



Performance Audit

Physical Education and Sport in State Primary and Secondary Schools

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations		4
Executive Summary		5
Chapter 1	Policy and Structure	9
1.1	Background	10
1.2	Role of Schools	13
1.3	Key players in the delivery chain	15
1.4	Objectives and scope of the study	18
1.5	Structure of the report	18
Chapter 2	PE and Class Teachers	19
2.1	Introduction	20
2.2	PE Peripatetic Teachers	20
2.3	Primary School Teachers	21
2.4	PE Teachers in Secondary Schools	23
2.5	Conclusions	24
2.6	Recommendations	25
Chapter 3	Facilities and Equipment	27
3.1	In State Primary Schools	28
3.2	In State Secondary Schools	29
3.3	Barriers and opportunities to increased PE and Sport	32
3.4	Conclusions	32
3.5	Recommendations	35
Chapter 4	Content and Quality of Delivery	37
4.1	Contextual background	38
4.2	Delivery of PE and Sport lessons	38
4.3	Organisation of sport and structured physical activities	43
4.4	Conclusions	46
4.5	Recommendations	47

Appendices

Appendix A	Methodology	50
Appendix B	Selected Bibliography	53

Figures

Figure 3.1	Reported access to facilities and equipment in State Primary and Secondary schools – January 2009	33
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Tables

Table 4.1	KMS-SPU programmes and events organised during school hours during scholastic year 2009/2010	45
Table 4.2	Other KMS programmes for school-aged children	46

List of Abbreviations

BMI	Body Mass Index
CfC	Commissioner for Children
CMeLD	Department for Curriculum Management and eLearning
DES	Directorate for Educational Services
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
EO	Education Officer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTS	Foundation for Tomorrow's School
HBSC	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children
HELP	Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan
ICCO	Intersectoral Committee on Counteracting Obesity
IPES	Institute for Physical Education and Sport
KMS	Kunsill Malti għall-iSport (Malta Sports Council)
KMS-SPU	Sport Promotion Unit of the Malta Sports Council
MHEC	Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care
MOC	Malta Olympic Committee
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
MEEF	Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family
MVPA	Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity
NAO	National Audit Office
NMC	National Minimum Curriculum
NSO	National Statistics Office
PE	Physical Education
PSD	Personal and Social Development
SIS	School Information System
SMT	Senior Management Team
TGFU	Teaching Games for Understanding
UoM	University of Malta
WHO	World Health Organization



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The key findings, conclusions and recommendations set out in this section cover a wide spectrum of critical issues affecting the quality and frequency of PE, sport and physical activity in State Primary and Secondary Schools. The main challenges faced by the authorities is how to appropriately address these concerns, through clear strategies, effective leadership in Colleges and Schools, a strong commitment from all key stakeholders, as well as adequate resources and capacity. Schools also need to target the risks of a sedentary lifestyle and child obesity.

Background

1. Physical Education (PE) and Sport is defined by the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) as a basic subject to be taught in all schools at compulsory educational levels. Physical activity is an indispensable means for individual good health. It is recommended that each day children and adolescents accumulate at least sixty minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Physical activity from an early age leads to fitness – a state of well-being that allows people to perform daily activities with vigour, participate in a variety of physical activities, and reduce their risks to health related problems.

2. Malta has high rates of children and adolescents who are either obese or overweight and this is undoubtedly a major cause of concern due to the link between childhood and adult obesity and the significant co-morbidities that are associated with obesity.

3. By offering a variety of in school and after school programmes, schools present unique opportunities to provide time, facilities and guidance for children and adolescents to learn and participate in PE, sport and physical activity. Government has indicated through a number of channels its commitment to improve the quality, delivery and frequency of these activities.

4. The efficient and effective planning, coordination, implementation and achievement of goals and policies related to PE, sport and physical activities in schools requires strong leadership and close partnership between different organisations within the Directorates for Education, at College level, at school level and with several key stakeholders in the delivery chain. Partnerships among these different organisations are critical for the efficient use and sharing of limited human, physical and financial resources, as well as for achieving better outcomes from the organisation of these activities.

5. Using various research and analytical techniques (outlined in Appendix A), the National Audit Office (NAO) examined the level of organisation, collaboration and implementation of PE, sport and physical activities in State Primary and Secondary Schools. The study sought to determine the type of lessons and activities held, the level of frequency and regularity, the issues and factors affecting delivery and quality, as well as the overall importance being given in schools to the subject and physical activity in general. The main research tools used for the study included an extensive literature review; meetings with key officials; consultations with experts, practitioners and stakeholders; on-site visits; an examination of forwarded documentation and data; as well as surveys. It is important to point out that the conduct of the surveys used for this study coincided with the launch of the Sport Promotion Unit (KMS-SPU) within the Malta Sports Council (KMS) and as a consequence the activities organised by this Unit in schools were not reflected in the responses received at that time.

6. The following paragraphs highlight the key conclusions of this report.

Key conclusions

7. **PE and Class Teachers:** One of the key issues assessed in the study (covered in Chapter 2) was the

distribution of staff teaching PE and Sport, and how the allocation of these human resources is contributing towards the regularity and quality of PE and sport activities in these schools.

- (a) In Primary Schools, the teaching of PE was found to be mainly carried out by Peripatetic Teachers. Few Primary School Teachers reported to be holding frequent and comprehensive PE lessons as a continuation of those carried out by the PE Teachers. Several teachers reported that they either carried, to varying extents, simple physical exercises and games between lessons, and/or integrated (in a broad sense) related themes and movements in other lessons. Some schools also participated in sport promotion programmes organised during school hours by KMS. Overall, NAO detected a high risk of many children having less than the four thirty-minute weekly sessions recommended by the Department for Curriculum Management and eLearning (CMeLD). The need for class teachers to be more involved in the delivery of PE lessons was also widely noted during fieldwork.
- (b) In Secondary Schools, the situation was found to be different from that found in Primary Schools. PE and Sport lessons are taught by specialist PE Teachers who are allocated to specific schools. Overall, a sufficient number of PE Teachers were available to deliver all the lessons envisaged in the standard Secondary School timetable and, therefore, lessons are held regularly. Some Secondary Schools were also involved in programmes organised by KMS.
- (c) Moreover, the study carried out by NAO clearly demonstrated the considerable pressure being placed on children, teachers, parents and school management to give overriding priority to examined subjects at both primary and secondary level of education. The gradual replacement of the 11+ examination system with national examinations may help to remove the excessive pressure being placed on all those involved and encourage more time for PE and physical activity during and after school hours.

8. **Facilities and Equipment:** Another fundamental issue that was evaluated (covered in Chapter 3) was the availability of suitable facilities and equipment in schools for the practice of PE, sport and other physical activities, and on how this effected the organisation and delivery of such activities.

- (a) A combination of different indoor and outdoor areas were found in many schools, although a considerable number of schools indicated serious concerns on the suitability, maintenance and availability of these facilities (in particular indoor

facilities). Some of these constraints are linked to the restrictive structural limitations of existing school premises and would require reconstruction.

- (b) With regard to equipment used for PE and sport activities, schools were equally divided in their feedback on whether sufficient equipment was available. This response indicated inadequate expenditure on the replacement or purchase of required items by some schools.
- (c) The study showed that, overall, more investment is needed in order to ensure that each school has the proper indoor/outdoor facilities and equipment to carry out frequent quality PE, sport and other physical activity programmes in schools. The planned investment in new schools and ongoing upgrading in some schools is encouraging and recommendable. However, it is clear that substantial investment is still required, particularly in Primary Schools, to reach the required standards and ensure equal opportunities in each school. There is also considerable potential for schools to identify alternative ways of how to generate revenues through the renting of the school premises (excluding specific sport facilities which are bound by an annual agreement with KMS) and using these funds to upgrade their premises and equipment.

9. **Content and Quality of Delivery:** The third component of the NAO study (covered in Chapter 4) addressed issues concerning the delivery, quality and diversity of PE, sport and other physical activities held in schools.

- (a) The relatively short school day is a decisive limiting factor that can impinge on the delivery of these activities. The study also found that few Primary Schools organised structured activities during lunch breaks. This contrasts with the situation in Secondary Schools where such activities were found to be held regularly in many schools.
- (b) Initiatives are being undertaken by KMS to compensate for these limitations. These include activities during school hours and after-school programmes in certain schools.
- (c) The appointment of a new Education Officer (EO) for PE in 2008, following a lengthy delay during which the post was vacant, has had a positive impact. Several initiatives have been launched to improve the quality of PE. However, substantial outstanding developmental work still needs to be done in order to ensure that a comprehensive system of support, guidance, monitoring, inspection, evaluation and reporting is established.

- (d) Specialist PE Teachers are currently guided by a set of syllabi and guidelines developed by CMeLD. They also participate in workshops and events aimed at improving standards and quality, as well as meetings with the EO (PE).
 - (e) PE lessons delivered by class teachers in Primary Schools may not always be of the expected quality and standard. Delivery is influenced by the degree of creativity and commitment of the individual class teacher and it also depends on personal abilities and aptitudes. Several Primary School Teachers reported that they carry out simple exercises and games between lessons. Considerably few, however, reported to deliver comprehensive PE lessons as a continuation of those held by the PE Peripatetic Teachers. Moreover, the introduction of the weekly ninety-minute sessions dedicated to curricular development has meant that Primary School Teachers had less or no time to shadow and observe the weekly lessons delivered by the PE Peripatetic Teachers and to discuss lesson variations.
 - (f) The majority of parents of children in Primary and Secondary Schools were found to be highly satisfied or satisfied with the quality of PE lessons in a survey carried out by NAO. However, a significant proportion was less satisfied or dissatisfied as the lessons were few, activities were limited and unvaried, and facilities for PE were inadequate. In the case of structured physical activities, a significantly higher number of parents rated the quality on a lower scale, expressing concerns related to the insufficient organisation of sport activities. The views of parents were obtained before the launch of the KMS-SPU programmes in specific Colleges.
- (b) The provision, resources permitting, of sufficient support to all schools so that each child and adolescent receives frequent, quality PE. Colleges and schools should be helped to have a sufficient number of qualified PE specialists, appropriate class sizes, diverse physical activity programmes, and the facilities, equipment and supplies needed to deliver quality and daily PE and Sport education. These are the most essential ingredients of a quality PE programme. (Refer to recommendations in paragraphs 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.6.7, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 3.5.5 and 4.5.6)
 - (c) The development and dissemination of tools to help schools improve their PE and other physical activity programmes. (Refer to recommendations in paragraphs 2.6.4, 4.5.1 and 4.5.3)
 - (d) The monitoring of the frequency and quality of PE and Sport in each school. (Refer to recommendations in paragraphs 2.6.2, 2.6.4, 3.5.3, 4.5.1, 4.5.3, 4.5.4 and 4.5.5)
 - (e) More intensive ongoing campaigns, through the media and events in schools, to influence parents' views on the importance that their children are physically active, and to nurture the attitude among all those involved that PE is an important component of a quality education and long-term health. School environments, teachers and parents play a critical role in shaping children's experiences in physical activity and sport. (Refer to recommendations in paragraphs 2.6.5, 2.6.6 and 4.5.5)

Recommendations

10. Full implementation of the recommended actions listed at the end of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will require leadership, commitment of resources, intensive efforts, a gradual culture shift, and creative thinking from many partners. Only through extensive collaboration and coordination can aspired goals be achieved, use of limited resources be maximised, strategies be integrated, and messages be reinforced.

11. Overall, the recommendations in the report cover the following cross-sectional issues:

- (a) Strong leadership, planning, collaboration and effective measures from school authorities to promote the importance of PE in schools and the expansion of after-school programmes that offer physical activities and sport. (Refer to

12. Furthermore, NAO recommends that a single consolidated Delivery Plan is developed on how PE, sport and physical activity in schools can be increased and improved in the medium term (e.g. over a three year period). The Delivery Plan should clearly outline the principal steps and measures to be taken by all those involved to achieve established goals. It should also specify the expected outcomes and timeframes. In support of this Delivery Plan, consideration must also be given towards securing the required human and financial resources. The Plan is essential as effective solutions need the engagement and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders involved in this sector. Its development and coordination should involve key officials at the Directorates for Education (including the EO), College Principals, Heads of School, KMS and the main stakeholders. Champions should also be identified at College level and/or at school level. The Delivery Plan should also be updated regularly to enable more effective progress and delivery.



