

## THE VOICE OF MARGARET TALBOT ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL SPORT: A TRIBUTE

Karel J. VAN DEVENTER

*Department of Sport Science, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa*

### ABSTRACT

*On 2 December 2014, Professor Margaret Talbot sadly passed away after a long illness. In this tribute, the focus will be on her advocacy efforts regarding school Physical Education (PE) in the UK. She believed that PE was the greatest asset in education, but that the Western body-mind dualism was one of the greatest threats to the survival of PE. PE benefited from the high profile enjoyed by sport in 2001 in the UK. In 2007, it was declared that children in the UK would receive five hours of PE and school sport, with two hours devoted to school PE. Although PE is a statutory requirement for all children, a systemic weakness in initial Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) for primary schools existed. There was limited recognition and support for the unique role of school PE, as the only means to provide every child the chance to learn the skills and knowledge to achieve physical literacy and social competences. A case for PE could be made on health grounds alone, but the UK based Association for Physical Education (afPE), believed that it must be made in educational terms. The year 2008 saw an 'independent review' of the primary school curriculum, led by Sir Rose, but his remit did not include PE as a subject. The afPE made a strong case for PE to this Review. Safely, it could be said that Sir Rose had been consistent in promising nothing and in keeping his word.*

**Key words:** Margaret Talbot; Tribute; Physical education; School sport; Politics, advocacy and policy.

### INTRODUCTION

In this section, a brief account will be provided on the most important positions that Margaret Talbot held. She was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1993 for the exceptional work she had done in the field of school Physical Education (PE) and sport. From 1997 to 2005, she served as the President of the International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) and became an Honorary Life Member in 2005. From 1999 to 2009, Margaret acted as Vice President for Physical Education in the UK. She was the founding Chief Executive of the Association for Physical Education (afPE) and served in this position from 2006 to 2009. She also acted as the Chief Executive of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, an umbrella organisation for English and UK non-governmental sport organisations (Talbot, 2015).

In 2009, Margaret was appointed President of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), a position she held until her death. In 2011, she was appointed the Chair of the Education Committee of the International Paralympic Committee where she served until she passed away. She was appointed as Expert to the Committee on Culture and

Education of the International Olympic Committee in 2014. A position she also held until her death (Talbot, 2015).

Other positions held and awards received were: Carnegie Research Professor and Head of Sport at Leeds Metropolitan University; an Honorary Fellowship of the University of Chichester in 2008; AD Munrow Award (1998) in university sport and physical education; Fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts; the Ling Award of the Physical Education Association UK; Honoured Member of the Association for Physical Education (UK); Championship of the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management; and Pathfinder Award (2006) from the USA National Association of Girls and Women in Sport (Talbot, 2015).

Posthumous, the Margaret Talbot Memorial Scholarship at the Institute of Technology, Tralee, was launched in February 2015 and in March 2015, the Lifetime Achievement Award was awarded to her at the Leeds Sports Awards (Talbot, 2015).

In December 1995, the author had the privileged to meet Margaret Talbot in person for the first time at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Rainbow Week Symposium that was held at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Her passion for children in the first place, and secondly, for physical education (PE) and the role that PE and School Sport (PESS) could play in the lives of children were clearly illustrated in the paper she presented at this event, as well as in most of her published works. In this tribute, an attempt will be made to discuss in retrospect her viewpoints on PE as a school subject, as well as other aspects, such as advocacy, policy and school sport as it relates to PE. It has been 20 years since Margaret Talbot coined the phrase: “The game’s not the thing – the child is”, which must be at the heart of the PE practice (Talbot, 2007a:7).

This article will mainly focus on the period in her life, 1993-2014.

## **PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY**

With this brief background, the aim of this tribute is to focus on her work regarding PE as a school subject prior to and during her time as Chief Executive of the Association for Physical Education (afPE). This research was conducted by means of a literature study of mainly primary, as well as secondary sources. The methodology applied in this study can thus be typified as qualitative research within the interpretative science paradigm.

