



## **17 NCPE 2000 – Where Are We so Far?**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Some of the most significant changes that came with the revised National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) in 2000 (DfEE/QCA, 1999b) were in the area of assessment. Assessment in the NCPE 2000 has been acknowledged by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2003b) as the area requiring most attention from both teachers in schools and from those in universities, colleges and schools who are responsible for educating the next generation of teachers. This chapter provides the opportunity for you to consider the underpinning rationale for the proposed assessment process in the NCPE 2000. It also makes more explicit some of the key concepts on which the assessment processes and procedures are premised. The language used in assessment in the NCPE 2000 is technical in so far as the interpretation of words needs to be specific in order to convey the intention and guide action and planning. Some of the terms used are discussed in order to appreciate possible interpretations and their significance for pupils' learning.

In the proposals for the first NCPE in 1992 (DES/WO, 1992) PE was denied the requirement of levels in assessment that was introduced for the majority of subjects. This was regretted. Concerns about this omission were voiced both by the National Curriculum Working Group (DES/WO, 1991) and teachers, and focused on:

- the image given of PE and the message sent to colleagues, parents and pupils that the subject was less important than other subjects;
- the inference that learning in PE did not allow for systematic, reportable progression;
- the possible interpretation that assessment in PE was not sufficiently sophisticated to allow for differentiation into levels.



The inclusion of levels for assessment in the NCPE 2000 is the most significant change and is welcome by many in the profession. Being able to consider the detail of description that is within these levels raises the expectation that teachers observe and assess pupils' success in a much more definitive way than previously. This detail also allows teachers to appreciate the more subtle aspects of continuity and progression. It makes it possible for teachers to give pupils a more accurate profile of their achievements in a more systematic way.

The other major change in NCPE 2000 was in the introduction, within the programmes of study (PoS), of four strands related to pupils' learning. These define what PE is about. New concepts in education are often very difficult to establish. In the 1992 NCPE (DES/WO, 1992) the concept of planning, performing and assessing as the organising principle was introduced within PE. It was intended that this process would underpin what pupils learn and will do. The emphasis was to change from a product (activity) based curriculum to a process (learning) based curriculum. The change had proposed that instead of pupils being taught an activity (e.g. football) as an end in itself, the pupils would experience and understand what learning in PE was about through participating in a range of activities. Even by the introduction of the revised NCPE, neither teachers or pupils had come to terms with the potential and implication of this process focus and the majority were still not comfortable with its incorporation in learning and teaching in PE. This was evidenced in:

- planning for learning where the learning objectives still arose from a focus on progression of skill within an individual activity rather than on the process of learning that each pupil would experience within each activity;
- the language used by teachers and pupils which focused on the appropriate language for a specific activity rather than on words that would describe and make judgements on the ability of each pupil to plan, perform and evaluate;
- assessment emphasised the level of pupils' skill performance within each activity rather than on their competence in planning for learning, improving skill levels and being able to make critical judgements on their own and others' learning.

The writers of the NCPE 2000 recognised the reluctance of teachers to change established practice in this way, felt the need to introduce alternative concepts and so proposed a change in the way the subject was organised in terms of learning and teaching. As a result the four strands were introduced.

This change of focus to strands, coupled with the requirement to incorporate levels of assessment, has challenged teachers to redesign the departmental assessment policy. This is not proving to be an easy task and the formulating and implementing of assessment policies is taking more time than would be expected. There are reasons for this. For some teachers, inertia against proscribed change means that they have not yet accepted that their policies must change if they are going to meet curriculum requirements fully. For others, the translating of the requirements of the curriculum into a working assessment policy is proving frustrating in that they already have what they believe are good procedures for assessing pupils effectively. Still others are struggling with the concepts of the NCPE and are finding it difficult to understand and



produce a process of assessment that they can implement confidently. Most teachers who have designed changes in their assessment policies have produced procedures that are often more complicated than necessary. This is consequently causing them a problem in making the process work efficiently and effectively.

This chapter attempts to uncover some of the issues involved in interpretation of the NCPE requirements. Integration of the various aspects of assessment are discussed and some ideas for simplification proposed. This is designed in part to help you to develop effective assessment procedures in PE (see also Chapter 11).

### **OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- appreciate the structure of assessment in the NCPE;
- understand the conceptual basis of NCPE assessment;
- understand the relationship of the four strands, within the programmes of study, to the eight levels of pupil achievement;
- question the practice of assessing in schools when you become involved in assessment;
- understand what a good and effective assessment policy in a school might be;
- recognise the most common pitfalls in achieving a successful policy and its practice.

## **THE FOUR STRANDS**

### **Understanding the nature of PE**

In the NCPE 2000 the process of learning in PE is defined as comprising four strands. These are:

- acquiring and developing skills;
- selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas;
- evaluating and improving;
- knowledge and understanding of fitness and health.

The relationship of the first three of these strands to the earlier concepts of 'planning, performing and evaluating' in the 1992 and 1995 NCPE (DES/WO, 1992; DfE, 1995) is obvious and so the change should not have been major for those who had already embraced this principle.