Chapter 1

Policy and Structure

Chapter 1 – Policy and Structure

Chapter 1 discusses the importance and value of PE, sport and physical activity in the schools’ curriculum and timetables. It sets the scene for the subsequent chapters by providing relevant details on the legislative framework, Government’s policies and goals in this area, the key players, and an overview of the delivery chain through which Government seeks to achieve strategic and policy objectives. This Chapter also outlines the objectives, structure and span of the study, explaining that although the scope of the performance audit was limited to mainstream State Primary and Secondary Schools, relevant recommendations included in this report can also be applied nationwide.

1.1 Background

Physical Education and Sport

1.1.1 Physical Education (PE) and Sport is a distinguishable subject by its very nature and scope. It is the main educational experience in schools where the focus is on the body, its movement and physical development, as well as on helping children to respect and value their own bodies and abilities, and those of others. The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) framework published in 1999 lists PE and Sport as a basic subject to be studied and practiced in all schools at compulsory educational levels.

1.1.2 Participation by all is key to a quality PE and Sport programme and students should be engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) for most of the lesson period, whatever their individual aptitudes and abilities. The programmes should be oriented to the success of every student by providing a non-threatening environment in which participants are never subjected to the humiliation of being chosen last or being dropped from a team.

1.1.3 Quality PE and Sport should aim to systematically and progressively:

- (a) develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills and competence needed to enjoy a variety of physical activity experiences and to adopt a healthy lifestyle;
- (b) build students’ confidence in their individual physical abilities and encourage them to become involved in lifelong sport and other physical activity;
- (c) provide students with opportunities for enjoyable and worthwhile physical activity; as well as
- (d) contribute to students’ social and moral development, including leadership skills, perseverance and commitment, coping with both success and failure in competitive and cooperative environments, interpersonal skills and teamwork.

Physical Activity

1.1.4 Physical activity is an indispensable means for individual good health. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other health experts recommend that each day children and adolescents should accumulate at least sixty minutes of age-appropriate and developmentally suitable physical activity.

1.1.5 To ensure healthy development, some of these daily physical activities should be in periods lasting ten to fifteen minutes or more and include MVPA together with brief periods of rest and recovery. Moderate intensity implies that whilst one is engaging in an activity he or she is able to carry on a conversation but with some difficulty (for example, biking or dancing). Vigorous activity refers to more strenuous engagement with the person becoming winded or too out of breath to carry out a conversation easily (for example, swimming, basketball and handball).

1.1.6 Through the appropriate practice of physical activity throughout childhood and adolescence, young people gain significant physical, mental and social health benefits, including the:

- (a) building and maintenance of healthy bones, muscles and joints;
- (b) development of a healthy cardiovascular system (i.e. heart and lungs);
- (c) development of neuromuscular awareness (i.e. coordination and movement control);
- (d) control of weight and body fat percentage;
- (e) prevention or delay in the development of high blood pressure and a reduced blood pressure in some adolescents with hypertension;
- (f) reduced feelings of depression and anxiety; and
- (g) development of personal and social development skills such as self-discipline, leadership, sportsmanship, self-expression, self-confidence, social interaction, teamwork and integration.

1.1.7 Moreover, when patterns of physical activity and healthy lifestyles are acquired during childhood and adolescence they are more likely to be maintained. It has also been suggested that physically active children and adolescents more readily adopt other healthy behaviours (e.g. avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and drug use) and demonstrate higher academic performance at school.

1.1.8 There is a distinctive difference between physical activity and physical exercise. Physical activity is an encompassing term that includes physical exercise. On the other hand, physical exercise is a more specific term and implies planned, structured, repetitive and purposeful physical activity, often with the goal of improving or maintaining one's physical fitness.

1.1.9 The “*dose*” of physical activity that a person receives is dependent on the ‘FITT’ principle, that is:

- (a) *Frequency (how often)*: the amount of times that one engages in physical activity (often expressed as a number of times per week).
- (b) *Intensity (how hard)*: how strenuous is the physical activity (often described as light, moderate or vigorous).
- (c) *Time (how long)*: the duration of the physical activity session.

- (d) *Type*: the specific mode of exercise in which one engages (e.g. running, swimming, etc.).

1.1.10 Physical activity among children and adolescents in Malta is relatively low, with a significant proportion not being physically active during their free time outside school hours. A fact-finding survey carried out by National Audit Office (NAO) in 2008 with 444 parents of children in State Primary Schools and 406 parents of students in State Secondary Schools revealed alarming rates of inactivity. 56 per cent of interviewed parents who have children in Primary Schools and 44 per cent of those with children in Secondary Schools reported that their children were not involved in physical activities or sport outside school hours. Moreover, it is important to keep in view that children who were reported to be taking part in physical activities outside school hours may not always remain consistent in their participation throughout the year.

1.1.11 The NAO survey also showed that girls were significantly more inactive than boys. 63 per cent of interviewed parents who had a daughter attending a Primary School reported that their child was not involved in physical activities or sport outside school hours. In the case of Secondary School students, 52 per cent of interviewed parents with a daughter in these schools reported that their child did not take part in such activities.

1.1.12 In the case of boys, 50 per cent of interviewed parents who had a son attending a Primary School reported that their child was not physically active when not at school. In the case of boys in Secondary Schools, 36 per cent of interviewed parents reported that their child did not take part in physical activities or sport outside school hours.

1.1.13 These low levels of physical activity are largely due to increasingly common sedentary ways of life. For example, children can devote excessive time to watching television, playing computer games and other sedentary activities - often at the expense of time and opportunities for physical activity and sport. Many other factors hinder the participation of adolescents in physical activity: lack of time; poor motivation; inadequate support and guidance; feelings of embarrassment or incompetence; lack of safe facilities; limited accessibility to physical activity facilities; and ignorance of the benefits of physical activity.

Physical Fitness

1.1.14 Physical activity from an early age leads to fitness. This is a state of well-being that allows people to perform daily activities with vigour, participate in a variety of physical activities, and reduce their risks to health-related problems.

1.1.15 The following five basic components of fitness are important:

- (a) cardio respiratory endurance;
- (b) muscular strength;
- (c) muscular endurance;
- (d) flexibility; and
- (e) body composition (percentage of body fat).

1.1.16 A second set of attributes, referred to as sport or skill-related physical fitness, includes power, speed, agility, balance, and reaction time. Although these are not essential for maintaining physical health, they are important for athletic performance or physically demanding activities.

Obesity among Maltese children and adolescents

1.1.17 Obesity occurs when a person puts on weight to the point that it seriously endangers health. Some persons are more susceptible to weight gain for genetic reasons, but the fundamental cause of obesity is consuming more calories than are expended in daily life. Most evidence suggests that the main reason for the rising prevalence is a combination of less active lifestyles and changes in eating patterns (including greater consumption of fat and sugar).

1.1.18 Obesity in adults is relatively easy to define and is considered to be a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 30kg/m². This simple definition cannot, however, be applied to children, as the ratio of weight to height gain changes during children's normal growth. Therefore, the figure must be adjusted for age and gender when using BMI for children. In general, a BMI greater than the 95th percentile for age is an indicator of obesity while a BMI between the 85th – 95th percentiles is considered overweight and at risk of developing obesity.

1.1.19 There is no complete set of data to measure the situation on child obesity in Malta, although it has been acknowledged that as a nation this is a public health problem of alarming dimensions. The emerging data is showing that the problem of obesity in Malta, besides being widespread, is also differentially distributed with education and lower income being major contributing factors. Enhancing efforts to promote participation in daily physical activity and sport among children and adolescents is, therefore, a critical national priority.

1.1.20 Obesity in childhood was first recognised as a public health problem in Malta in 1992 when an anthropometric study carried out in conjunction with the WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) International Conference on Nutrition showed that eleven

to thirteen per cent of five-year old children were already obese. Ten years later, the 2002 WHO's survey on Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) classified Malta with some of the highest rates of eleven to fifteen year old children to report that they were overweight or obese according to the BMI.

1.1.21 The 2008 report on the HBSC survey carried out in 2005/2006 showed a deteriorating situation and listed Malta and the United States of America as the two countries with the highest overall percentages of children who reported to be obese or overweight according to the BMI. In the case of Malta, the indicators for young persons who reported to be obese and overweight were as follows:

- (a) 25 per cent (girls) and 30 per cent (boys) of 11-year-olds.
- (b) 31 per cent of 13-year-olds (both girls and boys).
- (c) 28 per cent (girls) and 32 per cent (boys) of 15-year-olds.

1.1.22 Furthermore, a study was carried out in 2007 by Grech and Farrugia Sant'Angelo (2008) with 3,461 children entering the first year of Primary School (that is, aged between five and six). The study revealed that, based on the International Obesity Task Force criteria, over a quarter of Maltese school-entry children were overweight or obese. Stricter criteria of the Centre for Diseases Control classified one third as overweight or obese.

1.1.23 These high levels of children of different ages who are obese or overweight is undoubtedly a major cause of concern due to the existing link between childhood and adult obesity, and the significant co-morbidities associated with obesity, particularly chronic diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, colon cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis). Malta already has a high ten per cent prevalence of diabetes amongst adults of which ninety per cent is type II diabetes. It is also worth noting that eighty-four per cent of the diabetic population in Malta is overweight or obese. Diabetes in Malta accounts for nearly one out of every four deaths occurring prematurely before the age of sixty-five years. In addition, Type II diabetes is being diagnosed at increasingly younger ages and these diagnoses are inextricably linked to obesity in adolescents.

1.1.24 Obesity also has serious financial consequences for the national health system and for the economy. It is estimated by the Health Information and Research Department within the Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care (MHEC) that overweight and obese people are costing taxpayers almost €18 million a year in medical treatment alone. These costs are considered just a fraction of the total financial burden as the expenses for operations and drugs are not included. In fact, in another

study by Grech and Farrugia Sant'Angelo (2008) it was estimated that obesity will eventually cost Malta as much as €70 million per annum.

1.1.25 These results continue to place an 'urgent' demand on Government, including Education Authorities, for more intensified action. An overarching difficulty with reducing child obesity is the inherent complexity of the issue, including changing the behaviour of children and their parents, together with attitudes in society in general. Child obesity can only be tackled through a range of approaches aimed at both prevention and treatment.

1.2 Role of Schools

1.2.1 Through a variety of in school and after school programmes, schools present unique opportunities to provide time, facilities and guidance for children and adolescents to learn and participate in PE, sport and physical activity. As noted in paragraphs 1.1.10 to 1.1.13, for a sizeable number of children and adolescents, PE and Sport programmes in schools are the only systematic opportunities for them to be regularly active.

1.2.2 Schools also have an obligation to contribute towards preventing obesity by, for example, delivering frequent and regular quality PE lessons, encouraging and supporting take-up of sporting opportunities and a healthy lifestyle; and by providing sufficient time for children to play and be active.

1.2.3 The school setting can have an inherent advantage over other environments as programmes to encourage physical activity can be institutionalised into the regular school curriculum. Furthermore, children spend a large portion of their time at school (around 40 to 45 per cent of their waking time) and many lifestyle and behaviour choices develop during this time.

1.2.4 Schools also have a long history of addressing health of school age children through, for example health screening and immunisation programmes. Schools are now being called upon to play a leading role in addressing the 'new social morbidities', including the unhealthy dietary behaviours and inadequate physical activity of children and adolescents.

1.2.5 Government has indicated through a number of channels its commitment to improve the quality of PE and sport activities in schools.

- (a) In the National Programme (Vision 2015), Government made a commitment to increase sport in the education system and the provision of an 'after-school' programme of sport and creativity for children in state-run schools.
- (b) Furthermore, in 2005, the Minister responsible for Education at the time outlined the goals to be pursued by the Ministry over a ten year period. These included a re-thinking of how physical activities and sports are to be delivered in schools and the achievement of specific targets. At that time, it was envisioned that:
 - (i) by 2010, 75 per cent of children and adolescents in Primary and Secondary Schools between the ages of five and sixteen years would have - every week - two hours of quality PE and Sport; and
 - (ii) moreover, by 2015, the aim was to increase this level of activity to three hours per week and that all children and adolescents would be involved.
- (c) The Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family (MEEF) has also confirmed to NAO its firm commitment to constantly improve provision related to PE, sport and health related initiatives, including sport and after-school activities. There is, however, no comprehensive strategic working document which brings together, supports and commits the measures and programmes that key players and stakeholders are implementing to achieve these goals. This shortcoming is reflected in the overall recommendations of this report.
- (d) In parallel, the Malta Sports Council (KMS) in the National Sport Strategy (2007 – 2010) has emphasised the importance that:
 - (i) children have at least one hour a day of physical activity as recommended by WHO;
 - (ii) all schools provide children with the number of hours of PE that they are entitled to;
 - (iii) PE should be supplemented by sport and physical activities during recess and after school hours;
 - (iv) schools aim for at least two hours of high quality PE every week;
 - (v) KMS and schools work together on after-school and community sports programmes; and
 - (vi) links between KMS, schools, clubs, associations and the local community are strengthened.
- (e) Moreover, the Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan (HELP) developed by the Ministry responsible for Education in 2007 to promote and improve the healthy eating of children and adolescents in schools emphasised



the importance of physical activity in schools as one of the core issues leading to a healthy lifestyle. HELP also indicated that a working committee would be set up to study physical activity.