In this tribute, the discussions will be based on two pillars: (1) the universal provision of primary and secondary school PE and sport; and (2) politics, advocacy and policy. These two pillars will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

## **SETTING THE SCENE OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Margaret believed that youth worldwide *need* PE (Talbot, 2001:39). With its unique educational value, she believed that PE was “one of our greatest national assets” (Talbot, 1997:1). To ensure that PE is not lost, she was passionately committed to raise an awareness of the dangers currently threatening its survival.

PE content is not limited to the traditional practices of Physical Activity (PA) known as “sport”, because it is not merely in the physical, but *through* the physical that it aims to make a unique, vital and lasting impact to children’s health, self-esteem and growth (Talbot, 1997:3). “Sports Education” is:

... the introduction of the forms, conventions and skills of the activities known as sport; the critical place of the body and the process of learning [*through* the physical] are either marginalised or omitted, ... (Talbot, 1997:2).

The practice of school sport in a competitive extracurricular system does not concentrate on the process, but rather on the product. The status of these schools depends heavily on winning success and positions on logs. Unfortunately, competitive sport excludes most learners (only so many players can be on a team and only so many teams are in a specific age league), and especially late developers.

While Sport Science has been an effective way for PE to achieve academic propriety, it seems as if it has been at the expense of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programmes. The gap between PETE programmes and sport science has increased and has given rise to programmes in which sport forms the core, even in PETE programmes, at the expense of curriculum theory, practical teaching ability and the ethical and social concerns of sport (Talbot, 1997; Talbot, 2001). In teacher education courses in her frame of reference, the dominance of sport and sport science are seldom questioned (Talbot, 1997). She was determined to see that national policy on youth sport is informed by PE’s core values (Talbot, 1997).

In 2003, she wrote that the dominance of the sport sciences, that are relatively young compared to the parent science Physical Education, seems to have placed PE in an inferior or even submissive position. This relates to a performance discourse in sport science, which tends to focus solely on top performance sport and winning and not on the physical and movement experiences of ordinary people (Talbot, 2003).

The “World Crisis in Physical Education” refers to the fact that globally PE in school curricula is under threat or declining, while the sport sciences are going from strength to strength at Higher Education Institutions where they are presented. The World Summit on Physical Education in November 1999, tried to put the case for school PE and to raise political support for investment in PE. The global audit, performed on the state and status of school PE, indicated that there is less time available in school curricula; PE specialists are being dispatched to other school subjects; and other ‘academic’ subjects are replacing PE (Talbot, 1998:5-6; 1999:112-113; Hardman & Marshall, 2001). The legacy of the Western body-mind dualism, and the over-intellectual view on human development, are ideologies which are difficult to address (Talbot, 2001), but it is “the most powerful *false dichotomy*, which continues to bedevil PE” (Talbot, 2003:116).

In 1997, Talbot stated that because of the concern for literacy and numeracy in UK schools, PE had to compete, usually in vain, against these two categories of subjects who already received the lion’s share of resources, and as a result, the significance of physical literacy seemed to be overlooked (Talbot, 1997:9-10). According to Bailey (2015), the situation for

PE and youth sport has changed drastically during the 2000s, with huge amounts of money directed in that direction.

Education has always been a stable patron for sport, by providing the most comprehensive and effective structure to introduce all school-going youth to the skills and knowledge required for participation in sport, dance and physical activities (PA's) through PE (Talbot, 2001). In the case of PE, its contributions to the health and well-being of young people, as well as future sport participation are the most significant aspects (Talbot, 1997; Talbot, 2001). Through meaningful PA, that is fun and enjoyable, young people can develop self-confidence, a prerequisite for resistance to the risk behaviours related to school absenteeism, drug abuse, early sexual activity and delinquency (Talbot, 2001). The above-mentioned features of the case for PE seem so conclusive, so why does the case have to be made at all? There seems to be various reasons for this (Talbot, 2001:44-45):

1. *The world recession - education budgets are cut.* Non-examinable subjects are often seen as a disposable in such circumstances.
2. *Parent concerns regarding their children's employment.* Parents and policy makers have not yet been convinced by the PE profession that it is in fact a significant prevocational area.
3. *The youth are under great pressure to attain academic qualifications.* The result is that subjects that have intrinsic benefits, but are not examinable, are sidelined.
4. *The Western view of dualism.* Activities that are beyond the cognitive domain are not valued.
5. *The strength of the sport culture.* It is ironic that PE is often sidelined in both education and sport policy.
6. *Community sport programmes.* Policymakers saw the opportunity to reduce spending within education by trading PE for community sport programmes. The result, an inclusive system of introducing ALL children to the joys of learning through movement no longer existed. Due to various circumstantial issues, many youths will be excluded from these programmes, such as the poor, the less talented, etc.