That *knowledge of fitness and health* in the NCPE 2000 is given a separate strand reflects a long-running issue and debate that relates to the place of this critical area in curriculum planning. The issue arises out of two strongly-held beliefs about how



pupils should be introduced to such critical concepts. These beliefs are that this area of the curriculum:

- should be considered as a specific programme of study in its own right with its own content; or alternatively
- should be integrated throughout all programmes of study, informing the content and assessment of each.

The NCPE 2000 has selected not to follow the former but has recognised the spirit of the latter in integrating fitness and health into each separate activity through its inclusion as one of the strands. This gives the area a separate strand in the assessment design which ensures that it is reflected fully within the learning and assessment of pupils and features in reports to parents (others, e.g. Piotrowski 2000, look at this debate).

### Interpreting the strands

The first strand, *acquiring and developing skills*, states that PE is about the ‘acquisition of skill’ but recognises that simple mechanical reproduction of skills, however good this may be, is not sufficient to ensure that pupils are involved in learning about what it means to acquire and develop skills in the subject. Successful achievement in this strand gives the learner-performer significant transferable skills related to learning and developing other bodily-based skills (e.g. handwriting, playing a musical instrument, driving a car). Performing a skill is a mindful exercise that demands of the pupils that they make intelligent decisions about their performance of skills, both prior to and during the performance.

*What do the words used to describe the strand mean? Acquiring* means to learn or be able to perform a skill or produce quality in performance. This relates to the technical phrase ‘acquisition of skill’. *Developing* refers to skills that are changing, becoming more advanced and complex and converting to a new purpose. It is important to note the difference between the use of ‘skill’ and *skills*. Skill refers to the ability to do something well and having expertise, while skills refer in this instance to specific examples of skilled behaviour that are necessary for effective performance within the activities of PE and sport. *It is important that both meanings are used in this strand as pupils are learning a series of specific skills for which they must acquire the ability to do well and show expertise where possible.*

Figure 17.1 explains more fully what is meant by acquiring and developing skills, highlights the differences between them and illustrates with general examples across activities.

The second strand, *selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas*, is a very significant strand in the process of learning within PE. The strand expects that the performer has, and is still developing, a repertoire of skills. It then demands that when the performer is participating in a structured activity they are able to select the most appropriate skill to achieve success in the challenge (e.g. a low ball close to the net in volleyball calls for a ‘dig’ shot). Most other skills would be inappropriate. Not only must the skill be *selected* but it must also be *applied in the context that presents itself* (e.g. the player who selects to play the dig must also decide that it cannot be attempted until they are close to the ball – to apply this skill may demand repositioning



**Figure 17.1** Interpretation of the first strand of the NCPE 2000: acquiring and developing skills

	Acquiring	Developing
<b>Skills</b>	<p>There are a number of categories of skills to be acquired in learning to be a successful performer in PE, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• motor</li><li>• communication</li><li>• non-verbal communication</li><li>• team building</li><li>• thinking</li><li>• kinaesthetic awareness</li></ul> <p>Each activity within the PoS has specific dedicated skills that form the essence of the activity (e.g. overhead smash in tennis)</p> <p>Skill acquisition does not happen quickly. It requires concentrated and repeated practice over a significant period</p>	<p>The process of developing a skill depends on which skill is to be developed (e.g. development of the motor skill 'overarm throw' develops into the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• serve in tennis</li><li>• overhead smash in badminton</li><li>• outfielder throw in cricket etc.</li></ul> <p>The development of the serve in tennis comes as a result of the motor pattern being adapted to suit the player's natural aptitudes and the demands of the activity</p> <p>Development of a skill allows the newly learned skill to be refined and grooved into <i>consistent performance</i> that is within the total control of the performer (e.g. the golfer 'grooving' his swing)</p>

from mid-court to the net zone prior to performing the dig, and the whole pattern of movement must be smooth and continuous).

*What do the words used to define the strand mean? Selecting* means to choose carefully from a number of options the one that is the best or most suitable. *Applying* refers to bringing something into operation or use that is relevant. For *skills*, see above. *Tactics* refers to action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end and *compositional ideas* refers to a concept or an imaginative form that can be brought into being by creatively arranging a number of basic components.

Figure 17.2 explains what selecting and applying mean and gives examples to show how they are used in relation to skills, tactics and compositional ideas.

The third strand, *evaluating and improving performance*, is critical to the process if learning is going to result in success. The only way a performer is going to improve is if they appreciate the performance in terms of its strengths and of the aspects that need to change if it is to be successful. Evaluating one's own and others' performances requires competence and ability in observation, comparative analysis and the mastery of appropriate language to describe what the performance is showing. This process engages the performer/coach/spectator in reflection and thinking about what the participant has done and the context within which this took place. Suggesting ways of improving the performance relies upon the person making the suggestions having a thorough knowledge of the activity, being able to pinpoint the specific aspect of the performance which is either hindering success or is the reason for an outstanding performance and then being adept at giving understandable, accurate feedback to the performer.