- (f) Other developments related to the ongoing education reforms can have an impact on PE and sport activities in schools.
 - (i) One of these is Government's commitment to implement the planned reforms to the 11+ examination system. Government has announced that the last set of 'Junior Lyceum' exams will be held in May 2010. This selective method of distributing children who are in their sixth year of Primary Education has been in place since 1981 and has been considered by many to be a source of stress for children, parents and educators.
 - (ii) As from 2011, the concept of the 'Junior Lyceum' examinations will cease, and the current examination system for progression from Primary to Secondary Schools will be replaced by three national examinations - Mathematics, Maltese and English. Pupils will then move to Secondary Schools within their area colleges.
 - (iii) Through these reforms it is hoped that the cultural problems which grew with the existing system are reversed and more time is allocated to non-examined basic subjects (such as PE) and enjoyable physical activity during and after school hours.

1.2.6 At a more operational level, the Education Authorities in 2007 issued a circular to all Heads of State Primary Schools and Sections (DCM 28/2007) emphasising the importance of a cross-curricular approach, effective time management, good lesson planning and an efficient and a consistent timetable. One of the recommendations of the Circular was that children should have quality, daily PE at Primary level of schooling. This is expected to include four thirty-minute lessons of PE delivered by Peripatetic or class teachers held on different days, as well as a weekly session of expressive arts (called the mid-week project) during which children can be physically active through drama, art and design, music and/or movement.

1.2.7 In contrast to Primary Schools, Secondary Schools have a compulsory number of PE lessons that should be carried out. In Secondary Schools the time dedicated for PE and Sport in Forms 1 and 2 is two lessons of forty-five minutes each per week. On the other hand in Forms 3, 4 and 5, students not choosing PE as an Option have one session of forty-five minutes every week set in their timetable. Those who choose PE as an Option have additional lessons.

1.2.8 The Department for Curriculum Management and eLearning (CMeLD) within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) also stresses through syllabi and guidelines that all children, whatever their abilities, should be able to participate in and enjoy PE and Sport. PE is a fundamental contributor towards the holistic development of the child. Such education is to be carried out through the psychomotor, cognitive, social and effective domains, related to the relevant development of



the child. Educational programmes should also encourage lifelong participation in sport and leisure activities, providing opportunities for enjoyment, recreation, and the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

1.3 Key players in the delivery chain

1.3.1 The efficient and effective planning, coordination, implementation and achievement of policies related to PE, sport and structured physical activities in State Primary and Secondary Schools require strong leadership and close partnership between different organisations within the Directorates for Education, at College level and at school level. It also entails involving and working through parents who should act as models and support their children's participation in enjoyable physical activity. Moreover, it requires close collaboration and partnership with a broad range of connected organisations, including the following:

- (a) KMS and the Sport Promotion Unit within this organisation (KMS-SPU).
- (b) The Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and the School Health Services within MHEC.
- (c) The Intersectoral Committee on Counteracting Obesity (ICCO) chaired by the Director General (Public Health Regulation) within MHEC.
- (d) Other central government organisations, such as the Management and Personnel Office within the Office of the Prime Minister and the Budget

Affairs Division within the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment.

- (e) Local Councils.
- (f) The Faculty of Education and the Institute for Physical Education and Sport (IPES) at the University of Malta.
- (g) The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT).
- (h) The Commissioner for Children (CfC).
- (i) The Malta Olympic Committee (MOC), in particular the Youth Commission.
- (j) Individual Clubs and Sport Associations.

1.3.2 The relationships between these different organisations both within and outside the Directorates for Education constitute what is referred to as a 'delivery chain', that is the network of systems, processes, and organisations through which Government seeks to achieve strategic and policy objectives. The various levels of partnership and arrangements constituting the delivery chain must be well understood and managed for opportunities to be efficiently and effectively targeted.

1.3.3 The following paragraphs provide a more detailed description of the two Directorates for Education within MEEF, as well as the roles played by Education Officers, College Principals, Heads and Assistant Heads of School, teachers, the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS) and KMS.

Directorates for Education

1.3.4 The primary objective of the Directorates for Education is to assure a holistic quality education for all Maltese students within the compulsory school age and beyond, as well as to encourage and support life-long learning. This objective encompasses the development of intellectual, civil, human, ethical, social, emotional and spiritual values and the recognition of fundamental rights and responsibilities.

1.3.5 The Directorates for Education aim at providing an efficient and effective system of learning in order to ensure quality education and training relevant to the needs of the Maltese society. Their mission is to also safeguard the right of the individual to develop all cognitive potential, resulting in a secure investment for the continual development of the nation.

1.3.6 The Education Act (Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta) as amended by Act XIII of 2006 led to the restructuring of the top management structure within the former Education Division. The most significant was the appointment in November 2007 of two Directors General to lead the following two new Directorates and to report directly to the Permanent Secretary of MEEF:

- (a) The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) – This Directorate is responsible for regulating, establishing, monitoring and assuring standards and quality in programmes and educational services provided by schools, whether state schools or not, as provided for in Part II of the Education Act. Departments forming part of DQSE include those responsible for the Curriculum, eLearning and Quality Assurance. One of the roles of the Directorate is to provide a service of support, guidance, monitoring, inspection, evaluation and reporting on the process of teaching in schools, as well as on the application of the curriculum, syllabi, pedagogy, assessment and examination. The Act also provides for the delegation of powers to Education Officers within the Directorate to enter in any College, school, class or place of instruction, and inspect and report on the teaching process, the physical environment, and the observance of applicable conditions, standards, policies and regulations.
- (b) The Directorate for Educational Services (DES) – This Directorate is responsible for the effective and efficient operation and delivery of services to the Colleges and State Schools within an established framework of decentralisation and autonomy, as provided for in Part II of the Education Act. This Directorate is expected, in constant collaboration

with the Colleges and schools, to plan, provide and allocate the resources, services, and learning tools to schools and institutions. DES includes departments and entities responsible for student services, for human resource development, for school resource management, and for the construction or maintenance of schools.

1.3.7 The Education Act amendments introduced in 2006 also provided for the establishment of the Permanent Committee for Education, presided by the Minister responsible for education to discuss and evaluate the policy, the strategy, the direction and the developments in the education sector. The Committee, when established, is also expected to have the role of facilitating and ensuring the effective collaboration and coordination between various entities. It will also monitor and follow the implementation of the educational policy and strategy adopted by Government.

State Colleges

1.3.8 Colleges of State Schools, as defined in Part V of the Education Act, are networks of State Schools set up to ensure educational experience and services in a full and continuous process starting from early childhood education and through the Primary and Secondary levels.

1.3.9 The network of Colleges is part of the overall reform introduced by Government in 2006 to increase decentralisation and autonomy at State Primary and Secondary education levels, as well as increase the commitment to quality and rigour. Central to the College system is leadership and the transfer of decision-making. The network of schools is also intended to stimulate teamwork and encourage key players to work together in a collegial atmosphere that strengthens development and improvements in schools.

1.3.10 Furthermore, Colleges are expected to develop their own identity, ethos and character. The Colleges are also important for promoting initiatives that cater for the aspirations and learning needs of their students and the communities that they serve.

1.3.11 There are nine state Colleges in Malta and one in Gozo. These are St. Margaret's College, St. Benedict's College, St. Gorg Preca College, St. Ignatius' College, St. Clare's College, Maria Regina College, St. Nicholas College, St. Theresa's College, St. Thomas More College and Gozo College.

1.3.12 Each College is under the responsibility, guidance and administration of a Principal whose role is to perform the duties of a chief executive officer of the College. The Principals are responsible to the Directors General

as regard to the performance of their functions and their responsibilities include amongst others:

- (a) supporting the schools within the Colleges to grow individually and together as providers of quality education;
- (b) preparation of business plans and estimates of the College and its schools, including the apportionment of funds;
- (c) the creation of opportunities so that Heads of School, teachers, and other staff in schools collaborate on common educational programmes, projects and activities, as well as contribute and exchange ideas, experiences and good practices;
- (d) facilitation of the organisation of common activities in such fields such as PE and Sport;
- (e) mentoring Heads of School and presiding over Council meetings of Heads of School; and
- (f) collaboration in the initial training and continuous professional development of teachers and staff in schools.

1.3.13 The Council of Heads of School in each College is expected to play a key role in the nurturing of the spirit of collegiality, the development of a common ethos and identity, the planning of staff development needs, the development of projects, the sharing of resources and services as well as the exchange of experiences.

Heads of School

1.3.14 The Heads of School referred to in this report are the persons holding the office of Head of School or temporarily acting in that capacity. Each Head is expected, amongst other duties, to:

- (a) provide professional leadership;
- (b) ensure the implementation and the development of the NMC;
- (c) promote and develop holistic education of each student;
- (d) organise, manage and control efficiently the human, physical and financial resources of the school;
- (e) manage (in collaboration with the Senior Management Team (SMT) in the school) administration, finance and student matters including development and adherence to policies

and procedures, promoting an inclusive school policy and appropriate customer care;

- (f) ensure order, discipline and effective conflict resolution; as well as
- (g) secure commitment to the curricular philosophy, value and objectives through team building, communication and collaboration.

1.3.15 The Assistant Head of School assists and deputises the Head of School in the management and control of human, physical and financial resources of the school. The post is also expected to offer professional leadership in the implementation and development of the NMC.

Teachers

1.3.16 In terms of the Education Act, a teacher is defined as a person with a warrant to practice the profession and who is trained in the science of the educational process and in the use of pedagogical skills.

1.3.17 The teacher is expected to have the capability to succeed to teach effectively by motivating each student's aspirations for the highest values in life and help them develop creative and thinking skills, according to their respective ages, their individual physical and intellectual development, as well as according to the potential of their skills and talents.

1.3.18 The final aim of the teacher should be to train students to become lifelong learners.

1.3.19 The employment conditions of teachers in state schools are governed by a Collective Agreement between Government and the MUT.

Malta Sports Council (KMS)

1.3.20 KMS was established through the Sports Act of 2002 (Chapter 455 of the Laws of Malta). Through this legislation, the Council was given the responsibility to promote sport, to implement Government Policy on Sport, to register Sport organisations and to establish dispute resolution structures. KMS is also expected to act as the main public promoter of the health, social and economic benefits generated by sport to society.

1.3.21 The vision of KMS is targeted towards the development and implementation of policies, programmes and practices aimed at improving access and equity in all aspects of sport; maximisation of available resources for the development of sport; introduction of assistance / incentive schemes for local sport organisations; and registration of sport organisations. In 2008 KMS also

established the KMS-SPU to organise additional sport and physical activity programmes in schools.

1.3.22 KMS organises a number of programmes during and after school hours, during weekends and in summer using its own facilities, as well as those of schools and other organisations. These programmes and initiatives include *Girls on the Move, Skolasport, Schools on the Move, Sport for All, Summer on the Move, Active Youngsters, Sports Buzz and Sports Fun*. In addition the following programmes are offered through KMS-SPU: *Fundamental Basic Sport Skills Programme, Outdoor Activities Programme, College Based Sport Activities and National Sport Festivals*.

1.3.23 Furthermore, since 2010, KMS together with the Għaqda Ġurnalisti Sportivi Maltin started to give an award during the Sport Malta Awards to the best State College promoting sport.

Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS)

1.3.24 The building and refurbishment of facilities within all state schools in Malta and Gozo fall under the responsibility of FTS. The Foundation was set up in 2001 following a Cabinet Decision with the main objective of transforming Primary and Secondary schools into “Tomorrow’s Schools” in line with the guiding principles of the NMC requirements. In particular, the NMC states that learning environments are important features of the educational fabric, and that there is an intimate relationship between the physical conditions, the allocated space and the educational resources allowed by specific learning environments, and the development of student attitudes and behaviour. During 2009 FTS was reported to have invested €13 million in the construction of new schools and in maintenance in several schools.

1.4 Objectives and scope of the study

1.4.1 Against this backdrop, NAO undertook a study to examine the organisation and implementation of PE, sport and physical activities in State Primary and Secondary Schools. The study sought to determine the type of lessons and activities held, the level of frequency and regularity, the issues and factors affecting delivery and quality; as well as the overall importance being given to PE, sport and structured physical activities in these schools. In addition, through this report, NAO proposes recommendations on areas where there is scope for further improvement and attention.