Since 2001, PE has benefited from the high political profile now enjoyed by sport and the belief that investment in sport invests in wide-ranging health benefits, social inclusion and fighting crime (Talbot, 2006). In July 2007, the England Prime Minister at the time announced a new strategy for children to receive at least five hours of PESS, with two hours of PE within curriculum time (Talbot, 2007c; Talbot, 2008a).

Two main and unique features set PE apart from other delivery systems in the educational and sporting systems. They are, (1) the processes of learning and teaching; and (2) inclusion (Talbot, 2007b:6). Firstly, it is imperative in PE that teachers shift their focus away from curriculum *content* towards learning, which implies the teaching *process*. In PE, teachers need to collect suitable evidence of reflection and action to expand the learning process. Lastly, PE is a legal requirement for all children in the four home countries of the UK. The ideology and policy position is secured by the legal basis in the UK, and a range of

international agencies<sup>1</sup> support PE as a right for all children, which affords both a sustainable and ethically secure position for PE in schools. PE programmes cannot claim ‘high quality’ if these two aspects are not adequately addressed. Even before considering other quality criteria, they are prerequisites to be addressed (Talbot, 2007b).

As stated by Talbot (2007b), there remained a systemic weakness in the delivery of PE in UK primary schools, which could be attributed to the lack of sufficient time in initial Physical Education Teachers Education (PETE) programmes. The four-year BEd programme became a one-year postgraduate programme in which prospective PE teachers in effect only received eight months training. Even worse, in initial degree programmes data collected by the afPE in the UK showed that 40% of newly qualified PE primary school teachers had less than six hours training. The minimum suggested by the profession is 30 hours (Talbot, 2007b), therefore, six hours are simply not acceptable. For a subject with in-built risks, it is a licence to kill, which is a national disgrace (Talbot, 2006/2007a/2007b/2007c/2008d).

This systemic weakness was brought under the attention of former England Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. The Minister of State for Schools and Families defended the existing system, but agreed that newly qualified teachers would require further professional development. The Ministerial response also failed to recognise that government agencies failed to protect standards of teacher education. To address the poor quality of initial teacher training providers at the time, there was apparently little appetite (Talbot, 2007c; Talbot, 2008a).

In preparation for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London, legacy became a familiar term in the UK (Talbot, 2009b). To ensure that the 2012 Olympic Games would be awarded to the UK, the commitment to legacy featured as the central element of the bid. Lord Sebastian Coe, after making the successful bid, pledged a lasting legacy for the youth: “Our vision is to inspire young people and change lives” (Talbot, 2009b:7). Because of this commitment, the manifesto of the afPE ([www.afpe.org.uk](http://www.afpe.org.uk)), professed that PE, as a right for all young people, is at the base of this legacy for the youth (Talbot, 2009b).

The aim of physical education is to develop physical competence so that all children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, along with numeracy and literacy, is the essential basis for learners to access the whole range of competencies and experiences. (Talbot, 2009b:7)

The task of the afPE was to validate and articulate clearly what ‘physical competence’ entailed and its impact on children’s experiences and learning, and which Talbot has often termed ‘stating the obvious’. Yet, how many times have the PE profession been seduced into defining PE in terms other than the physical? All PE professionals believe that PE can offer a wealth of situations for learning social, environmental, emotional and personal skills. Yet, PE’s focus on the physical is its distinctive role. This dimension is so frequently absent from

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<sup>1</sup>See International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) Berlin Agenda for Action 1999; and Magglingen Commitment 2005 [www.icsspe.org](http://www.icsspe.org); UNESCO 1978 Declaration on Physical Education; MINEPS III (Minister of Physical Education and Sport) Conference, Declaration of Punta del Este; MINEPS IV Conference Declaration, Athens 2004.

the learning ‘pantheon’ that even the PE profession often fail to notice its absence. PE should do what the term suggests, but rarely is it communicated satisfactorily (Talbot, 2009b:7).