**Figure 17.2** Interpretation of the second strand of the NCPE 2000: selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas

	Selecting	Applying
<b>Skills</b>	Being able to choose from a repertoire of skills the most appropriate one in context, e.g. to be able to chose to play a good lob shot in tennis	Being able to adapt this skill to the demands of the situation and perform it successfully, e.g. to be able to perform the lob successfully on court when under pressure from an opponent
<b>Tactics</b>	Recognising the demands of the situation and knowing which response copes best in the circumstances, e.g. making the decision that the lob is the correct shot in terms of the position of the opponent on the court	Being able to use the selected tactic successfully to achieve what has been considered necessary, e.g. being able still to complete the lob successfully by redirecting the angle of the shot when the opponent quickly changes position
<b>Compositional ideas</b>	Being able to select from a range and variety of innovative, imaginative and creative responses and make the best choice, e.g. knowing that the most effective spatial/temporal design of a movement phrase in dance to express tranquillity would be to remain on a constant level at a sustained speed	Appreciate how the compositional idea can be interpreted appropriately in the context of what is to be achieved, e.g. being able to compose a motif in this form and either perform it personally or help others to perform it in the context of the rest of the dance

*What do the words used to describe the strand mean? Evaluating* is a process of forming an idea of value, ‘goodness of fit’, amount of success and effectiveness. How good or effective? *Improve* means to achieve or produce something better and *performance* refers to the action or process of performing a task or function (i.e. responding to a learning activity set up in a lesson).

Figure 17.3 explains more fully the roles of evaluating and improving performance with some appropriate examples.

The final strand, *knowledge and understanding of fitness and health*, allows pupils to appreciate the role that fitness and health play in successful ‘performance’ and gives them the tools to prepare the body for the demands that are to be placed on it.

*What do the words used to describe the strand mean? Knowledge* refers to information and skills that are acquired through experience and education – what and how. *Understanding* incorporates perceiving significance, explanation, cause, interpretation and inference – why and what if. *Fitness* is to be in a specific *condition to attempt and succeed at something* and *health* to be free from illness and injury and in good general physical and mental condition.

Figure 17.4 shows that knowledge and understanding are different concepts and that fitness and health are also very different.

**Figure 17.3** Interpretation of the third strand of the NCPE 2000: evaluating and improving

	Evaluating	Improving
<b>Performance</b>	<p>No performance of a skill, tactic or compositional idea improves or reaches its best standard unless there is constant evaluation of it. This is normally the role of the teacher or coach but in this strand the task is carried out by the pupils both on their own performance and on that of their peers</p> <p>Good evaluation results in accurate feedback being given in such a way that it can be fully understood by the performer. The performer then acts on this information and if it is accurate and sensitive the performance should benefit</p> <p>Accurate feedback is dependent on the person giving the feedback being fully familiar with the essential items of the activity being performed, being able to observe these and being able to use well-developed language to convey the feedback. The pupils need help from the teacher to observe and make appropriate judgements</p>	<p>Being able to help a performer to improve performance requires a knowledge of both the performer's capability and potential and what they are trying to improve. The pupils need to be guided and helped in this by the teacher (see also the reciprocal teaching style of Mosston and Ashworth, 2002, Chapter 9). For example: the observer may decide that to improve the performance, the performer needs more power applied more explosively. The natural characteristics of the performer, however, do not include great ability in the production of explosive power so the feedback must approach the issue in a different way by focusing perhaps on how and where what power is available is applied, or by stimulating the performer via motivating images or metaphors</p>

**Figure 17.4** Interpretation of the fourth strand of the NCPE 2000: knowledge and understanding of fitness and health

	Knowledge	Understanding
<b>Fitness</b>	Being aware of what constitutes specific fitness requirements for specific activities. Knowing how fitness schedules work and how they should be planned for an individual	Being able to interpret the effectiveness of a specific fitness schedule and consider possible changes to make it more effective as the performer develops
<b>Health</b>	Appreciating what it means to be healthy and what contributes to this state. Being knowledgeable about different states of health for different people at different times	Being able to relate good health habits to ways of life of self and others in terms of effect of good eating, exercise etc. and be able to suggest good patterns of behaviour that take account of each individual



## Integrating the four strands

When the strands are integrated as a totality, the statement that they make about PE is that it is an area of study (a subject) that is based on knowledge, skills and an understanding of the fundamental basis of what it means to participate in recognised activities. This provides the framework for learning to participate successfully whatever the activity and ensures the possibility of ongoing participation in culturally acceptable forms of sport, dance and fitness. This curriculum prepares learners to access these cultural forms having acquired significant levels of skill, knowledge and understanding to fully appreciate them.

## EXPLORING THE LEVELS – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EIGHT LEVELS IN THE ATTAINMENT TARGET

The attainment target in NCPE 2000 (DfES/QCA, 1999b) states, in some detail, what pupils should attain at different stages and levels of their learning within the four strands of the PoS. The levels give detail as to the expected progression that pupils should make in their learning in PE.

Any proposed estimate of attainment for all pupils can only be given as a benchmark. Pupils do not conform to a norm, but it is necessary to have such a norm if we are to be able to assess pupils on a national basis. Equally, it is not possible to be confident about the actual progression rates of any individual pupil. Pupils tend to follow a similar pattern in their learning progression but it is unlikely that they all follow it *at the same rate*. Some pupils make steady progress against the suggested levels and stages. Others have periods of acceleration (or apparent delay) at different levels and stages, perhaps followed by a delay (or accelerated change), and show uneven progress through the levels. Others may have a profile of expected improvement followed by an apparent drop in level before they consolidate at an appropriate level. It is important to recognise this so that appropriate pressure can be put on pupils at points in their learning progression where it has the best effect.

