codes in light of the goals of the study; and (4) creating more sub-codes that refer to the main codes and have more thorough descriptive summaries. A manual

thematic analysis provided flexibility and accessibility for interpreting qualitative data when referring to theory, in this case, the NC and Ofsted framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a result the study was able to: (1) identify key codes that referenced the study's objectives; (2) assess themes and evaluate both concerning education; and (3) do additional sub-codes and interpretative analysis by looking at either patterns or compromises. The following table shows the emergent themes (Table 1.):

Table 1. Thematic coding results obtained through Nvivo 12, regarding curriculum details and information

Subthemes	number of codes/nodes	Themes
opportunities within the NC; tactics and strategies; performance analysis; formative and summative assessment	45	Teaching Methods and Pedagogy
striking; fielding; net and wall; invasion games; gymnastics, trampolining, dance	287	Sporting activity
creative movement; theoretical knowledge; practical skill; life skills	167	Skills and Knowledge taught
alternative opportunities within PE; coaching, leading, refereeing;	57	Opportunities within the curriculum
assessment methods; skills and knowledge taught; NC; methods of engagement	68	KS4 National Curriculum aims
assessment methods ; NC; engagement	69	KS3 National Curriculum aims

4. Research Results

Using the 2019 Ofsted Inspection Framework and National Curriculum Aims, 35 papers from 30 schools were inductively coded. Six major codes, seventeen sub-codes, and 426 tags were obtained through a manual thematic analysis (Appendix 1) (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) (Fig 1.).

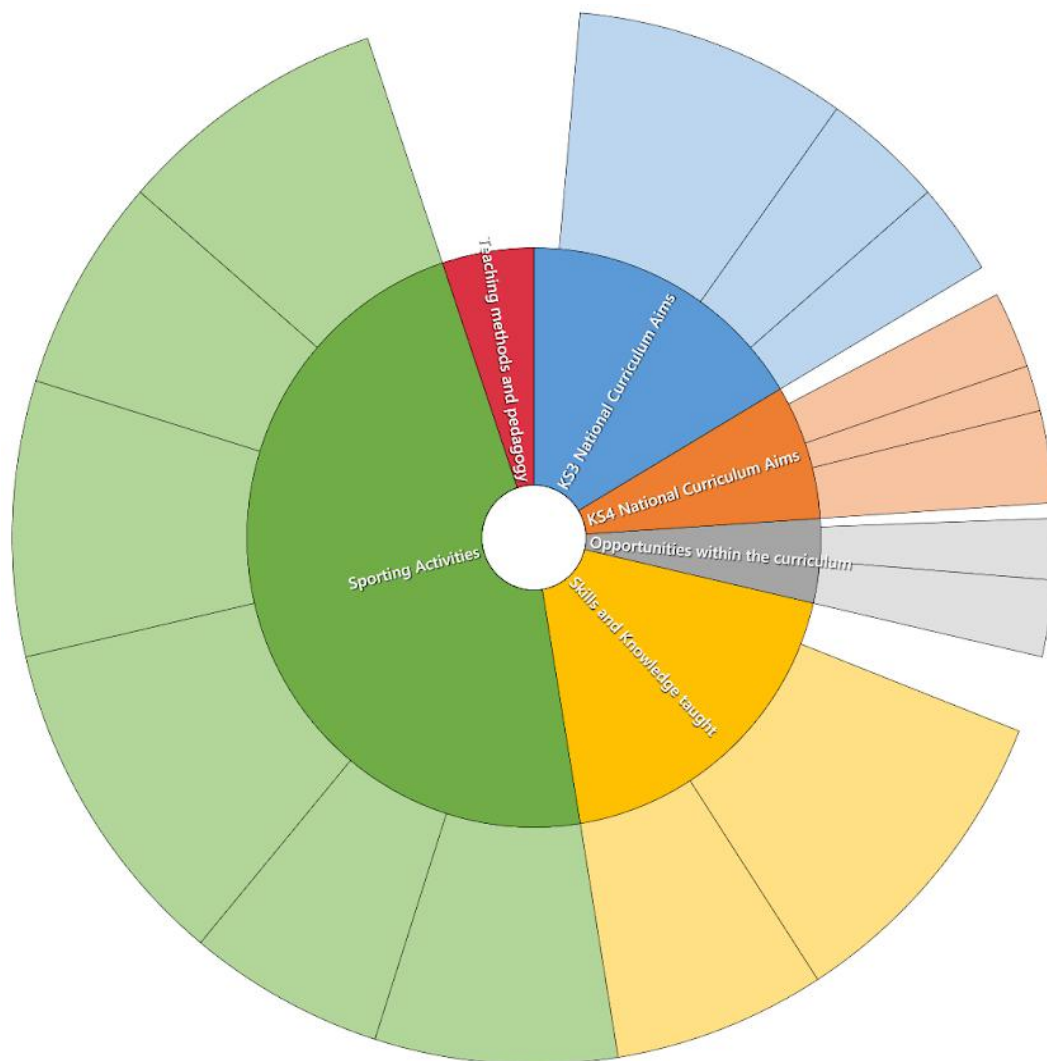
4.1. Key Stage 3 and 4 National Curriculum Aims