There is still limited recognition of the distinctive role of curriculum time PE as the *only* means of providing *every* child with the opportunity to learn the skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve the physical and social competences required for life-long participation. Yet, the largest allocation of funds goes to the elements of sport, which in reality are not accessible for every child. How is it then, even in the face of their own commissioned studies (Quyick *et al.*, 2008 cited in Talbot, 2009c:6), that strategic leaders still seem not to have grasped the fact that school PE can be the most all-inclusive and efficient component of the system (Talbot, 2009c)?

### **POLITICS, ADVOCACY AND POLICY**

According to Talbot, in 1998 the PE profession urgently needed to persuade education policy makers and those who influence them (parents, sport bodies, teachers, and businesses), that school PE is important for children’s development and that of sport. The same arguments are essential to make a case for school PE in establishing successful partnerships (Talbot, 1998).

There has been little agreement on the unique features of the educational experiences of PE and numerous calls for more actual and convincing research (Talbot, 1987 cited in Talbot, 2003:103; Bailey *et al.*, 2009; Hardman, 2010; Green, 2012a, b). These cynics would not accept a view of PE, which entails acceptance of hidden and incalculable practices and learning (Talbot, 2003).

The PE profession needs to play a leading role, mainly at national level, which is the only place where effective intervention could be made (Talbot, 2001). The challenges for governments were (Talbot, 2001:48), and still are:

- Recognise both the immediate benefits for the youth and longer term benefits for society;
- Provide a secure place for school PE in the curriculum and commit to investment in PE;
- Allocate resources for initial and post-PETE;
- Research PE’s contributions to educational, social and economic development;
- Integrate education and sport policies; and
- Cooperate with the PE profession.

At the close of the World Summit on Physical Education, there was an overwhelming agreement that PE faces a two-fold global challenge. Firstly, secure PE’s place in school curricula and secondly, improve the quality of teaching PE through initial and in-service PETE (Talbot, 2003). Among academics and the PE profession, there was a shared feeling that the need for political activity was either not acknowledged or resisted (Talbot, 2003). Talbot (2003:104) used a citation of Datnow (1998:2) to illustrate this point:

We seldom recognise the importance of the seedy underside ... - the micro-politics. We do not focus on the politics ... One reason for this is that the language of politics has long been taboo in educational settings.

Datnow's analysis offers a case study of processes with which the PE profession are familiar, but often lack the skills to manage it. Three key elements define her theoretical framework, which are relevant to address PE's global challenges. They are *discourse*, *ideology* and *social location*. The importance of *power* is constant, although the forces between the latter elements are complex and often subject to change (Talbot, 2003:104). Another key element is *agency*, which is defined as the capacity of people to sway events. In politics and policy-making practices of PE, *agency* is absent (Talbot, 2003).

Access to information on the dynamics of agency is often hard to obtain, because they are usually endorsed in private and might not be documented. This left PE negotiators involved in the political process, disempowered and misunderstood. Their agency is often constrained in ways, which the disinterested *post-hoc* observer simply could not appreciate, apart from their best efforts to ensure that the interests of PE are reflected in decision-making (Talbot, 2003). Central to the discourse analysis is the link between power and discourse and the ways in which the undercurrents of power within the political process are enacted by people that are seldom seen as significant by researchers (Talbot, 2003).

A three-stage process is required for political change (Talbot, 2007c:7; Talbot, 2014:422), namely (1) recognition of a problem; (2) the political will to challenge the problem; and (3) earmarking resources to do so. In the UK at the time, the first stage of political recognition regarding the systemic weakness in primary education had not yet been attained (Talbot, 2007c). The afPE, bearing in mind the various international efforts to guard the status of PE, could learn lessons in setting out its challenge to government policy. According to this political litany, PE professionals lack political experience and skills (Talbot, 2007c).