In learning there are two essential elements that need to be understood and to which careful consideration should be given throughout the process if learning is going to be as successful and effective as possible. These are *continuity* and *progression*. Why are these two concepts so important in learning? What do the words mean? The following definitions are taken from, with minor adaptation, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (1999).

*Continuity* means ‘a consistent line of development without any sharp breaks’. The significant words in this definition are ‘consistent’, ‘development’ and ‘breaks’:

- consistent – ‘not containing any logical contradictions’;
- development – ‘state of growth or advancement’;
- breaks – ‘divergence from something established’.

*The concept is that learning should be one logical, focused, seamless, smooth state of growth or advancement.*





Before reading on, think for a few moments about the following questions. How can you achieve these ultimate conditions for learning? How can you prepare for this to happen?

To achieve this in learning demands that the content of the learning is fully understood by both learner and teacher, in terms of the subtle changes that are necessary for development. It is important that 'what should come next' is fully understood. *Illogical links in what is being asked of the learner results in the breakdown of the learning process.* It is well known that learning is about assimilating new knowledge, skill and understanding into previously accommodated learning. If there is too much difference between what has already been accommodated and what is next to be assimilated then the dissonance is too great for the process to move on smoothly.

For example, between Levels 5 and 6 pupils must learn to 'discriminate between the demands of different activities'. For this transition in learning from the Level 4 expectation of 'showing a deeper understanding of tactics and compositional ideas' pupils, first, need help to understand the criteria that are to be used to describe the deeper understanding of tactics and compositional ideas. These same criteria can then form the basis for the process of discrimination between the demands of different activities and allow for a smooth transition into making discriminatory comparisons (e.g. a deeper understanding of the need for change of pace in outwitting an opponent leads to pupils being able to appreciate that different activities demand different patterns of change of speed to be in a position to outwit an opponent).

*Progression* means 'a gradual movement or development towards an improved or more advanced state'. The significant words in this definition are 'gradual', 'improved' and 'advanced':

- gradual – 'taking place in stages over an extended period';
- improve – 'make better', 'empower';
- advanced – 'far on in progress', 'complex', 'not elementary'.

*The concept is that learning should take place over an extended period in steady stages that empower the learner to achieve more complex, better things.*

Before reading on, consider what sources of information or material you would use to help you to plan for accurate and effective progression in pupils' learning in the PoS.

It is important for both learner and teacher to appreciate the logical and appropriate stages of learning within any specific context. The learning challenges that arise from this, and that are presented to the pupils, must relate to each other and show a gradual increase in complexity towards a more advanced state. This effectively empowers the learner to attempt even more complex knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, to progress towards making a successful throw from the outfield in cricket, pupils may need to experience the following progressions across two strands. *Within the first strand:*

- 1 Understand that there are different patterns of throwing that are used in different contexts (i.e. underarm for accurate bowling; overarm for distance and power).



- 2 Practice of the overarm throwing pattern to achieve both distance and power.
- 3 Further practice of the throw to achieve accuracy.
- 4 Develop the ability to pick up the 'loose' ball on the run and convert to an accurate and powerful fielding throw in one smooth, continuous movement.

*And within the second strand:*

- 5 Appreciation of where to aim the ball in the game so that the throw is tactically successful.

Pupils in a typical class will all be at different stages in this progression.

Attention to continuity and progression in planning for learning avoids a random approach to a pupil's learning that can only result in the pupil learning isolated and rather low-level skills.

The eight levels are written to encourage continuity and progression in the four strands for all pupils across all activities. The levels must be read in such a way that this is recognised and understood. What follows shows that the essence of tracing progression from one level to another lies in the use of selected words that focus on critical aspects of learning (e.g. *acquiring* skills progresses to *improving* skills). As a teacher you should know what the difference is between these two, in terms of what you ask the pupils to do and expect of them. You can find some of this detail in the material that relates to progression within each activity (i.e. the increasing difficulty of more advanced skills and why this is so). (See also Chapter 3 regarding planning for precise use of language in intended learning outcomes.)

### **What is the essence of progression from one level to the next?**

Progression from one level to the next focuses on processes of learning that pupils employ as they progress in that learning. For example:

- 'acquiring skills' (L1) progresses towards 'improving skills' (L2);
- 'make relevant comment' (L1) progresses to 'compare performances' (L2);
- 'being able to say why' (L3) progresses to 'can explain basic principles' (L4).

*Level 1* is about pupils both *acquiring* and *linking together* simple skills with some *control and coordination*. They should be aware of the interrelationship of these skills and abilities in their own performance, be *able to observe* them in others and *make some relevant comment* about the skills, about what their performance feels like and about being safe.

*Progression to Level 2* is about pupils *improving their skills* in terms of control, coordination, varying and linking such that they can *employ simple tactics* and *show some compositional ideas*. They now should *compare performances* and be able to *suggest appropriate improvements*.

*Progression to Level 3* is about pupils *selecting and varying* appropriate skills and compositional ideas from their established repertoire. They now begin to *understand*



the reason behind preparing for and concluding exercise and *be able to say* why physical activity is good for their health.