A total of 68 references from 35 publications made mention to the KS3 and 4 NC goal codes. The materials primarily cited the NC recommendations, with only minor additions and modifications created for the individual. One institution remarked, for instance,

“Develop their technique and improve their performance in competitive sports such as athletics and gymnastics” - Secondary School in Lancashire

Such a statement is a carbon copy of the KS3 NC aim, bullet point two (*National curriculum - physical education key stages 3 and 4 - gov.uk 2013*). Another school stated;

“During year 9 students will have started to develop their knowledge of how to measure sporting performance” - Secondary School in Merseyside



Red - Teaching Methods and Pedagogy **Green** - Sporting activity; **Yellow**- Skills and Knowledge taught; **Grey** - Opportunities within the curriculum **Orange** - KS4 National Curriculum aims
Blue - KS3 National Curriculum aims

Fig. 1. The six primary codes and their corresponding sub-codes, which were painstakingly created from the curricular maps, are shown visually.

The curriculum maps consistently emphasised "game-like circumstances" as a key way to show understanding and development. Curriculum maps showed a focus on practical performance by using NC guiding points one and three as a guide. For instance,

“Games: To learn how to outwit an opponent in face to face competition. This will include Invasion Games (Football, Netball, Basketball, Rugby). Become more competent and confident performing skills in progressively challenging practices and be able to apply them across a range of activities in competitive situations” - Secondary School in Chester

Whilst other curriculum maps focused on how the competitive situation would be assessed;

“Students will be required to peer and self-assess their own and others performances in Core PE. They will do this through a variety of methods such as observation checklists, video analysis and other worksheets. Success Criteria will always be referenced when referring to self and peer feedback” - Secondary School in Staffordshire

The fifth KS3 NC target is mentioned in the statement. Additionally, there were no references that mentioned KS4 PE assessment techniques. This indicates that while the curriculums made mention of the NC KS4 goals, they did not specifically define how they would measure or evaluate the objectives. Most citations concentrated on the growth of learning and enjoyment for lifetime engagement but provided no specific direction on how such requirements would be met.

“Inspiring a lifelong love of sport for all pupils through excellence, knowledge and opportunities” - Secondary School in Staffordshire

However, a small minority of schools had more personalised references to the NC aims.,

“Due to low-class numbers, particularly on the girls’ side of PE, we can give students a choice of activities. Students develop skills in isolation and gameplay, as well as tactics and evaluating performance” - Secondary School in Surrey

Students can get a sense of the school’s goals and values for NC counselling from these claims. Even though departments may alter their teaching and learning to meet the needs of their schools through different identities, many departments do not provide specifics on how they plan to implement the NC goals to meet their standards. It might be argued that such a policy is more likely to be developed to show compliance with NC criteria and the Ofsted Inspection

framework for curriculum designs than it is to serve as the mechanism that supports the curriculum design.

4.2. *Skills and knowledge taught*

Specific learning objectives and how physical education would be used to teach these skills were described in the curricular guidelines. The focus placed on 118 references to practical skills and 24 references to theoretical knowledge indicate that practical development is an important part of physical education courses. Nonetheless, a debate concerning the lack of coherence in the curriculum designs resulted from the differences in the theoretical knowledge and skills that were taught. For instance,

“Games: To learn how to outwit an opponent in face-to-face competition. This will include Invasion Games (Football, Netball, Basketball, Rugby). Striking & Fielding(Cricket, Softball, Rounders & Tennis). Net & Wall games (Volleyball & Table Tennis). Focus will be on skill development in isolation progressing to executing skills in modified competition” - Secondary School in Chester

Whilst another school would state:

“Build upon the physical development and skills learnt in year 7. Become more competent and confident performing skills in progressively challenging practices and be able to apply them across a range of activities in competitive situations” - Secondary School in Manchester

Although one statement emphasises athletic activities and the other more general growth, both show how practical abilities can be enhanced. But we need to look at the skills that are being taught right now. How can a physical education curriculum show proficiency and overall development? Additionally, the majority of schools placed more emphasis on the development of skills than on theoretical knowledge, which was supported by the curriculum assessment methods. Variations in PE training can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the department's vision and aim as well as the availability of resources. Some curriculum documents were very specific,