In presiding governments, politicians are less fascinated by problems than solutions. They do not dwell on problems for which their government may be held responsible; they rather seek ready-made solutions, which will show their government's success. However, opposition politicians are able to raise the profile of the problem, or even make a scandal out of the government's inability to solve the problem (Talbot, 2007c).

A crucial principle of policy and advocacy work is that if politicians are to hear and take notice, the message needs to be simple, consistent and repeated regularly over a period of time. Hence, organisations such as the afPE have to be willing to sustain their efforts. It is enticing to wonder how clear messages have to be and how often they need to be re-stated for politicians to 'get it'. Such a case is school PE (Talbot, 2007c:7). According to Talbot, in 2007 there was evidence that some providers in the UK were failing to adequately prepare prospective primary schools PE teachers. The task of the afPE, at the time, was to commit to a sustained campaign aimed at providing the mechanisms necessary for delivery and upkeep of high quality PE. The components of the campaign were, quality PE for all children; quality PETE; and time in school curricula (Talbot, 2007c).

In 2006, the Minister for the Third Sector in England made funds available to strengthen the 'voice' of voluntary and community organisation at the time (Talbot, 2007d:6):

It's not government that changes society; it's the third sector – through its campaigning, building communities, promoting volunteering ... My job is to enable people to do the inspiring things they do best.

The Shadow Minister of Sport and the Olympics was asked at the National Conference of the afPE in July 2007 (Talbot, 2007d:6): “What is the role of the afPE in national policy development?” His reaction was instant and concise:

[The] afPE is now the only independent voice for physical education ... it is vitally important that its voice is heard and recognised (Robertson, 2007 cited in Talbot, 2007d:6).

Although it seems that the role of independent organisations in challenging government departments have high-level political support, political rhetoric is not always converted into practice. Regardless of inspiring extensive support from within the PE profession and its associates in sport and health to improve the quality of initial PETE for primary teachers, the afPE had less positive replies from government departments responsible for teacher workforce development (Talbot, 2007d).

As stated earlier, 40% newly qualified PE teachers entering schools in England at the time received less than six hours training. The official response was that time cannot be equated with quality and that school-based experiences, which trainee teachers received were not taken into account in these assessments. Yet, in a follow up letter from afPE, it was highlighted that it is not possible for trainees, who lack confidence due to a lack of training, to develop it during the school experience (Talbot, 2007d). The following official responses were received (Talbot, 2007d:7):

- The required standards were met and there was no indication that they were not; and
- The responsibility lies with head teachers to safeguard that teachers were capable to deliver the curriculum safely.

These responses were not startling, as they protected long-term policies established by previous governments that seemed to respect high quality, managing demand and supply, and fast turn-around of suppliers when demographics needed it. The loyalty to this policy seems definite notwithstanding the fact that the UK required less training for its graduate teachers than any other West European country (Talbot, 2008d), and despite the fact that primary postgraduate PETE was viewed the most serious systemic weakness. This systemic weakness was severe for PE, not only because of the fears about health, but also because of the very high political expectations for PE at that time, which had to play its part in three policy areas: educational provision and the national curriculum; the sport system; and contributing towards child and public health (Talbot, 2007d).

Although PE does have high status in England, given that PE is mandatory for all children in the 5-16 age range, as is the case with five so-called core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, Information Technology), it is not a core subject. Unlike other “foundation” subjects, PE should at least have two hours per week within curriculum time, accompanied by three hours of extra-curricular sport as mentioned earlier. Notwithstanding differences, PE



enjoyed a high political profile in three of the UK home countries, but these countries shared the same professional anxiety about primary school teachers' insufficient initial PETE (Talbot, 2008a).

Why PE could not exploit its enhanced status and the extensive investment in PE in these countries, was a question the profession needed to ask itself. There was no doubt that much existing policy was sport-led rather than educationally-led and, therefore, the PE profession had to accept that it still needed to express a solid case for PE, which would attract investment on its own worth, rather than relying on its accredited role as a vital base for sport skills and knowledge (Talbot, 2008a). She agrees with Carney and Winkler (cited in Talbot, 2008a:6), that physical literacy is just as important as literacy and numeracy, but that a case still needs to be made to education policy makers to show the worth of curricula that stimulate physical literacy.