*Progression to Level 4* is about pupils *linking skills*, techniques and ideas with *precision and fluency* while continuing to show control and coordination and *deeper understanding of tactics and composition*. They can *explain basic principles* of safe exercise, and its effects and value to fitness and health.

*Progression to Level 5* is about pupils showing a *greater degree of consistency* in what they have achieved at Level 4. They are *involved in planning* their own and others' work and are able to *refine performances*. They have *more discrimination* about the effects and values of exercise.

*Progression to Level 6* is about pupils being able to *discriminate among the demands of different activities*, and *showing consistency* in what was achieved at Level 5. They are more *aware of individual strengths and weaknesses* of both self and others and are able to be *more analytical about performances* in terms of the appropriate use of skills, techniques and ideas. They begin to *take responsibility for planning* a personal fitness/activity programme.

*Progression to Level 7* is about *moving to an advanced level* of skills, techniques and ideas that they can apply successfully in a *range of different circumstances* with *originality*. They can now *explain and use principles* in relation to practice and analyse the relationships among skill level, tactical knowledge and fitness in order to achieve *quality of performance*. (For a discussion on what may constitute 'advanced' skills, see below.)

*Progression to Level 8* is about pupils being able to *apply consistently advanced skills* with *high standards of precision, control, fluency, flair and originality*. Pupils are now able to *evaluate their own and others' work*, appreciating the impact of skills, strategy, tactics, composition and fitness on quality of performance. They can suggest ways of improving and how to *monitor this improvement*.

#### Task 17.1 Checking your understanding of progression through the levels

So that you can check your understanding of progression through the levels, select one of the first three strands and write out all the words that are used in relation to this strand in each of the eight levels.

Consider if this list is comprehensive and gives a good picture of progression that would aid the pupils in their learning.

Add to this description of progression in the strand so that you provide a more comprehensive and definitive set of words from which you can evaluate progression. For example, is the progression from *acquire* to *improve* detailed enough to assist in deep learning? Can you add more descriptive steps in between to make the change smoother and more effective? For example, would 'being able to repeat a skill accurately' be appropriate in this progression?

Repeat this for each of the other two strands.

Record your responses in your professional development portfolio to refer to when you start assessing pupils.



## How is continuity and progression of pupils between levels encouraged by good teaching?

The following are examples of focusing not on the detail of all level statements *per se* but on what challenges and supports the pupils in moving up from one level to the next. The examples are of progression from Level 5 to 6 and 6 to 7. These have been selected as they are significant in the development of strands 2 and 3 and demand of pupils higher order skills and abilities. Pupils need much prompting and guidance from you to progress satisfactorily.

### What are the major differences between Levels 5 and 6?

#### Strand 1: acquiring and developing skills

In this strand there is very little specific progression expected between Levels 5 and 6, other than normal change through practice, maturation and experience. The main teaching focus should be on giving pupils plenty of opportunity to repeat and practise and, while this is happening, to consolidate pupils' learning by careful comment on the critical aspects of their performance.

#### Strand 2: selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas

The major change expected at this level is that pupils are able to apply skills, tactics and ideas 'in ways to suit the activity'. This entails pupils being able to analyse, and know more about, each individual activity. The teaching approach that helps pupils here is for them to consider the criteria and skills that are involved in analysing an activity and to question how these relate across activities (e.g. is it possible to apply the technique of 'creating space' in both football and table tennis? Is the idea appropriate to, and equally effectively in, both games? What happens about this in each of the other activities?).

#### Strand 3: evaluating and improving performance

There is a clear change of emphasis between the levels from being able to analyse and improve one's own performance to that of being able to do it for others as well. This demands of pupils that they know how to observe what others are doing, describe what they see and analyse and pinpoint where improvement could happen. They also need to know how to give appropriate feedback and have the appropriate language to do so.

Observation is a complex, skilled activity. Good observation is dependent on the pupils having clear criteria and it involves a number of skills that require practice. The process involves the observer in a sequence of:

- looking
- seeing
- describing
- evaluating
- recording



The skills required are:

- looking (knowing what to look for) criteria;
- seeing – being able to ‘image’ what you expect to see and comparing what is presented;
- describing – having the appropriate language to describe what is seen;
- evaluating – knowing that the task has been met, being able to say if it is good, average or needing more work and being able to give detailed feedback about the performance;
- recording – making some record of what is seen, verbal or written.

(See Chapter 4 on observation which can be applied to teaching pupils how to observe.)

Being a good observer does not come without having the appropriate skills and practising them. Pupils need to be helped by being given the opportunity to observe against clear criteria and to learn the language of description in specific contexts (see also reciprocal teaching style in Mosston and Ashworth, 2002).

#### Task 17.2 Developing pupils’ observation skills

Consider how you might assist pupils to become better observers. They need help with and time to practise:

- understanding and setting criteria;
- how to ‘image’ what the other pupil might present as a response – what do they expect to see;
- using appropriate words and finding new ones to make imaginative and motivating descriptions of what they see and what it might be like;
- making comparisons between the first response and the second – is it better and if so why;
- how to look at a group and how to look at an individual.