“Students acquire the following skills: Rolling, jumping, landing, control, supporting and sequencing” - Secondary School in Dudley

Whilst others were more ambiguous,

“Pupils will learn to choose, combine and perform a variety of skills with accuracy and control” - Secondary School in Gloucestershire

The quotes mentioned earlier highlight the glaring disparities in the curriculum materials' standards; some documents do not specify how each activity would be taught, while others do not cover all of the knowledge and abilities that would be taught throughout the major stages. The curriculum texts, however, with their ambiguous remarks, had more approachable evaluation techniques, emphasising assessment without levels,

“Throughout Key Stage 3, students will develop using the following three themes; Self-belief (Linked to Greatness whole school value), Cooperation (Linked to Honesty whole school value), and Resilience (Linked to Strength whole school value)” - Secondary School in Oxford

or a GCSE PE level 1 to 9 sporting activity criteria to promote ongoing growth. For example,

“We wish to develop theoretical knowledge, applying knowledge to sporting examples and furthering knowledge to be able to begin to evaluate, using our A03 assessment criteria from GCSE PE. Students will then be able to make reasoned arguments about important issues such as performance enhancement, Components of fitness and Types of Training to confidently articulate their opinions and challenge their peers' opinions using evidence to support their argument” - Secondary School in Chester

The Ofsted Inspection Framework's emphasis on curriculum effect, which mandates that curriculum designs demonstrate how learning influences development and progress, may be the basis for such a procedure. As a result, skill-specific curricula created assessment methods that demanded that talents be tried and completed to satisfy specific requirements, thereby demonstrating a degree of impact.

4.3. Sports activities

The purpose of physical education is to encourage all students to succeed in physically demanding activities by promoting high-quality physical education, according to the introduction of the NC PE guidelines. The majority of curriculum resources are based on sports. Invasion Games (55), Striking and Fielding (22), Net and Wall (24), Athletics (17 references), Creative Movement (18), and Other Activities were the sub-codes for the sports (23). The other categories might have depended on space management and availability, with some schools able to offer "fitness and gym," while others could have offered rock climbing, even though invasion

games had the most references. The NC guidelines for grades three and four provide suggestions for teaching sports (in square brackets) and how they relate to learning goals. The NC guidance clearly states,

“Schools are not required by law to teach the example content in [square brackets].”

The sports included in square brackets, however, make up the majority of the sports discussed in the newspaper. To meet the requirements of an Ofsted inspection, schools might adhere to the NC guidance. Additionally, staff members might be hesitant to enhance their knowledge and delivery abilities to teach new and emerging sports like paddle ball, hurling, and ultimate frisbee. To demonstrate the connections and consistency of the English physical education curriculum, schools and departments could feel that the available sports should be contrasted with the NC examples. The curricula may then demonstrate that they satisfy the requirements of the inspection framework in terms of having a well-defined goal, resources to carry out the activities, and methods to evaluate their impact. Incorporating new or emerging sports may make people feel vulnerable in terms of meeting NC criteria. Despite this, academies are not required to follow the NC advise. Furthermore, student experiences, demographic demands, and the liberation of physical ability through athletics could not be considered in the curricula.

4.4. Opportunities within the curriculum

The Ofsted inspection framework (2019) was used to construct the following code, which places a strong emphasis on inclusive teaching practices. Curriculum papers must demonstrate how they implement inclusiveness by incorporating alternative possibilities within their designs. This knowledge is derived from the NC development recommendations and the inspection framework's requirements for teaching, learning, and pedagogy. Two sub-codes were established using the terms "alternative possibilities within PE" and "development of life skills." A total of 12 references were highlighted among the 35 papers.

*“CC Links • History – how did cricket travel from England to the rest of the world?
PSHE – British values – rules and regulations” - Secondary School in Somerset*

Although not always, PSHE and cross-curricular integration were common topics in the majority of curriculum documents. The "breadth of learning" emphasis of the Ofsted Inspection Framework is demonstrated by integrating with other disciplines like science, geography, history, etc. Other curriculum maps demonstrated more streamlined opportunities such as;

“PSHE Focus on Healthy active lifestyle, Drama- link to the Dance unit- devising from stimulus, Music- creating motifs through dance and Gymnastics” - Secondary School in West Yorkshire

The idea of having chances in the curriculum that are directly related to the subject—for example, focussing on diet and connecting it to physical education—may be a little unclear, though. A KS3 curriculum should be different from a KS4 curriculum, according to the Ofsted Framework, so that students have access to a range of learning opportunities. GCSE and Vocational courses, which are KS4 PE alternatives, may contain a directly related curriculum. The concept does, however, indicate some opportunities for curriculum diversity, even though it is not found in all books and is used sparingly throughout. The curriculum could instead include alternative opportunities through informal written instructions that represent teaching methods and practices.