1.4.2 The study was limited to the examination of PE, sport and other physical activities in all State Primary and Secondary Schools forming part of the ten Colleges in

Malta and Gozo. Similar activities in state-run kindergarten schools, special schools, Church and privately-run schools, as well as higher secondary and tertiary institutions were not examined as it was not considered feasible to extend the study to the whole span of the education system in a single performance audit. Nevertheless, as some of the problems are not only confined to the studied schools but are part of overall national issues, the relevant recommendations of this report should also be considered by other schools nationwide.

1.4.3 Furthermore, although the performance audit refers to the programmes and events organised by KMS, the study did not carry out detailed reviews of the take-up and impact of these activities as these would have merited a specific study.

1.4.4 Details of the methods applied to this study are outlined in Appendix A. Unless otherwise stated, findings in this report reflect conditions up to December 2009. NAO would like to convey its appreciation to the invaluable collaboration extended by the Education Authorities, KMS, other stakeholders and researchers throughout this audit.

1.5 Structure of the report

1.5.1 The rest of the report is structured around the following three key areas:

- **Chapter 2 – PE and Class Teachers:** This chapter assesses the distribution of staff teaching PE and Sport in Primary and Secondary Schools. It also explores the human resource opportunities and challenges affecting the regularity and quality of PE and sport activities in these schools.
- **Chapter 3 – Facilities and Equipment:** This chapter examines the facilities and equipment available in Primary and Secondary Schools for the practice of PE and sport activities and provides recommendations on how observed limitations can be adequately addressed.
- **Chapter 4 – Content and Quality of Delivery:** This chapter evaluates how the time is utilised for PE, sport and other physical activities in Primary and Secondary Schools during and outside school hours. It also discusses the issues and factors affecting quality and delivery of these activities.
- **Appendix A – Methodology:** This section describes the information sources and analytical techniques that were used during the study.



Chapter 2

PE and Class Teachers

Chapter 2 – PE and Class Teachers

Chapter 2 focuses on the distribution of staff teaching PE and Sport in Primary and Secondary Schools. It also assesses the human resource opportunities and challenges affecting the regularity and quality of PE and sport activities in these schools.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 In State Primary Schools, children should be taught PE and Sport by specialist PE Peripatetic Teachers and Primary School Teachers, whilst in Secondary Schools the PE and Sport lessons are taught only by specialist PE Teachers. The number of hours to be allocated for the PE lessons in the school timetable at both levels of schooling is described in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2).

2.1.2 In certain Colleges, children are also learning about sport and participating in physical activities through programmes and events organised both during and outside school hours by KMS including one of its sections, KMS-SPU. The main events and activities held by KMS are outlined in paragraphs 4.3.8 and 4.3.9 in Chapter 4.

2.2 PE Peripatetic Teachers

2.2.1 Most of the PE Peripatetic Teachers are allocated to up to three schools and the majority of Primary School Teachers have a single PE Peripatetic Teacher visiting their school. The deployment depends on the number of classes in each Primary School and on the number of teachers in the peripatetic pool.

2.2.2 On average PE Peripatetic Teachers are each assigned twenty-six lessons a week, with the remaining time being allocated to travel between schools. The majority of PE Peripatetic Teachers participating in the NAO survey carried out during the scholastic year 2008/2009 (twenty respondents) indicated that they had sufficient time during the scholastic year to implement a suitable PE programme

for each class. On the other hand, a considerable number (thirteen respondents) reported that the time available for PE throughout the year was not enough to complete the syllabus. In addition, a few respondents mentioned that they had difficulties to plan a scheme of work due to the practice of sharing classes with other teachers.

2.2.3 During the last concluded scholastic year (2008/2009), thirty-three PE Peripatetic Teachers were assigned to Primary Schools in Malta and Gozo. This staff complement costed approximately (in terms of gross wages) €660,000 per annum. In addition Education Authorities incurred other costs such as training and professional development, maintenance of school equipment and facilities, and the salary of the Education Officer (EO).

2.2.4 The survey with Heads of State Primary Schools carried out by NAO during that period showed that sixty Primary Schools had between one to two PE Peripatetic Teachers. In addition, another five schools had three PE Peripatetic Teachers visiting their school. The remaining five schools did not provide information on the allocation of teachers.

2.2.5 At the start of the scholastic year 2009/2010, however, there was a staff shortage of PE Peripatetic Teachers as a number of teachers failed the interview for the post or refused the post after being selected. The interviews were held before the new scholastic year following a drive by CMELD to strategically improve the quality of specialist PE Teachers in Primary Schools.

2.2.6 As a consequence of these interim staff shortages in the PE Peripatetic pool, between October and December 2009, children in the classes without regular visits by Peripatetic Teachers were at risk of not having comprehensive PE lessons. This risk was being partly mitigated in cases where the Primary School Teachers delivered PE lessons themselves or the children participated in sport programmes and events organised by KMS-SPU.

2.2.7 However, CMELD confirmed that as from January 2010 most of the outstanding vacancies for the post of PE Peripatetic Teacher were filled and by March 2010 the full complement was established.

2.2.8 Overall, the peripatetic system is considered essential by the Heads of State Primary Schools given the very limited human resources and competencies in the teaching of PE and Sport. The system provides schools with the possibility to have access to specialist PE teachers. Another key strength is that PE Peripatetic Teachers can potentially introduce to the schools and to the class teachers new teaching techniques and initiatives. The PE lessons delivered by PE Peripatetic Teachers are discussed in detail in Section 4.2 in Chapter 4.

2.2.9 Moreover, the Heads of School reported through the NAO survey that the scheduled visits of the PE Peripatetic Teacher contributed to reducing the risk that children remained without a PE lesson, especially in cases where Primary School Teachers were reluctant or had difficulties to hold PE lessons.

2.2.10 Nevertheless, a significant number of Heads and PE Peripatetic Teachers complained that PE lessons by peripatetic staff were too few, although it was also observed by a number of respondents that some Primary School Teachers and parents would object to increasing the number of weekly PE lessons as this would mean less time to cover the syllabi of examined subjects.

2.2.11 Additionally, respondents commented that there was the need for more Peripatetic Teachers to ensure regular and frequent lessons, to implement a suitable scheme of work, and to provide sufficient contact time with pupils. Respondents pointed out that PE lessons were missed whenever the Peripatetic Teachers were required for other duties or were absent due to illness. This issue was also highlighted in a separate survey carried out by NAO in 2008 with 444 parents of children in Primary Schools. Parents participating in the survey had reported of cases of PE lessons not being held because the Peripatetic Teacher would not be available.

2.2.12 In addition, some Heads of School and PE Peripatetic Teachers remarked that the nature of the peripatetic system diminishes the teachers' sense of belonging to a particular school. Moreover, it was observed that valuable time is lost due to travel between schools. Respondents suggested that these concerns could be partially overcome by having resident full-time specialist PE Teachers in Primary Schools with a significant pupil population.

2.2.13 A number of Heads and PE Peripatetic Teachers also complained that even if enough teachers were available, the schools lacked suitable facilities and

equipment to carry out the proper quality PE lessons. This limitation is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1).

2.2.14 Furthermore, respondents were concerned that the Peripatetic System encouraged some Primary School Teachers to over-rely on the few lessons given by the PE Peripatetic Teachers and avoid delivering supplementary PE lessons. As outlined in Section 1.2 in Chapter 1, Primary School Teachers are guided by MEEF, through circular DCM 28/2007, to give three additional PE lessons every week apart from those delivered by PE Peripatetic Teachers. The role played, in practice, by Primary School Teachers in the delivery of PE and Sport is discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 below.

2.3 Primary School Teachers

2.3.1 According to the NAO survey carried out during the scholastic year 2008/2009 with Primary School Teachers (n=644), most respondents were integrating, to varying extents, related themes and physical movements in their other lessons. The degree to which PE, sport and related themes were reported by Primary School Teachers to be integrated in their lessons is evaluated in detail in paragraph 4.2.8 in Chapter 4.

2.3.2 However, few Primary School Teachers (approximately one out of five respondents) commented that they held comprehensive PE lessons during the week as a continuation of those held by the PE Peripatetic Teachers.

2.3.3 Of significance, three out of every four Primary School Teachers participating in the NAO survey also reported that Primary School children could not afford to have the recommended daily thirty-minute PE lesson during school hours. However, a number of these teachers argued that it is possible to hold PE lessons two or three times a week provided that the teacher is enthusiastic about the subject and has good time management skills.

2.3.4 Furthermore, one out of every five Primary School Teachers, when asked to provide unprompted general comments or suggestions (through the NAO questionnaire) on PE and sport activities in their school, recommended that the number of PE Peripatetic Teachers should be increased to the extent that there would be a resident PE teacher in every Primary School. Respondents indicated that this would allow for more PE lessons to be given by specialist staff and that more structured physical activities and events are organised in the schools.

2.3.5 The main underlying factor mentioned by most Primary School Teachers to be hindering frequent PE lessons was the strong pressure to complete the syllabi of the other subjects, even at the cost of not holding regular PE lessons. This constraint was more widely emphasised



by Primary School Teachers responsible for children in Years 4, 5 and 6.

2.3.6 In addition, a number of Primary School Teachers cited difficulties to carry out PE lessons because of insufficient knowledge or ability to teach the subject, as well as due to fears that children would hurt during physical activity. Moreover, some Primary School Teachers indicated that they could not hold PE lessons due to a lack of physical space (discussed in Section 3.1 in Chapter 3).

2.3.7 The limited role played by Primary School Teachers in the delivery of the PE and Sport syllabus is also highlighted in the survey with PE Peripatetic Teachers. Out of the thirty-three PE Peripatetic Teachers surveyed during 2008/2009, only five respondents thought that some Primary School Teachers were holding regular PE lessons (twice or three times a week) in addition to those scheduled to be delivered by them.

2.3.8 Most PE Peripatetic Teachers (twenty-three respondents) indicated that, based on their experience in schools, Primary School Teachers generally held PE lessons either occasionally (twice or three times a month), rarely (less than twice or three times a month), or never. The remaining five PE Peripatetic Teachers did not provide feedback. Overall, the participating PE Peripatetic Teachers commented that Primary School Teachers should take a more active role in supplementing the lessons carried out by them. It was also mentioned by PE Peripatetic Teachers that the physical activities and games occasionally used by Primary School Teachers in between lessons should not be seen as breaks but as comprehensive PE lessons that complement the ones carried out by them.

2.3.9 The need to strengthen the role and contribution of the Primary School Teacher in the delivery of PE in Primary Schools was also reflected in the responses received from the Heads of State Primary Schools and College Principals during the scholastic year 2008/2009.

- (a) Only twenty-one Heads of School out of the sixty-one that responded rated as 'satisfactory' or 'very satisfactory' the frequency of PE lessons held by Primary School Teachers. The other forty Heads of School reported lower ratings. Their main concerns included the few lessons held by Primary School Teachers due to time restrictions and that the class teachers were inadequately trained to teach the PE syllabus or were relying too much on the Peripatetic Staff.
- (b) Similarly, the majority of Heads of School (forty-two respondents) were of the opinion that children cannot afford the time during school hours to have the recommended daily thirty-minute PE lesson, mainly due to time pressure to cover the syllabi of other subjects. On the other hand, twenty-two Heads argued that it is possible to have the recommended daily PE lesson. Six Heads of School did not reply to this question.
- (c) Nine out of the ten College Principals participating in the NAO survey noted that insufficient time was being dedicated to PE in Primary Schools. Seven of the respondents believed that children should afford the daily thirty-minute PE lesson during school hours. The other three Principals, although in favour of a daily PE lesson, commented that this



Photo courtesy of St Benedict College

would be difficult to achieve as time dedicated to other lessons would have to be reduced.

2.3.10 These results confirm the critical challenges faced in Primary Schools to ensure regular and frequent PE lessons by all Primary School Teachers. NAO observed that four key issues were hindering the achievement of improvements in the delivery of PE by Primary School Teachers:

- (a) The most prevalent cause was the pressure placed on the Primary School Teacher to give overriding priority to first cover the syllabi of examined subjects. This issue is closely linked to the ongoing reform on the ‘Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools’ discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2). The survey carried out by NAO with 444 parents of children in Primary Schools in 2008 had also indicated that lessons by Primary School Teachers were sometimes missed as there was not enough time for PE.
- (b) There was also an overall tendency of Primary School Teachers to over-rely on the few lessons delivered by the PE Peripatetic Teachers. Factors that were reported to contribute to low level of involvement included a lack of sufficient knowledge, skill or aptitude to teach the subject, as well as fear that a child might get hurt.
- (c) Furthermore, in a number of Primary Schools there were limitations in the use of existing indoor and/or outdoor facilities. These constraints are discussed in more detail in Section 3.1 in Chapter 3.