In one of your lessons identify a specific learning outcome to develop pupils’ observation. Evaluate its effectiveness after the lesson and identify any changes to improve the way you present this in future lessons.

Pupils at this level are expected to be able to plan for their own and others’ work through recognising strengths and weaknesses. Pupils need help with recognising their strengths and weaknesses against what is expected of them both in terms of the NCPE and its implementation within the department. Having achieved this they then need help to understand how they can plan for their learning by balancing



opportunity for support from direct teaching with independent study and after-school participation.

#### **Strand 4: knowledge and understanding of fitness and health**

Knowledge at Level 6 focuses on the pupil being able to show more discrimination about how fitness and health contribute to different activities. This demands a greater depth of analysis of individual activities as outlined above, with experience of a range of activities – in particular, the components of fitness that are critical to good performance in each of the activities. Greater intelligence about how to become involved in exercise is expected. Pupils benefit from being made aware of the opportunities that are available to them to take part in exercise and activity both within the school and outside it. Assistance with making connections with outside provision helps them to take more advantage of these opportunities.

##### **General areas on which to focus in order to take pupils from Level 5 to Level 6**

- assist pupils to increase their knowledge of, and appreciate in more detail, individual activities (i.e. skills, tactics and strategies that are appropriate to each activity);
- ensure that pupils are aware in more detail of the physical/health demands of different activities;
- develop in pupils the ability to observe others and give appropriate feedback to improve performance using appropriate language.

#### **What are the major difference between Levels 6 and 7?**

Strand 1: acquiring and developing skills

The major change is the introduction of the concept of ‘advanced’ skills, techniques and ideas. The interpretation of ‘advanced’ in relation to skills can be through generic principles such as:

- increase in number and complexity of stimuli to be taken account of;
- increase in degrees of freedom within skills, with greater demand for coordination and control;
- reduction in extent of stable support with greater threat to equilibrium;

Alternatively, the concept of advanced can be interpreted through the accepted, conventional development of the more difficult skills which underpin advanced participation in an activity (e.g. the use of tumble turns in swimming).

Think about what you can do as the teacher to assist pupils to make the transition in this strand from Level 6 to Level 7.



### Strand 2: selecting and applying skills, tactics and compositional ideas

The consistent application of precision, fluency and control in Level 6 is extended in Level 7 to include originality. This means that pupils need to find less conventional ways of responding to tasks. The finding of original answers may in turn offer greater opportunity to increase control and fluency resulting in an improved performance by finding a more efficient or effective way of completing the task. Originality may well result in the challenge to involve more advanced skills, tactics and ideas and to be able to modify these in relation to more complex circumstances.

Advanced tactics and compositional ideas are also expected at this level. This entails pupils challenging themselves with more sophisticated stimuli and ideas that have more complex meanings. Responses therefore show much more subtlety in terms of interactions, rhythm, use of space, design etc.

Think about what you can do as the teacher to assist pupils to make the transition in this strand from Level 6 to Level 7.

### Strand 3: evaluation and improving

Evaluation at this level should show an understanding of the appropriate use of skills, tactics, strategies etc. in a clear effort to raise the quality of the overall performance (e.g. this worked because . . . !). Understanding of what is meant by 'quality of performance' is necessary here with the ability to engage in some discussion about how it is achieved. Quality of performance is described within the levels by the words control, coordination, accuracy, precision, fluency and originality, which involve, for example, degrees of body tension, clarity of the body in space, elevation, expression, changes of pace and direction.

Within this strand, pupils should also show a greater ability to make longer-term plans to bring about improvement in both their own and others' performances.

Think about what you can do as the teacher to assist pupils to make the transition in this strand from Level 6 to Level 7.

### Strand 4: knowledge and understanding of fitness and health

Evidence of work at this level includes increasing the ability to engage in long-term planning and evaluation of exercise and activity programmes. Think about what you can do as the teacher to assist pupils to make the transition in this strand from Level 6 to Level 7.

#### **General areas on which to focus in order to take pupils from Level 6 to Level 7**

- deepen pupils' understanding of the concepts and principles of 'advanced' performance and planning;
- assist pupils to produce work of greater originality;
- increase the capacity of pupils to be adaptable to changing circumstances in the performing of skills, tactics and compositional ideas.

**Task 17.3 Progression from one level to the next in NCPE**

Using the process as detailed above, consider the progression expected of pupils, in each of the four strands, from:

- Level 1 to Level 2
- Level 2 to Level 3
- Level 3 to Level 4
- Level 4 to Level 5
- Level 7 to Level 8

This should assist you to help pupils to move steadily from level to level when they are ready. Discuss this with your tutor or plan it together with another student teacher.

**ASSESSING AND MAKING GOOD JUDGEMENTS**

Judgements, especially those you make of pupils as they are learning, must be sensitive and therefore need to arise from well founded data that can be substantiated through valid and reliable evidence. These data arise from different levels of learning within the four strands that make up PE.

The elegance of the assessment procedure in the NCPE 2000 is the result of a blending of the four strands, which describe the experience of PE for everyone, with levels of progression that relate to the process of learning for each individual. The integration of these two critical features results in a detailed and informative statement about each pupil with regard to the stage they have reached, at different points in time, in all the critical elements of PE. The process is fully grounded in the assessment of *learning* and is not primarily focused on performance in individual activities but on each individual as a learner across the range of activities (Chapter 11 includes more information about assessment for learning and assessment of learning).