It was inviting to make the case for PE on health grounds alone, but the afPE believed that this was not the route to follow. The afPE wanted to argue the case for PE's *contribution* to health promotion through PA, within a multi-agency policy framework (Talbot, 2008b:6-7). (See the Health Position Paper of the afPE, 2008b at [www.afpe.org.uk](http://www.afpe.org.uk).) Though PE could contribute meaningfully to health promotion, its key function (as stated earlier) remains paramount:

... to develop physical competence so that all children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing (afPE Manifesto, 2008 cited in Talbot, 2008b:7; Talbot, 2009b:7).

Therefore, PE must continue to make its case in *educational terms*. The Manifesto for PE outlines its contribution to children's development and the policy measures essential to safeguard a vigorous system of provision and enhancement (Talbot, 2008b:7-8). The reasoning based on "learning to move" and "moving to learn" has been applauded by curriculum leaders as making clear both the intrinsic and instrumental values of PE (Talbot, 2001; Talbot, 2008b:8). (See the Manifesto for Physical Education, 2008, afPE.)

"Learning to move" includes learning inherent to PE, such as the skills and understanding needed for participation in PA and knowledge of the body and its range of and capability for movement. In contrast, "moving to learn", involves learning outcomes not inherent to PE, but are valuable extrinsic educational lessons. These outcomes include, social skills; managing co-operation and competition; applying aesthetic decisions; using language; numbers, etc. (Talbot, 2001:39).

Nonetheless, it is decisive that the forces coming from the sport culture and from PE's place within school sport, which unavoidably tend to place PE at the service of the national sport strategy at the expense of children's needs and PE's place in education, is recognised and managed (Talbot, 2008c). Talbot (2008c:8) elaborates:

Those advocating for physical education have long experienced the frustration of distinguishing it from sport, frequently in defence, falling back on characterising physical education as *what it is not*, i.e. that it is more than sport, or that sport is part

of physical education's content. It has been less common to see assertive articulation of what physical education *is*.

In policy arenas with the acceptance of performance targets, there is potential for conflict with the market values, which plague delivery in the public sector. Over the last 20 years across education and higher education, this has been as obvious as in health. Here the domination of clinical targets has helped to avoid essential approaches to preventive measures in health promotion, including promoting PA. Naturally, in sport, the final form is expressed in policies unashamedly targeted at 'more medals'. How this acceptance of market values, which effect its investment, infrastructure and delivery, has impacted on PE, needs to be activated by means of deliberation (Talbot, 2008b).

PE faces a dichotomous challenge. Leaders must manage the prospects placed on PE by its obligation within the sport system as the basis for children to be introduced to the skills and knowledge needed for performance. PE's contributions to public health must also be voiced and managed by them. Most notably, PE's unique core purpose to empower informed and critical learners through physical learning must be secured. The willingness of the profession to challenge market-led values is acknowledged by the welcome given to the title of the 2008 National Conference of the afPE, "Hitting the Target, Missing the Point" (Talbot, 2008b:8). A statement made by Ball captures the challenge (cited in Talbot, 2008b:8):

It is time to think differently about education policy before it is too late. We need to move beyond the tyrannies of improvement, efficiency and standards to recover a language of and for education ...

The media coverage of the tensions between investment in grass roots and performance sport regarding the budget shortfall to support Team Great Britain's preparation for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, was raised constantly. Often it seemed as if politicians believed that one section must flourish at the expense of another. History has revealed that most host countries have directed investment into a hunt for medals, at the expense of participation in sport and PA (Talbot, 2008c; Talbot, 2008d).

Talbot (2008c) was convinced that the potential of a country to be successful in sport at international level, a good quality PE system in all schools could make a substantial impact. Yet, no evidence to support this belief exists. Talbot was invited to the Beijing Olympic Games. The then IOC President wanted to know how the youth were influenced in their choices of sport and PA in different parts of the world and whether participation patterns were sustained over time. The question that arose was why the IOC asked PE researchers for help when they have massive resources (Talbot, 2008c). She believed that the answer was simple: in most cases, the research expertise available to the IOC does not relate to pedagogy and cultures, but to performance sport, which led her to ponder on the effect of sport science on PE research (Talbot, 2008c).