- (d) Finally, College Principals, Heads of School and teachers also commented that some parents considered PE and Sport as taking away time from study and hence did not encourage their children to be physically active. Having said that, in the survey carried out by NAO with parents, 86 per cent of the respondents who had children in Primary Schools (n=444) were of the opinion that it is possible to have a thirty-minute PE lesson every day. On the other hand, as indicated by the teaching staff, the relatively small minority of respondents that disagreed with daily PE lessons cited time taken from other lessons as their main concern.

2.4 PE Teachers in Secondary Schools

2.4.1 In general, a sufficient number of PE Teachers were reported to be available in Secondary Schools to deliver the scheduled weekly lessons. This finding was also confirmed in the NAO survey carried out with 406 parents of students attending Secondary Schools. 93 per cent of these parents responded that PE lessons were always or nearly always held. The nature and type of PE lessons delivered in Secondary Schools is examined in Section 4.2 in Chapter 4.

2.4.2 Most schools have between one to four PE Teachers, depending on the number of classes and the size of the school population. The number of PE lessons that should be delivered each week in Secondary Schools is explained in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2).

2.4.3 Furthermore, most PE Teachers in Secondary Schools (forty-six respondents) were of the opinion that they had adequate time to implement a suitable PE programme for each class. However, eighteen PE Teachers indicated that the time available was insufficient to adequately cover certain topics in the PE syllabus. This concern was particularly noted by PE Teachers responsible for classes in Forms 3, 4 and 5 which have only a scheduled lesson a week. The lack of proper changing facilities was another issue mentioned by the teachers as it impinged on the limited time available for PE.

2.4.4 In addition, PE Teachers in Secondary Schools identified a number of issues which in their opinion hindered increased PE, physical activity and sport in schools. Apart from limited indoor and outdoor facilities (discussed in Section 3.2 in Chapter 3), PE Teachers made the following observations:

- (a) A number of parents would object to an increase in the number of PE lessons as time would be taken from other subjects which are considered more important for their children's scholastic achievements. Nevertheless, the NAO survey with parents of students in Secondary Schools, showed that 82 per cent of respondents (n=406) were of the opinion that it is possible to have a thirty-minute PE lesson every day. Those parents that were against daily lessons mentioned that less time would be available for the other subjects as their main concern.
- (b) There is a widespread lack of interest among students to participate in sport and physical activity, even if opportunities are made available.
- (c) Students and teachers are under considerable pressure to focus mainly on academic subjects.
- (d) Greater attention needs to be given to the promotion of daily physical activity and sport in schools and on influencing parents.
- (e) Additional PE teaching staff would be required if PE lessons are to be increased.
- (f) A decision would also need to be taken on how more time is to be allocated to PE in the schools' timetable, even at the cost of reducing time for other subjects.

2.4.5 Moreover, a number of PE Teachers commented that due to the few PE lessons held in Primary Schools, some children were starting Secondary Education without the necessary basic skills and attitude. Such pre-requisites are essential for students to be able to actively participate in

PE and Sport education programmes and activities offered at Secondary level.

2.4.6 The Heads of State Secondary Schools were also asked for their views on whether it was possible to increase PE lessons for all the Forms to the extent of having thirty minutes of PE every day. Of significance, the majority (twenty Heads of School) indicated that students can afford to have a daily thirty-minute PE lesson during school hours. On the other hand, eight Heads were of the opinion that it was not possible for students to have a PE lesson on a daily basis due to difficulties on how to fit more PE lessons in the existing timetables. Furthermore, it was observed that an increase in lessons would require additional PE Teachers. The remaining three Heads did not respond to the question.

2.4.7 In parallel, the College Principals were also asked for their views on whether sufficient time was being allocated to PE in Secondary Schools. Their opinion was equally divided on this issue, with five respondents being satisfied with current levels of delivery and the other five respondents indicating that there should be an increase in PE lessons. The College Principals also listed similar barriers to increasing PE lessons as those identified by the participating PE Teachers and the Heads of School.

2.4.8 NAO was also informed by DQSE that having a daily PE lesson in Secondary Schools is not a realistic option considering time-tabling constraints where lessons range between forty and forty-five minutes. In order to achieve the commitment of two hours of quality PE every week the number of lessons would need to be increased to three weekly sessions.

2.5 Conclusions

2.5.1 In Primary Schools, the teaching of PE and Sport is mainly carried out by Peripatetic Teachers. Both Heads of School and College Principals considered the Peripatetic System in Primary Schools as being advantageous as the arrangements give schools access to specialist PE Teachers. Some respondents went as far as to suggest that these specialist teachers should be assigned to single schools.

2.5.2 CMeLD indicated that the current Peripatetic System is designed to offer a weekly lesson for each class. In addition, Primary School Teachers are expected to carry out supplementary PE lessons, as well as integrate related themes in other lessons. Furthermore, in some schools, a programme of activities and events are organised by KMS to increase awareness and participation in sport.

2.5.3 In practice, however, few Primary School Teachers reported that they held frequent and comprehensive PE lessons as a continuation to those carried out by the PE Peripatetic Teachers. Instead, most Primary School

Teachers responded that they integrated, in a broad sense, related themes in their other lessons. Furthermore, activities through KMS-SPU were held in selected schools.

2.5.4 In the case of Secondary Schools, each PE Teacher is deployed to a specific school. Overall, the information gathered by NAO showed that a sufficient number of PE Teachers were available to deliver all the lessons in the standard Secondary School timetable.

2.5.5 NAO also observed that for Government to be able to improve and increase the delivery of PE and Sport in both Primary and Secondary Schools, additional PE staff would be required at these levels of schooling. Furthermore, more attention would need to be given to ensure that all Primary School Teachers in Primary Schools deliver frequent PE lessons throughout the week.

2.5.6 Moreover, the study carried out by NAO clearly demonstrated the considerable pressure being placed on children, teachers, parents and school management to give overriding priority to examined subjects both at primary and secondary level of education. This prevailing culture and mindset has, as a consequence, conditioned decisions by both school management and individual teachers. It was also commented by respondents that there was a general lack of interest among students in Secondary Schools to participate in PE, sport and physical activities, even if opportunities are made available.

2.5.7 College Principals, Heads of School and teachers also indicated that some parents considered frequent PE and Sport lessons as not critically important to the development of their children and as taking away time from study. Surveys carried out by NAO with parents of children in both Primary and Secondary Schools indicated that a minority of parents held this opinion. However, a considerable majority reported not to be so much against frequent PE lessons.

2.6 Recommendations

2.6.1 As discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1), the benefits of PE and physical activity are considerable and any additional allocation of resources would have a positive impact on the behaviour and well-being of school children at an early stage of their development. This is particularly significant due to the high incidence of children who are overweight or obese. NAO recommends that MEEF considers including in the revised NMC a requirement that two hours of PE are held weekly in all Primary and Secondary School classes. This condition would reflect the current goals of the Ministry to increase the frequency of PE (discussed in Section 1.2 of Chapter 1). Such a commitment would require an increased number of PE teaching staff.

2.6.2 An area where there is scope for significant improvement is the increased utilisation of Primary School Teachers to supplement lessons by PE Peripatetic Teachers. A stronger mechanism is required across Colleges and schools to ensure that all Primary School Teachers fulfil their role and deliver regular lessons (at least twice or three times a week). This would need to be monitored, with timely action being taken if it is found that classes are not benefiting from this opportunity. Furthermore, the Senior Management Teams in schools should continually exercise their leadership and authority to ensure that PE is given the appropriate importance. The ongoing reform on the ‘Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools’ (discussed in Section 1.2) can also potentially alleviate some of the pressure placed on Primary School Teachers to give overriding priority to examined subjects.

2.6.3 NAO also recommends that MEEF considers temporarily lowering the threshold of required experience of PE Peripatetic Teachers by allowing recent Bachelor of Education (Honours) graduates specialised in PE to apply for the post. This special consideration is essential due to the experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers qualified in the teaching of PE and Sport for the Peripatetic pool.

2.6.4 Furthermore, attention must also be given to the content and quality of the lessons delivered by the Primary School Teachers by ensuring that opportunities to shadow PE Peripatetic Teachers are not missed and by offering in-service courses on PE. These issues are discussed in more detail in paragraphs 4.2.22, 4.4.3 and 4.4.4 in Chapter 4.

2.6.5 Greater attention also needs to be given to the promotion in Primary and Secondary Schools of daily physical activity. The Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, in collaboration with individual schools, carries out a number of activities (including talks and physical exercises). NAO recommends that Education Authorities strengthen these links with this Department and implement a full-scale programme of similar or enhanced initiatives in all schools.

2.6.6 Some parents need to be persuaded not to discourage their children from participating in PE, sport and other physical activities. These campaigns are vital as children and adolescents need to be continuously influenced on the importance of physical activity for their development and well-being and encouraged to participate. 43 per cent of the open-ended comments and suggestions (n=212) given by parents of students in Secondary Schools when asked for feedback through the NAO survey related to the need for more time to be allocated for PE. A further 12 per cent mentioned the need for PE to be considered as important as other subjects. These indicators are encouraging and further confirmed that a sizeable number of parents do not consider spending additional time on PE and physical activity as a waste of time.

2.6.7 The activities organised by KMS-SPU during school hours should also continue to be enhanced and extended to all Colleges. These activities, although not intended to replace the scheduled PE lessons, provide further opportunities for children and young people to be active, to develop basic motor and sport skills, and to gain important exposure to different sport disciplines.



Photo courtesy of FTS

Chapter 3

Facilities and Equipment

Chapter 3 – Facilities and Equipment

Chapter 3 examines the adequacy of physical assets and equipment available to Primary and Secondary Schools for the practice of PE and sport activities. It brings together information obtained from site visits and from surveys carried out with College Principals, Heads of School, PE Teachers and parents during 2008/2009. The Chapter discusses the key issues, challenges and opportunities related to facilities and equipment and highlights the areas that need to be addressed.

3.1 In State Primary Schools

Outdoor areas for PE

3.1.1 In surveys carried out by NAO with seventy Heads of Primary Schools and thirty-three PE Peripatetic Teachers during the scholastic year 2008/2009, the majority of Primary Schools reported to have suitable outdoor areas for PE. In thirty-nine schools, both the Heads of School and the PE Peripatetic Teachers indicated that the grounds in their schools were appropriate for outdoor PE lessons.

3.1.2 Nevertheless, a considerable number of outdoor areas in Primary Schools were also reported to be unsuitable. In fact, in twenty-six Primary Schools, the Heads of School and/or PE Peripatetic Teachers commented that the yards or grounds in their school were too small or were inappropriately surfaced or maintained. Safety concerns related to the unsuitable or unlevelled surfaces of outdoor areas for PE were also highlighted. No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining five Primary Schools, although the PE Peripatetic Teachers serving in four of these schools mentioned similar concerns.

3.1.3 Concerns expressed by Heads of Primary Schools and PE Peripatetic Teachers were also reflected in responses given by parents of children attending Primary Schools in the survey carried out in 2008 with 444 respondents. These

parents reported cases of lessons that were missed because schools' facilities were inappropriate or not available.

Outdoor areas for recreation and playing

3.1.4 Through the same survey with the Heads of Primary Schools, forty respondents indicated that they had access to appropriate outdoor facilities for recreation and playing. On the other hand, a considerable number of schools reported to have unsuitable outdoor areas for such activities. The Heads of twenty-two Primary Schools indicated that their schools had significant space limitations and/or play areas which were unsuitably surfaced. A number of schools also stated that due to the small size of the outdoor areas, children were divided into two groups, each group given half the break time to go out and play. No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining eight Primary Schools.

The type and size of outdoor areas

3.1.5 The type and size of outdoor areas available in individual schools is varied. Primary Schools typically have at least one yard on their premises, with fifty-seven out of the sixty-two School Heads that responded to this question reporting to have between one to three yards. The reported sizes of these areas ranged from less than a hundred square metres to approximately five thousand square metres. It was also confirmed that nearly all the yards had hard surfaces (concrete paving, a tarmac surface or tiles) and a small number of schools had areas with either artificial turf or a rubber surface.

3.1.6 In addition, seventeen Primary Schools indicated that they have an outdoor court or ground. In this case, different surfaces were mentioned, namely concrete, tarmac or synthetic turf. A Head of School also commented that the school made use of an external ground in the locality.

Indoor areas for PE and physical activity

3.1.7 The Heads of Primary Schools reported that on days when the weather is unsuitable for outdoor physical activity, the PE lesson is held in the school hall, in a special indoor area and/or in the classroom. It was also commented that when the school hall is not available children are kept in the classroom.