Figure 17.5 is a template for you to use as another way of linking the levels and the strands so that you are very familiar with the words you are using at any specific time.

The integration of both aspects of this matrix in relation to Strand 3 at Level 4 should result in statements about pupils (John and Anne) that could read as follows:

John has participated in five areas of activity and is able to comment on the skills that he has acquired. His experience in outdoor and adventurous activities (OAA) is yet to come in next year's curriculum. He is more comfortable describing his skill level in games, gymnastics and swimming



**Figure 17.5** Verbal summary of integration of strands and levels

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
<b>Strand 1</b>	<i>Copy Explore</i>		<i>Select</i>	<i>Link</i>				
<b>Strand 2</b>						<i>Plan Modify</i>		
<b>Strand 3</b>								
<b>Strand 4</b>			<i>Reasons</i>					<i>Evaluate Activity programme</i>

but still struggles with the concepts of dance and the technical language of athletics. He is able to make reasonable comparisons in the performance of his peers and is beginning to be able to make helpful and appropriate suggestions as to what they could do to improve. Again this is stronger in games, gymnastics and swimming than in the other two activities that he has studied.

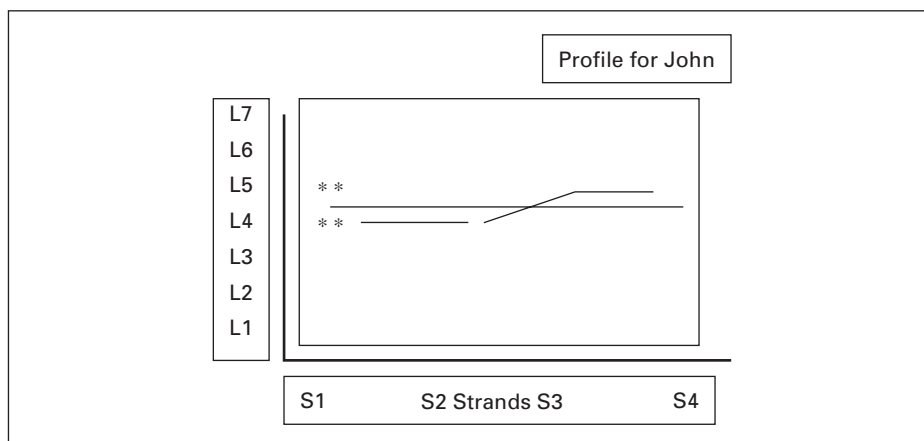
Anne is very interested in gymnastics and spends much time on it as an after-school activity. She is very competent in the skills and techniques and is in a strong position to assist others in her class in the development of their skills. She is less strong however in producing innovative compositional ideas and needs much prompting in this. The other activities of the curriculum pose some problems for Anne in that she does not have the motivation to analyse and improve her performance to the same level as she does in gymnastics. Where she can develop closed skills she is much more effective but she has difficulty in meeting the challenge to use imagination and creativity in her responses and in what she is able to observe and comment on.

John would be at a point well through Level 4 and would be moving quickly towards Level 5. Anne is only just in Level 4. She can achieve the processes of observation and comment, although this is over a very restricted profile of activities. To begin to consolidate her Level 4 standard and before she could be considered for Level 5, she would need to show the same competences across more areas of activity.

The overall level awarded to these pupils depends on their profile across all four strands (see Figure 17.6).



**Figure 17.6** Profile of attainment showing the possible unevenness in John's progression



#### Task 17.4 Integration of strands

To help you to understand in more detail the integration of strands with levels, return to Figure 17.5 and complete the grid. To do this, select the appropriate words from the description of the appropriate strand at each specific level and insert them in the table. Compare this with the table in Doherty (2003).

It is possible that attempting to achieve such data on each pupil may lead you to design a very complex assessment design and structure. The most important issue is that whatever policy you devise it should be as simple and uncomplicated as possible. This ensures that you can implement the policy and its procedures naturally as part of the learning process and not have it become a 'tail that wags the dog'.

The next section helps you to consider what a good assessment policy should be and what it should do.

### What are the critical features of a good assessment policy?

A good assessment policy should be one that:

- is integral to the learning process and arises naturally from it;
- is sensitive to individual differences;
- focuses on pupils' learning and not on individual aspects of their performance;



- shares relevant criteria for assessment with the pupils and involves pupils in their own and others' assessment where appropriate;
- uses appropriate language so that judgements and feedback are easily understood by the pupils;
- is completely in line with the structure of the National Curriculum;
- is monitored and standardised to allow for fairness of judgement across the department and within a national context;
- is well planned to allow for different modes of assessment to be used where they are most effective (i.e. formative or summative; ipsative or normative etc. – see Chapter 11);
- is workable in terms of the complexity and detail and the demand for excessive paperwork and records;
- does not assess more than is necessary to conform to the National Curriculum statutes;
- provides a meaningful report for parents so that they can encourage pupils to progress.