To deliver a key perspective and value position, which place the interest of the youth beyond extrinsic luxuries, such as success through competition and economic value through earned income, is a vital aspect of PE's role, which is ignored. The main focus on PA, the participant and the interactions between them, has often been ignored in academic studies. In these

studies, the disposition has been to drift towards what Whitson and Macintosh (1990:48 cited in Talbot, 2008c:6), called “performance discourse”, with little concern for the way in which the:

... rationalised pursuit of high performance collides with ... the practice of sport as a medium of personal education and growth.

An understanding of the complex and dynamic relationships between people, their lives and participation in PA is needed so that a shared scientific pedagogy can be established for work in PE and sport science using multidisciplinary viewpoints. If these challenges could be met, the PE profession would be closer to the common pedagogy so badly needed, more likely to retain creative people and much more likely to attain high quality and creative researchers for PE (Talbot, 2008c).

The afPE Board stated (Talbot, 2009a:6):

... [The] afPE is committed ‘to establish and sustain physical education at the heart of school life and whole-school development, through support for high quality learning and teaching; research; ethical leadership; and politically informed advocacy and representation.

As the representative voice for PE, this role requires (Talbot, 2009a:6):

... awareness of policy innovations and their implications; and where possible, early influence or intervention to ensure that the interests of physical education and those who deliver it are not harmed; ... If early intervention is not effective, then it may be necessary to resort to lobbying and campaigning.

Talbot (2009a) provided a case study of advocacy and influence using the policy progress at that time in England. This case study had significance for any proposed change to the status of PE, right across the UK and internationally. Early in 2008, Government commissioned an ‘independent review’ of the primary school curriculum in England, led by Sir Jim Rose. The features of Sir Rose’s remit did not make mention of PE as a subject, not even in the Early Years Curriculum, which implied that any analysis of the place of PE would be subordinate to these features. Thus, it was vital to gather information about the evolution of the review, which was piloted in private, with inputs from ‘experts’ who were carefully chosen by the Review Team (Talbot, 2009a).

Previous curriculum reviews allowed subject associations to make inputs to thinking and the agendas allowed much more time than the Rose Review. This Review asked for contributions to its rationale, subsequent to publishing the remit. The afPE submitted an official reply to questions posed in April 2008 and made a strong case for PE to become a core subject (Talbot, 2009a:7). (See the afPE website [www.afpe.org.uk](http://www.afpe.org.uk).) During late 2008, information about the progress of the Review was received by the afPE causing concern. Unavoidably, there were leaks through which the afPE became aware that PE would be integrated into the ‘Health and Emotional Well-Being’ Area of Learning. Of greater concern was that the Review was being influenced by two different viewpoints, each with an incorrect, but sadly,

common view of PE. One viewpoint was that PE was limited to competitive team games, which were unfitting for this age range, and a unit within Arts and Design, dance and movement could meet their needs. The other view was that there should be no need for PE to be taught, as schools should be committed to daily exercise to meet the health requirements of children. This clearly showed the sustained threat to the status of school PE (Talbot, 2009a).

The above-mentioned position also risked the progress of the Physical Education, School Sport and Young People (PESSYP) strategy and the Government's ambitious statement of two hours high quality PE within curriculum time and three hours extra-curricular school sport by 2012. In addition, it would jeopardise the legacy promises by Government in 2012 and would be contrary to the aims of the 'Every Child Matters' and childhood obesity objectives. As a result, the afPE notified their partners within the PESSYP Consortium for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – Sportscoach UK and the Youth Sport Trust (YST). The Consortium partners then notified colleagues in the Departments of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). A joint letter from the Consortium partners was sent to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (Talbot, 2008a; Talbot, 2009a).

In December 2008, the original suggestions published by the Rose Review requested responses. The afPE submitted a formal response and a media release, which highlighted major concerns (Talbot, 2009a:7-8):

- Within the Area of Learning, "Understanding Health and Well-Being", PE was being reduced almost invisible. Where PE had been included under another heading, for example in South Africa under Life Orientation, PE in the curriculum disappeared (Hardman & Marshall, 2001);
- Children could follow the proposed curriculum without moving a muscle; and
- A strong case was also made for the integrity of PE and for location in a context with similar concepts.