3.1.8 The NAO survey, based on responses given by sixty-one Heads of School, showed that:

- (a) forty-one Primary Schools had a school hall;
- (b) fourteen Primary Schools had a dedicated indoor area or room for PE and Sport; and
- (c) six schools had both a school hall and a dedicated indoor area.

No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining nine Primary Schools.

3.1.9 In twenty-seven Primary Schools, both the Heads of School and the PE Peripatetic Teachers indicated that the indoor areas were suitable for PE lessons and other physical activity events.

3.1.10 The availability of such indoor facilities, however, does not necessarily mean that these areas were appropriate. In fact, the Heads of School and/or the PE Peripatetic Teachers of thirty-seven Primary Schools highlighted key concerns related to their indoor areas. The most prevailing challenges mentioned by the respondents were that the school hall or foyer were not ideal for the practice of quality PE and Sport or that the hall was not always available as it was being used for other activities (such as music and drama activities) which take precedence.

3.1.11 In addition, respondents indicated that the indoor areas of some schools were too small to hold a quality PE class, the flooring was inappropriate (for example, slippery) or the height of the room was unsuitable.

3.1.12 No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining six Primary Schools, although the PE Peripatetic Teachers serving in two of these schools indicated similar concerns.

3.1.13 A separate NAO survey carried out in 2008 with 444 parents of children in Primary Schools also indicated similar issues as those identified by the Heads of School and PE Peripatetic Teachers. Respondents reported that there were cases of PE lessons being missed because it was not possible to hold the lessons indoors when the weather was unfavourable due to inappropriate or unavailable facilities.

Equipment for PE and sport activities

3.1.14 Apart from physical areas, the Heads of School and the PE Peripatetic Teachers in all Primary Schools were asked to indicate whether their schools had sufficient equipment for PE classes and sport activities. The responses for this question were equally divided, highlighting varying degrees of availability and accessibility to essential PE and sport equipment.

3.1.15 On one hand, in thirty-two schools, both the Heads of School and the PE Peripatetic Teachers indicated that their schools had sufficient equipment. However, in thirty-one other schools, the Heads of School and/or the PE Peripatetic Teachers reported that the equipment available for PE and sport activities was not enough, with the underlying issue being the insufficient purchase or the non-replacement of key items.

3.1.16 No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining seven Primary Schools, although a PE Peripatetic Teacher serving in one of these schools also indicated that the equipment was insufficient.

3.2 In State Secondary Schools

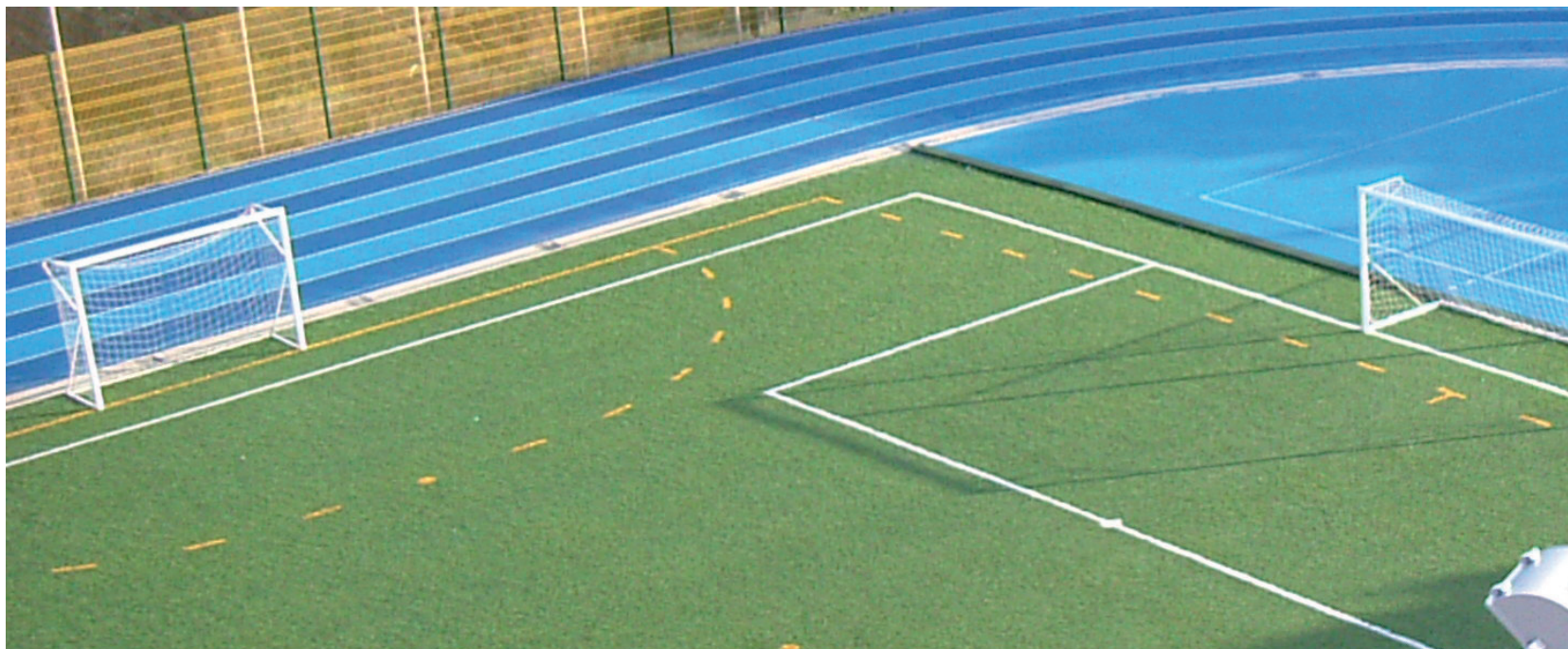
Outdoor areas for PE

3.2.1 The surveys carried out by NAO with thirty-one Heads or Acting Heads of Secondary Schools and sixty-seven participating PE Teachers during the scholastic year 2008/2009 confirmed that the majority of schools had access to suitable outdoor areas to hold PE lessons. Both the Heads of School and the PE Teachers of nineteen schools responded that they had appropriate outdoor facilities.

3.2.2 On the other hand, the Heads and/or PE Teachers of nine other Secondary Schools reported critical constraints. It was also indicated that one of these schools was scheduled to be closed down and hence there were no plans to improve existing facilities.

3.2.3 The main limitation of outdoor facilities mentioned by the respondents (including PE Teachers of recently built Secondary Schools) was the relatively small size of outdoor area when compared to the student population. Furthermore, respondents mentioned other problems such as the inappropriate surfacing and fencing of the external areas, poor maintenance of the facilities, safety concerns, as well as grounds that were unsuitable for carrying out specific PE activities.

3.2.4 No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining three Secondary Schools, although the PE Teachers serving in two of these schools indicated similar concerns.



Outdoor areas for recreation and playing

3.2.5 A similar result was reported by the Heads of Secondary Schools when asked to specify whether their schools had access to suitable outdoor areas for recreation and playing. The majority of Heads (representing nineteen Secondary Schools) confirmed that they had access to appropriate outdoor facilities. Eight other Heads of Secondary Schools, however, indicated critical limitations, namely significant space limitations, safety concerns and/or play areas which are inadequately surfaced. No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining four Secondary Schools.

3.2.6 The type of outdoor areas available in the twenty-eight Secondary Schools that participated in the NAO survey varied considerably:

- (a) Twelve schools had all three types of outdoor areas, namely football grounds, courts and yards.
- (b) Nine schools had only a single type of outdoor area, that is a football ground, a court or a yard.
- (c) Another four schools had courts and football grounds, but no yards.
- (d) Three schools had yards and courts, but no football grounds.

3.2.7 Most of the outdoor areas in Secondary Schools were reported to have a hard surface (that is concrete paving, gravel or tarmac). It was also mentioned that a few

football grounds in such schools had been surfaced with artificial turf.

3.2.8 The most common type of court found in Secondary Schools is the multi-purpose court. A number also have individual courts for basketball, volleyball, handball and tennis, and/or athletic tracks. In the case of football grounds, most Secondary Schools reported to have either five-a-side or seven-a-side pitches.

Indoor areas for PE and physical activity

3.2.9 With the exception of one school, all participating Secondary Schools reported to have allocated indoor space for PE. The Heads of Secondary Schools confirmed that on days when outdoor activity is unsuitable due to unfavourable weather conditions, PE lessons were held in the school hall or in a special indoor area/room. Alternatively, PE Teachers used such situations to carry out a theoretical PE lesson in the classroom. In the case of the school reported to be without indoor facilities, the Head indicated that PE Teachers delivered their lessons in the corridor.

3.2.10 Secondary Schools reported the following different types and combinations of indoor facilities:

- (a) Three Secondary Schools had a school hall, an indoor room for PE, and an equipped fitness room.
- (b) Another three schools had a school hall and an indoor room for the practice of PE.



Photo courtesy of FTS

- (c) Two schools relied on the school hall and an equipped fitness room to hold indoor PE lessons.
- (d) Six schools indicated that they had access to the school hall for PE.
- (e) Eight schools reported to have an indoor area or room dedicated for PE.
- (f) Two schools had an equipped fitness room which they used for indoor PE lessons.
- (g) No feedback was received from the Heads of the six Secondary Schools.

3.2.11 Although in nearly all schools indoor areas have been allocated for physical activity, a considerable number of Heads and/or PE Teachers in these schools did not consider the facilities to be appropriate for PE. In fact, the number of Secondary Schools in which both the Heads of School and the PE Teachers reported suitable indoor areas for PE is significantly low, with only seven schools being considered as having the appropriate facilities.

3.2.12 In contrast, in twenty-one Secondary Schools, the respective Heads of School and/or PE Teachers reported serious limitations in connection with available indoor facilities. The most prevailing concern mentioned by respondents was that the indoor areas were small in size when compared to the school's population. As a consequence this was reported to have led to difficulties as more than one class would need to make use of the indoor facilities at the same time for PE lessons.

3.2.13 In addition, respondents also commented on the limitations of school halls when used for PE lessons. The halls were reported to be not always available for PE lessons as they were also used for other school activities. Furthermore, schools halls were unsuitable for certain physical activities due to, for example, slippery surfaces or restrictions on the type of PE that could be carried out in order not to damage lighting equipment and furniture placed in the hall.

3.2.14 Individual schools also mentioned specific concerns. Some respondents commented on the unsuitable low ceilings of the indoor areas used for PE lesson in their schools. Other schools highlighted the need for repairs, with the most repeated concern being water seeping from the roof on top of the area used for PE.

3.2.15 The survey also found that among the schools reporting limitations related to the indoor facilities, three were newly built schools completed between 2006 and 2008. Respondents from one of these schools indicated that the indoor area to be used for PE had been under construction for several years. Respondents in another school commented on difficulties to access indoor facilities available in a nearby sport pavilion. In the case of the third school, respondents mentioned that the indoor areas for PE were not refurbished during the construction of the new school.

3.2.16 No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining three Secondary Schools, although the PE Teachers serving in two of these schools reported similar concerns as mentioned above.

Equipment for PE and sport activities

3.2.17 In addition, the Heads of School and the PE Teachers in Secondary Schools were asked whether their respective schools had sufficient equipment for PE classes and sport activities.

3.2.18 In the case of sixteen Secondary Schools, both the Heads of School and the PE Teachers reported that they had the required equipment. However, in twelve other Secondary Schools, the Heads of School and/or PE Teachers commented that the equipment available was inadequate, mostly due to insufficient replacement of items and the need to purchase additional equipment in order to satisfactorily cover the PE syllabus. Some teachers commented that these shortcomings were so critical that they had to resort to bringing their own personal equipment to school.

3.2.19 No feedback was received from the Heads of the remaining three Secondary Schools, although the PE Teachers serving in two of these schools reported insufficient PE equipment.

3.3 Barriers and opportunities to increased PE and Sport

3.3.1 The findings above were also reflected in the responses received from the College Principals and the PE Teachers to the question on the five most critical barriers to increasing PE, physical activity and sport in schools.

3.3.2 Seven out of the ten College Principals, as well as sixty-eight out of the ninety-one participating specialist PE Teachers (in Primary and Secondary Schools) reported unsuitable indoor and/or outdoor facilities, inadequate space for PE and Sport, and/or insufficient equipment as critical barriers to the practice of PE and Sport in schools. PE Teachers also suggested that more resources are allocated for PE and sport activities and that a specific budget is established for the annual compulsory purchase and replacement of equipment.