4.5. Teaching methods and pedagogy

Teaching strategies must follow and show various approaches to delivering distributive information while taking into account the Ofsted inspection framework, which forms the basis of curriculum papers. Additionally, certain recommendations for inclusive teaching practices are provided by the Ofsted inspection framework (2019). There was unmistakable evidence of teaching ideologies that were closely tied to the sports that were given.

“Key Methods of Delivery Guided Discovery. Students creating and implementing their own ideas/tactics Lay-up – whole part whole method TGFU” - Secondary School in Wolverhampton

Clear indicators of teaching style and teaching focus, whilst others highlighted student outcomes.

“We know our students: PE teachers understand the needs and abilities of all their students. PE teachers adopt the approach of high support and high challenge within lessons, planning lessons tactfully to meet these needs and responding carefully in lessons to these needs so all students are provided with opportunities to be supported and challenged” - Secondary School in Durham

The curriculum's structure is clear with these guiding principles since departments have given detailed descriptions of how they wish to communicate their curriculum themes. There is a

correlation in the distributive knowledge evaluation process since the instructional tactics have an impact on student comprehension, which is the basis for distributive knowledge assessment.

5. Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the elements that support the creation of physical education curricula, as well as the connection between the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) and the Ofsted Inspection system (Ofsted, 2019). The research also looked at the curricular materials to see how adjustments or modifications were made to the NC criteria to ensure the quality of PE instruction across KS3 and KS4. One important starting point for figuring out whether teaching pedagogy is uniform across schools was the Ofsted inspection system.

5.1. *KS3 and 4 National Curriculum*

A person's ideas and prior experiences have a significant impact on how they implement the idea of a national curriculum, and each school may view it differently depending on sociocultural, historical, and contextual aspects (Oh and Graber, 2019). Instead of being generated by an algorithm, staff personnel design most curriculums. Pre-context and other elements that might influence the design—from the designers' prior experience to the requirements of the school—must be considered. According to Biesta (2017), the PE NC may fail to advance the perspectives of students from specific demographic groups and backgrounds since the policies do not consider social justice. This could provide a picture of persistent problems in physical education, likeability development, social pressure to engage in physical activity, and the requirement for quantifiable results. With 68 references from 35 curriculum materials that directly relate to the KS3 and 4 National Curriculum aims and objectives, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of schools follow the NC principles when creating and implementing their curricula. The vast majority, meanwhile, do not elaborate on how they plan to use the objectives. It was evident that the common underpinning theory employed across the curriculum referred to the NC, the skills that were taught, leisure activities, and competitive scenarios since NC served as the foundation for the guiding idea. For instance, the majority of curriculum texts emphasised the value of "competitive settings" and engaging in game-like activities; nevertheless, given that sports may be relatively new, we must question the necessity and quality of both. However, because the curriculum just outlined the NC and not how it would be delivered to advance understanding, it was unclear how knowledge would be altered (Shay, 2013). Despite being well-structured and comprehensive, the curriculum papers' nature

indicated that teachers were not given much help because they focused more on teaching, development, and advancement than the content that was indicated concerning the Ofsted curriculum standards. Given that the evidence suggests that the practices' stagnation and divergence may not alter in the medium- to long-term, such conclusions may suggest that the most recent curriculum revision may have an impact on physical education in the UK (Herold, 2020).

5.2. Ofsted Framework

The Ofsted framework evaluates curriculum documents based on the intent, implement, and impact criteria. To demonstrate the breadth and depth of learning, curriculum designs must make use of the three i's. There is a definite correlation between the NC policy information and how these goals are interpreted and understood through the sports that are used as examples. In line with NC principles, these materials seek to advance sports as the main vehicle for delivering and advancing physical education. Some departments may have prioritised skill development and greater physical activity over theoretical opportunities due to concerns about children's health and physical inactivity, especially after COVID-19 (Prince & Annison, 2022). The study's other key findings concern instructional methods, classroom environment as outlined in curriculum maps, and educational quality. When looking at the Ofsted implementation criteria, there is a strong connection between the KS3 NC teaching that addresses "techniques in performance" and the curriculum document notes that list the skills being taught. Since there is such a clear focus on sporting abilities and growth within varied activities, the implementation phase is made easier because the skills are taught through the sporting activity. As can be observed from the findings, the majority of the sports offered in the sample were related to the same sports listed in the NC, suggesting a clear link to ensure or promote curricular conformity. Another important finding from this study relates to teaching methods, curricular maps that describe classroom environments, and educational quality, all of which are in line with Ofsted's implementation. There is an obvious connection between the KS3 NC instruction on "techniques in performance" and the curriculum document comments mentioning the skills being taught when evaluating how curriculum information is used in the classroom. Notes on the fundamental and sophisticated abilities that are taught and cultivated through sports. They can be further separated into motor skills necessary for all sports and movement skills essential to the sport being taught (Muller, 2007). The curriculum maps simply attempt to include as many "learning opportunities" as feasible, thus a mix of knowledge and sports can either show