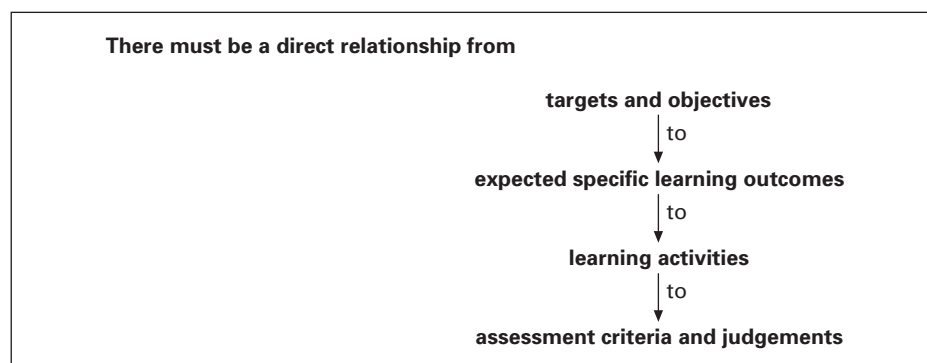
### What are the potential pitfalls in designing an assessment policy for the PE department?

There are a few very important issues that can undermine the building of a good assessment policy and seeing it through to effective practice.

It is critical that pupils are assessed in what they are attempting to learn. This may seem very obvious but it is a more prevalent problem than would be expected. You will have *targets and objectives* related to what you wish the pupils to learn. You will then translate these into more specific *learning outcomes* and will set appropriate *learning activities* to help the pupils realise these outcomes. Finally and most importantly you will design *assessment criteria* from these outcomes so that you will base your *judgements* on what the pupils actually learn (see Figure 17.7).

This process must be logical. If it is not possible to trace the *essence* of what is to be learned through the planned learning activities and in judging how effective the learning

**Figure 17.7** The logical process of learning and its assessment





has been, then learning is severely affected and the pupils become confused. For example, the intention is that the pupils learn to 'observe' what their peers are doing; pupils are given a task to perform which focuses on the transition of one phrase to another in a dance sequence; pupils observing are then asked to make a judgement and report on the accuracy of the step pattern being performed. This is illogical. The pupils were asked to focus on the development of *transitions* not *accuracy of performance* and so the assessment is of no value to the learning which is of essence to the task. This is an all too frequent error and can be helped by there being a clear set of criteria, available in writing if possible, and then all can focus on the same priority.

A second possible pitfall is to plan an assessment procedure that attempts to assess too much. The National Curriculum gives clear statutory requirements about what is to be assessed and how. There are numerous examples of PE departments that are attempting to assess more than is necessary to meet these requirements. It is not necessary to grade every pupil in every activity every year. This is a very complex exercise which is time-consuming, yet a number of departments are implementing such a policy. It is important that you trust your professional judgement on the evidence that each pupil presents to you and that you can with confidence say that the various aspects of a pupil's work are showing a specific level within each strand. It should not be necessary to level every strand within every activity for every pupil and then be faced with a complex aggregation exercise. As with all other professional competences this develops with practice to enable you to make these judgements with accuracy from your own direct observation.

## CONCLUSION

'Effective assessment in physical education is integral to teaching and learning' (Ofsted, 2003b). A good assessment process leads to school improvement, pupil achievement, interpretation of data to find out more about the nature and state of learning and opportunity to maintain a good position in relation to national norms. If an assessment policy is going to be good then it is critical that you understand fully the concepts and processes that are discussed in this chapter. It is important that assessment is integral to your thinking from the beginning of your education as a teacher of PE.

A closing thought:

When we think of the School of the Future, we ought to look beyond the computers, the interactive white boards, the internet-connected mobile phones. We should also consider new ways of thinking, learning, working sharing and creating ideas across the curriculum.

Let's not resign ourselves to the dictates of new technologies in shaping our lives and learning. Why don't we have a debate about what sorts of people we want to see coming out of the doors of our future schools, and how we want them to engage with the world. This conversation needs to start with a reflection on the nature and purpose of our assessment systems.

(Facer, 2003)



## SUMMARY

This chapter has looked at what is meant by assessment in the NCPE 2000. It has focused particularly on the use of the language of assessment and the implications of using the words and phrases that make up an assessment process. It is intended that by reading and understanding this chapter you should be able to integrate your assessment process fully into your pupils' learning and design and implement an efficient and effective policy that is based on your informed professional judgement of pupils' learning and performance in PE. It is designed so that you start to think about the complexities of teaching from the start of your education and not get into the habit of following departmental practice without question – which is hard for you to change later.

## FURTHER READING

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. and Williams, D. (2003) *Assessment for Learning*, Buckingham: Open University Press. Assessment for learning is explained and the shift from more traditional aspects of assessment is discussed.

Claxton, G. (2003) *Building Learning Power: Helping Young People to Become Better Learners*, [www.buildinglearningpower.co](http://www.buildinglearningpower.co). This text is related to the ELI (Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory) Project ([Ruth.Deakin@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Ruth.Deakin@bristol.ac.uk)) and considers teachers becoming 'learning coaches' to guide young people into a life of learning. Assessment of 'learnability' features as a concept to assist in the tracking of pupils as effective learners.