3.3.3 In addition, the Principals were asked whether the current arrangements through the College system facilitated the sharing of PE, sport and recreational areas and equipment between schools. The feedback received from all the College Principals indicates that the establishment of Colleges is encouraging the sharing of facilities and equipment among schools. In fact, the Principals are playing a critical role in coordinating such arrangements. However, the College Principals also commented that there is still scope for increased collaboration and for ensuring optimal sharing of facilities for PE and sport activities. Certain schools have not taken up opportunities to share equipment and sport areas, demonstrating reluctance to let

go of their own resources or limiting the time that these were available to other schools within the College.

3.4 Conclusions

3.4.1 The results of the surveys with the school management and the PE Teachers (Figure 3.1) indicate a combination of different facilities for the practice of PE and sport activities in State Primary and Secondary Schools. However, the findings also highlight critical limitations and concerns. These concerns were also identified from the surveys carried out with parents, as well as in reports and strategic documents prepared by the EO (PE) for the management and improvement of PE in schools.

3.4.2 Some of these constraints are linked to the restrictive structural limitations of existing school premises and would require considerable investment in the re-construction of new premises. MEEF explained that this a national issue and depends on the budgets that are allocated to the Ministry for such investments.

3.4.3 Since the collection of the survey questionnaires by January 2009, a new Primary School with new PE and sport facilities has been opened. The existing facilities of a Secondary School have also been upgraded. In addition, FTS has reported that patterned safety rubber tiles and/or indoor play tiles were installed in nine Primary Schools. Government also plans to build four new Secondary Schools with upgraded facilities by 2012.

3.4.4 In addition, KMS, sports associations and clubs as well as a few Local Councils have permanently upgraded certain facilities in schools. In these cases children are benefiting from these facilities during school hours. KMS has also explained that during 2009 and 2010 it provided sport equipment, for permanent or temporary use, in a significant number of schools.

3.4.5 However, despite these new developments, several schools remain with serious constraints, as well as limited or unsuitable spaces for PE, sport and physical activity. The restrictions on availability and space are more critical in the case of indoor facilities, even in the newer schools.

3.4.6 On the other hand, space for outdoor activities is more easily available in nearly all schools, although space is restricted in certain schools when compared to the student population. Furthermore, several outdoor areas require improvements and upgrading in order to ensure safety and to allow for the full implementation of the PE syllabus.

Figure 3.1

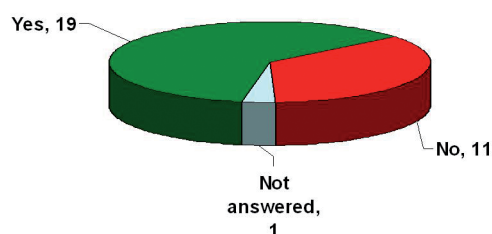
Reported access to facilities and equipment in State Primary and Secondary Schools – January 2009

Access to suitable outdoor areas to hold PE lessons

State Primary Schools
(N=70)

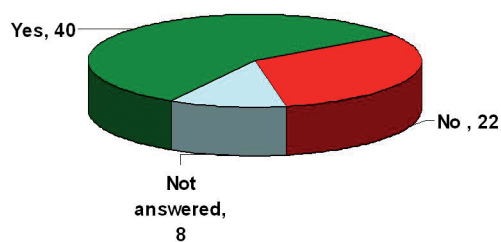


State Secondary Schools
(N=31)

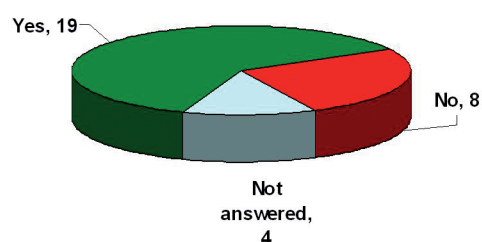


Access to suitable outdoor areas for recreation and play

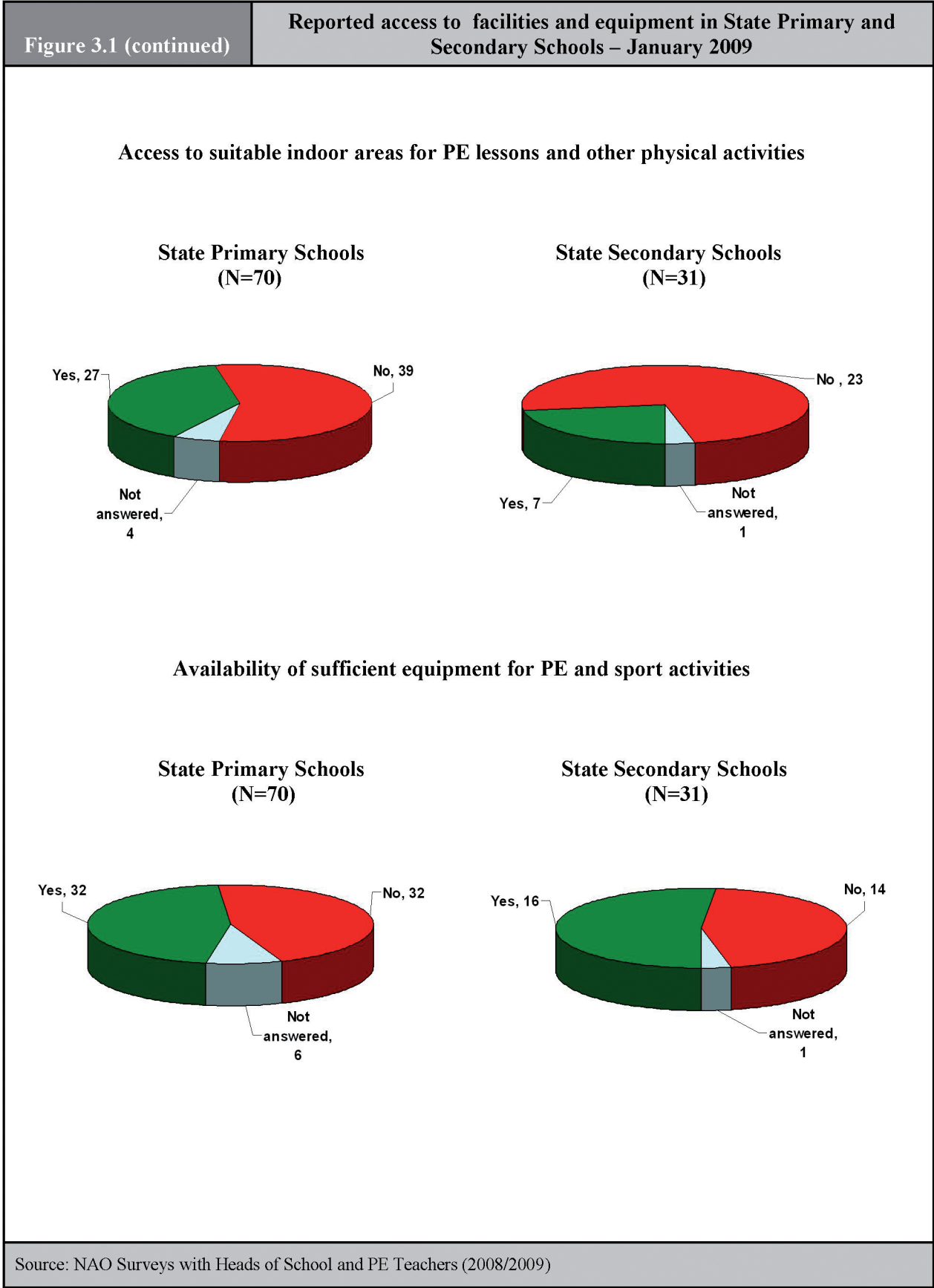
State Primary Schools
(N=70)



State Secondary Schools
(N=31)



Source: NAO Surveys with Heads of School and PE Teachers (2008/2009)



3.4.7 Quality PE and Sport programmes involve a range of activities which require dedicated spaces and specialised equipment. For Government to be able to improve the frequency and delivery of PE and Sport in schools, more attention needs to be given to ensuring that key requirements related to facilities are addressed. The schools' facilities and equipment should be safe, as well as inspire and advance educational performance and creativity. The resources should meet all the requirements of the PE and Sport syllabi, cater for different needs, contribute to staff satisfaction and retention, enhance student motivation, and encourage community involvement. Limitations with regard to facilities and equipment can impinge on the frequency of PE lessons held in schools (discussed Chapter 2) and on the quality of activities carried out (referred to in Chapter 4).

3.5 Recommendations

3.5.1 NAO encourages MEEF to continue with its programme to build new schools and to upgrade existing facilities. It is acknowledged that with existing budget allocations there is a limit on how much MEEF can do to address major structural constraints of existing premises, in particular those of Primary Schools.

3.5.2 On the allocation of available funds for the development or upgrading of school facilities, NAO encourages Education Authorities to give priority to indoor facilities, as well as to ensure that all outdoor areas have a suitable surface. These measures are essential in order to achieve policies and goals set for improving and increasing the delivery of PE in schools, as well as for ensuring greater student participation and overall safety.

3.5.3 Furthermore, priority should be given by the Senior Management Teams in schools to ensure that PE lessons are not missed because indoor areas, in particularly school halls, are unavailable. Suitable alternative arrangements should be in place when such areas are used for other activities. As a last resort, the actual classrooms should be transformed to allow children to perform simple movements and thus keep each class committed to regular physical activity.

3.5.4 The SMT in each school should also ensure that sufficient allocations are made from the school budgets to replenish or replace the equipment required for PE lessons and sport activities.

3.5.5 NAO also encourages Colleges to further exploit opportunities for sharing facilities and equipment, as well as to continue to make arrangements to use nearby facilities in the community.

3.5.6 In addition, NAO recommends that MEEF determines what facilities and equipment are required in each school for the achievement of PE, sport and physical activity targets and for the attainment of expected levels of quality and frequency. This assessment should also include a detailed review of the existing facilities in each school and the preparation of a medium to a long term plan outlining how identified gaps will be narrowed. Active participation of the responsible EO and PE teaching staff is also recommended in order to ensure that finished PE and sport facilities and procured equipment are suitable and appropriate for the lessons or activities that they are expected to deliver.

3.5.7 Existing specifications, such as those used for the building of new Primary and Secondary Schools, can provide a sound basis for determining minimum requirements. These specifications outline, for example:

- (a) The shape, size, height, positioning, flooring and markings, ventilation, natural lighting, storage as well as finishing of walls, ceiling, windows and doors of indoor areas.
- (b) The minimum outdoor areas for PE, sport and recreation, including minimum accommodation specifications for play pitches, courts and running tracks, as well as criteria for the type and quality of playing surface required in each area.
- (c) The minimum required size and level of finishing of changing rooms, showers and other ancillary facilities.
- (d) Key cross-sectional considerations such as requirements concerning security, safety, accessibility and environmental performance.



Chapter 4

Content and Quality of Delivery

Chapter 4 – Content and Quality of Delivery

Chapter 4 evaluates how the time allocated for PE, sport and other physical activities is, in practice, being availed of and monitored in Primary and Secondary Schools. Physical activities in schools can be carried out during lessons and breaks, as well as through programmes and initiatives organised in schools before, during and after school hours. The Chapter brings together information obtained from the Education Authorities and KMS, from surveys carried out by NAO in 2008/2009, as well as from site visits undertaken by the audit team during the course of the performance audit.

4.1 Contextual background

4.1.1 The relatively short school day is a decisive limiting factor that can impinge on the delivery of PE and Sport, as well as on the organisation of other physical activities during school hours. Nearly all Primary and Secondary Schools are open for six hours during the winter session (from September to May) and for less time during the few weeks of the summer session (up to the first week of July). These hours include time to be allocated for assembly in the morning, for all the lessons, for lunch breaks, as well as for other activities. In addition, the schools break for holidays for Christmas and Easter, as well as for mid-term holidays in November and during Carnival.

4.1.2 Schools face considerable challenges in balancing the teaching of various subjects and the organisation of different activities in the limited time available in a typical school day. This situation needs to be taken into perspective when assessing the level of delivery of PE and Sport in schools.

4.1.3 Furthermore, there is considerable pressure on Heads of School, teachers, parents and students to give more time and attention to the teaching of examined subjects as these are considered as being more important for academic success. In parallel, there are also constraints

on the number of specialist staff available to teach the subject, as well as on the suitability and accessibility of indoor and outdoor facilities for the teaching of PE and Sport. These issues are discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

4.1.4 The following sections discuss the nature of PE and Sport lessons delivered by specialist teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools, together with Class Teachers in Primary Schools. The Chapter also focuses on the type of sport and other physical activities organised before, during and after school hours.