depth or clear up misconceptions. Then, the focus is on how effective physical education is and how instruction can change learning. Why engage in gaming? Why sports? Why are there no other ways to teach physical education? The practicality of the document illustrates how NC education and delivery standards are consistent.

6. Evaluation

Since the curriculum materials show how information is communicated, their adaptability is essential (Ekberg, 2021). The results demonstrated a variety of assessment concerns, the majority of which mentioned sports, abilities, and life lessons that physical education may impart. The criteria for assessing athletic skills reveal progressive development points, whereas athletic skills exhibit continuous development across critical periods, illustrating the difference between an unstructured and planned curriculum. However, because there is no "one size fits all" approach, the variety of assessments affects the design of a course. Some assessments focus on assessments without levels, showing a degree of progress that focuses on school development objectives, while others adhere to teaching and learning objectives. In contrast, some curriculum materials used the Key Stage 4 certificated (GCSE) PE levels 1–9 assessment criteria, emphasising skill development as a key element of progress demonstration. It is necessary to take into account how curricula demonstrate evaluation. The GCSE PE standards are referenced in the background of sports abilities based on GCSE levels and criteria, suggesting that the curriculum design places a strong emphasis on skill development, skill acquisition, and the development of competence to engage in a particular activity. As a result, most schools may modify their evaluation criteria to change their teaching strategies if there is not a clear primary goal or agreement to adhere to the NC. A complete curriculum is made possible by streamlining cohesive assessment procedures, but the bigger picture might highlight the connection between underlying pedagogy, instruction, and learning activities.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The report started by claiming that the PE curriculum has altered and developed over time in response to a variety of outside factors, including new PE programs, Ofsted inspection frameworks, and NC recommendations. However, this study demonstrated that curriculum designers must ensure that an underlying concept of the NC serves as a development building block. This is important since curriculum design requires the local field to establish important needs, such as the Ofsted inspection system and NC criteria. Curriculum designs are affected

by compromises made with specific activities taught, instructional methods, and assessment forms. However, most curriculum materials adopted the NC's goals and objectives without providing much detail on how those standards would be met. There was little uniformity among the designs of the various foci, with some emphasising skill and others' overall development. Though they all draw from the NC recommendations, each curriculum design uniquely applies the information. Since it shows that a curriculum is adaptable and that departments are allowed to express and promote provisions that appeal to their target audience, the fact that these principles seem to be more impacted by evaluation methodologies than by core goals may be advantageous. There are notable compromises throughout the research, even though it does not offer a conclusive explanation of the relationship between PE curricula, NC, and the Ofsted framework. Sports-related activities that focus on holistic development and other skill competencies are instances of such compromises. According to the survey, the majority of schools focused on athletic skills, and even fewer had descriptive information on evaluation techniques. Few schools had documentation for the KS4 curriculum. Even while there is clear evidence of compromises and some connection to NC and Ofsted, more research on the fundamental principles and components of curriculum designs, as well as the rationale behind specific decisions, would be helpful.

The need for future study is therefore essential to address the following recommendations. It is recommended that the PE curriculums should include both NC guidance and the development of various physical and social skills. These skills should include confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth as I was suggested by Harris and Cale (2018). As Griggs and Fleet (2021) suggest, these skills are learnt through hands-on experiences, even if they are not explicitly stated in the curriculum. In England, schools have recently emphasised their focus on reading, numeracy, and test performance, as well as limited school funds, all of which tend to limit the subject's prestige and push much-needed relevant professional development down the pecking order—therefore this issue also needs to be addressed. As a result, departments must consider how their curriculum design can align with, at the very least, NC advice and Ofsted's standards of quality education and curriculum, allowing the education judgement to be evaluated against the inspection criteria (Ofsted, 2019). To that end, any reliance on departments as the sole source of curriculum design could be viewed as fabricated because the underlying concept may reflect PE's ability to recognise Ofsted rather than access learning opportunities to assist learning at appropriate times.

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