The reaction of the afPE led to a high level meeting at the Department of Children, Families and Schools, where a Rose team representative heard the views of the afPE and members of the CPD Consortium, Sportscoach UK and the YST, which were intensely supported by high-ranking officials from government departments and agencies concerned. The agreement shown at the meeting, along with ensuing awareness raising and advocacy, may well have contributed to greater visibility of PE in the official suggestions, which were then looming (Talbot, 2009a).

With the last 'Key Matters' that Talbot wrote as Chief Executive of the afPE, she unveiled what had been learned and what still needs to be done from the involvement with the Rose Review (Talbot, 2009d). From the outset, it was a highly politicised process. On 19 November 2009, Ed Balls quietly issued a letter "representing an important decision based on imperfect knowledge". The letter indicated that the Ministers accepted the recommendations of Sir Rose. Both Sir Rose and Ed Balls sadly chose to ignore the joint professional advice from the lead officials of the afPE, the YST and the then Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) (Talbot, 2009d).

It was Talbot's belief that Sir Rose was a stalwart to reasoned arguments to uphold linguistic orderliness at the expense of a vital element of the primary curriculum. No counter arguments have been made in the numerous representations during the 'consultation' process. It could safely be said that he has been consistent, in promising nothing and keeping his word. As a typical bureaucrat, defined as "an official who is rigidly devoted to the details of administrative procedure", he simply stuck to his brief, as he saw it, and omitted any influence, which might have made it more complex (Talbot, 2009d:6).

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Margaret Talbot was the true Olympian, one of the leading academics and researchers, not only in defining what the content of school physical education entails and its benefits to society, but also in fighting for its rightful place in school curricula. Furthermore, her advocacy work as Chief Executive of the afPE clearly indicates how bureaucratic red tape within the political world can turn around what has been stated as a given. It is unfortunate to learn from her work that autonomous associations like the afPE do not have a strong enough voice, although it has been stated that it is the third sector that can change society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Margaret Talbot's work should not end here, but her legacy should be honoured and continued. The global battle for school PE should still be high on the agenda of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), which was the last base where Margaret served. The ICSSPE, with its 300 organisations and institutions, which work with and within PE and Sport Science, should take the lead in activism internationally and come forth with the *dream team* that Margaret referred to in 2014 (Talbot, 2014:423). A strong leader with the vigour and passion of a Margaret Talbot is needed to drive the whole process.

## Epilogue

The situation in the UK in the 1990s, regarding resource allocation towards literacy and numeracy and PE and school sport, is currently applicable in the South African context. According to the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), PE is a topic within the subject Life Orientation (LO), and the different topics are allocated various hours of contact time throughout the year in all the different phases of the CAPS. South Africa is also a signatory towards the MINEPS declarations.

However, in 2009, 60% of the teachers who presented PE within LO in the Western Cape Province were not qualified in PE (Van Deventer, 2009). In a follow-up study in the Eastern Cape, Free State, North West and Western Cape Provinces, 50% of the teachers were not qualified in PE (Van Deventer, 2012). It would thus seem that South African PE programmes could not claim high quality because the *learning and teaching* and *inclusion* of all children cannot be guaranteed by the Department of Basic Education.

Most South African children have already fallen in to what is called movement poverty, lacking the necessary physical literacy to engage in a healthy lifestyle, free of social ills (drug, crime, teenage pregnancy, etc.), now and as future adults.

A lesson to be learned by South Africa, from the sterling and exemplary professional legacy left by Margaret Talbot, is that even with a recognised association for PE, the reinstatement of PE as a stand-alone school subject will not materialise without the political will do it. Valuable knowledge for South African policy makers can be gained especially on the subject of her advocacy for PE within the broader context of politics in the UK.

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Dr Karel J. VAN DEVENTER: Department of Sport Science, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa. Tel.: +27 (0)21 808 4715, Cell.: +27 (0)84 258 1756, Fax.: +27 (0)21 808 4817, E-mail: kjvd@sun.ac.za

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