4.2 Delivery of PE and Sport lessons

Syllabi and content

4.2.1 PE teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools are guided by syllabi and guidelines developed or recommended by CMELD. PE Teachers in both levels of schooling are expected to implement the complete syllabus for the particular Year or Form by the end of a scholastic year.

4.2.2 The syllabi include the teaching of skills, knowledge and behaviours in specific areas, depending on the age of the child or the adolescent. Areas that are taught include fundamentals, educational gymnastics, dance, health and fitness, athletics, swimming, outdoor adventure and different types of games (such as throwing, catching and fun games).

4.2.3 As in the case of other subjects, PE programmes should be progressively followed from Year 1 to Form 5. The surveys carried out by NAO with 850 parents of children attending Primary and Secondary Schools confirmed that the nature and type of PE lessons changed as a child advanced in his or her schooling. In fact:

- (a) In Primary Schools, most parents reported that generally the PE lessons of their children included exercises and fun games. Mini-football, mini-basket and gymnastics were also reported to be held, albeit less frequently. A few respondents also mentioned dancing, athletics, tag rugby, swimming, tennis and hockey.
- (b) In Secondary Schools, the emphasis is more on sport education with most respondents indicating that their children's PE lessons included mainly football, athletics, basketball, volleyball and handball. Gymnastics, hockey and dance were also mentioned, although these were reported to be less commonly held. A few respondents also said that other activities were organised namely netball, baseball, badminton, rugby, tennis, dodgeball, aerobics, softball and swimming.

4.2.4 There are also fundamental differences in the PE syllabi taught from Form 3 upwards in Secondary Schools. In the higher Forms, PE is taught both as a General subject and as an Option.

4.2.5 Students pursuing PE as an Option are given a more comprehensive and rigorous education in preparation for the ordinary level (SEC) PE examinations than those who do not make this choice. The SEC syllabus enables students to acquire techniques necessary to perform a variety of physical activities; to experience the enjoyment of participation in physical activity; to understand (through theory and practice) the implications of and the benefits from participation in physical activity; as well as to value the contribution that physical activity can make to a healthy lifestyle and to positive social relationships. However, the number of students benefiting from this more intensive education in PE and Sport is relatively small when compared to the overall population in Secondary Schools.

Priorities set by specialist PE Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools

4.2.6 PE Teachers also set specific priorities when developing their individual lesson plans. The following feedback received from teachers participating in the NAO surveys provides some relevant insights:

- (a) In Primary Schools, participating PE Peripatetic Teachers stated that they use various methods and games to develop each child's full potential in terms of movement and basic skills. They also indicated that they seek to instil self-discipline, self-esteem and teamwork, as well as foster positive attitudes towards lifelong participation in sport and engagement in physical activity. Most PE Peripatetic Teachers mentioned that they give
- utmost importance to ensuring that their lessons are enjoyable, participative and motivating. A number reported that children are divided into groups and each group is given time to practice different activities.
- (b) Similarly, PE Teachers in Secondary Schools reported in a separate survey that they gave priority to full inclusion and active participation by making the lessons enjoyable and interesting, as well as adapting them to students' individual abilities. Teachers commented that in their lessons they use a variety of activities, sport and fun games to stress the importance of lifelong physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, fair play, tolerance, sportmanship, commitment and perseverance. Classes were also reported to be divided into smaller groups in order to encourage team building and group work.

The teaching of PE and related themes by Class Teachers in Primary Schools

4.2.7 Class teachers can also give priority to PE and integrate related themes in various ways in their daily lessons on different subjects. It is up to the individual Primary School Teacher to be creative and innovative in order to encourage all children in a class to make regular physical activity part of their life and to learn key developmental skills such as agility, coordination and balance. Class Teachers are expected to adopt a thematic approach in their teaching. The NMC regards the integration of knowledge, centring around themes as the kind of pedagogical approach that comes closer to the idea of holistic education.

4.2.8 Primary School Teachers participating in the NAO survey carried out during the scholastic year 2008/2009 (n=644), in general, indicated that they integrated, albeit to widely differing extents, themes and movements related to PE, physical activity and to the adoption of behaviours linked to a healthy lifestyle. Respondents gave examples through the NAO questionnaire of how they integrated PE in various subjects and in their timetables. These are explored in the following paragraphs:

- (a) Respondents mentioned that they used movement when teaching the alphabet or vocabulary, as well as during poetry, role play or drama lessons. Movement was considered important when, for example, teaching action verbs, gestures and colours. Teachers also responded that they integrated physical activity during the mathematics lessons to, for example, teach direction and length.
- (b) Furthermore, several respondents explained that related themes are integrated in topics related to



science, religion, social studies, home economics as well as personal and social development (PSD). For example, related themes were indicated to be integrated when describing how the body works, when teaching about the senses, when explaining why physical activity is important, when presenting the food pyramid, or when emphasising the importance of healthy eating and taking care of one's body.

- (c) Considerably fewer Primary School Teachers mentioned that they carried out comprehensive PE lessons during the week as a continuation of those held by the PE Peripatetic Teachers. A number of class teachers, however, reported to organise simple physical exercises and games between lessons, after breaks or during the last lesson of the day. The mentioned exercises included for example, stretching, dancing to music, bouncing balls, hopping, throwing, catching, as well as running on the spot or around an outdoor area. These Primary School Teachers reported that such activities helped them to better grasp their pupils' attention, release stress, as well as to avoid restlessness, boredom or drowsiness in the class especially after the children would have spent much of their time sitting down. These exercises are also used to encourage participation and teamwork through games. Moreover, the teachers mentioned that they try to make these exercises enjoyable yet disciplined.
- (d) Respondents also said that they sought to influence the children under their responsibility by, for example, encouraging positive attitudes towards

physical activity; motivating the children to take part in outings and physical activities organised by the school or within the community; explaining why the children should bring a healthy lunch to school; as well as suggesting that they encourage their parents to walk them to school instead of travelling by car. Teachers also commented that they used the time they had with the parents on Parents' Day to encourage them to drive their children to be more physically active in their free time.

- (e) Some class teachers also emphasised their responsibility to act as role models for the children and that they should set a good example by being physically active themselves, as well as play, dance and jump with the children when organising games. Respondents also mentioned particular initiatives, such as taking the lead to organise school outings to a sport complex or taking children for a swimming session.
- (f) On the other hand, some Primary School Teachers specifically stated that they found it impossible to integrate PE in their timetables because of lack of time, difficulties to carry out physical exercises or because they did not feel competent to teach the subject.

4.2.9 Both CMELD and the Department of Primary Education at the University of Malta (UoM) emphasise the importance of integrating themes related to PE, a healthy lifestyle and well-being, as well as providing opportunities for physical activity and sport in their daily lesson plans.



4.2.10 NAO noted from discussions with UoM that opportunities to learn how to teach PE, albeit limited, are given to prospective Primary School Teachers during the four-year Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree course offered at the University. In this academic programme, students learn on topics such as an overall introduction to music, education dance and movement skills in PE; on pedagogical aspects in the teaching of PE; on how to teach education gymnastics and education dance; and on the teaching of mini-games and the organisation of field days. However, some of these courses are only offered as electives and a significant number of students have in the past opted not to choose them.

4.2.11 In addition, academic staff at the Institute for Physical Education and Sport (IPES), the entity responsible for delivering these courses at UoM, commented to NAO that a key challenge has been the need to instil in students studying to become Primary School Teachers the importance and value of PE and Sport in primary education. In many cases, students with insufficient aptitude towards physical activity and sport tend to be reluctant or find it difficult to embrace the pedagogy, principles and values of PE. This is considered a critical obstacle to overcome as these students eventually are expected to influence the children they will be teaching on the importance of physical activity and sport in their lives.

4.2.12 CMeLD also promotes the importance of PE as a daily activity in Primary Schools. Presentations delivered by PE specialists in activities organised by CMeLD suggest practical techniques that can be easily adopted by class teachers. Such daily activities can provide for a minimum of twenty minutes of vigorous activity and effective use of

space. These activities can also be varied and modified from week to week according to ability, giving due importance to continuously challenging the children. The techniques include focusing on:

- *Agility and coordination*, for example running to markers, slalom runs in open and closed spaces and crawling relay race games on mats.
- *Balance*, for example dribble walking on bench, individual and team stilts, wobble board balances, relay races with bean bag and quoit on head, as well as pyramid building.
- *Speed and coordination*, such as games and activities that include hopscotch activities, ladder activities, obstacle courses and flat relay races.
- *Catching and passing*, for example passing and catching balls, passing relay games, and passing quoits in air.
- *Body/space awareness*, including gymnastic exercises on mats, rope skipping, or other games (such as running and learning how to use open space).

Critical factors affecting quality

4.2.13 The following paragraphs draw attention to additional factors that were found to be affecting the delivery of PE lessons:

- (a) *Shadowing of lessons delivered by PE Peripatetic*

Teachers: Since the scholastic year 2007/2008, the ability of class teachers to ensure continuity and complementation of the PE lessons offered by Peripatetic Teachers was negatively affected when a new provision (Paragraph 7 of Schedule II) in the Collective Agreement signed between Government and the MUT, came into force. Through this provision, each Primary School Teacher responsible for a class on a full-time basis was offered the opportunity of an hour and a half per week to work on curricular development. In practice, this provision has negatively affected the time available to Primary School Teachers to observe and shadow the scheduled weekly PE lessons carried out by the specialist PE Peripatetic Teachers. The Agreement specifies that PE Peripatetic Teachers are expected to assume full responsibility for the class they are assigned to for the duration of the lessons concerned, whilst the Primary School Teacher carries out the curricular activity outside the class.

- (b) *Unsuitable facilities and equipment:* Another factor that is negatively affecting the quality of PE in certain Primary and Secondary Schools are the unsuitable or limited facilities and equipment available or accessible to these schools. Some teachers complained that specific activities, games and sport covered in the syllabi could not be properly carried due to such limitations. These concerns are comprehensively discussed in Chapter 3.
- (c) *More time with each class:* Furthermore, teachers in both Primary and Secondary Schools remarked that they would have preferred to have more time with each class in order to cover the syllabi in more depth and to allow more time for practice and participation. This issue was particularly mentioned by PE Peripatetic Teachers in Primary Schools and PE Teachers responsible for Forms 3 to 5 (excluding those choosing PE as an Option). Chapter 2 examines in more detail the issues affecting the number of lessons allocated to PE and the availability of staff to teach them.
- (d) *Wrong attitude and poor skills of students:* PE Teachers in Secondary Schools also remarked on the lack of enthusiasm shown by some students during the PE lessons, including apathy and reluctance to participate in the organised activities. Moreover, PE Teachers at Secondary level commented that, due to the insufficient time given to PE in Primary Schools, some children are starting Secondary Education without the necessary basic skills and attitudes to carry out physical activities. These skills are essential for students to be able to take an active part in PE and Sport education that forms part of secondary schooling.

Monitoring the quality of delivery

4.2.14 PE Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools are supported and assisted by the EO (PE) in CMELD. This post was vacant for over four years between March 2004 and August 2008, following the retirement of the incumbent and until a new EO was appointed.

4.2.15 As from the scholastic year 2008/2009, the EO has organised regular professional development meetings and workshops for specialist PE Teachers to discuss issues related to quality, improvements in delivery, as well as the application of standards in the teaching of the subject at both Primary and Secondary level.

4.2.16 The meetings organised by the EO have also been used as opportunities to share knowledge, techniques and good practices, as well as to review existing PE content and methodology. These initiatives have included the development of a complementary workbook for the teaching of PE as an Option. Emphasis has also been made to improving the quality of ‘Teaching Games for Understanding’ (TGfU). Improvements in the syllabi discussed during these meetings were also planned to be piloted during the scholastic year 2009/2010.

4.2.17 Since the scholastic year 2008/2009, the EO has also carried out regular visits to Primary and Secondary Schools to monitor the lessons delivered by specialist PE teachers. These visits are followed up with individual written feedback reports on how the lesson content and delivery could be improved. The EO has also held meetings with the Heads or Assistant Heads, as well as with College Principals to discuss overall issues and initiatives related to the quality and delivery of PE.

4.2.18 Apart from the monitoring carried out by the EO (PE) of lessons undertaken by specialist PE Teachers, a few Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools also indicated, through the NAO survey, that they had in place a formal and structured mechanism for monitoring the quality of PE lessons in their schools. In these cases, it was reported that the SMT in the school observed some of the lessons or held meetings with PE teachers to discuss related issues.

Level of professional training given to teachers responsible for PE

4.2.19 NAO noted that training opportunities have been offered in recent years to specialist PE teachers in the form of courses, workshops or seminars organised by CMELD and/or UoM. However, no in-service courses have been offered to Primary School Teachers on practical techniques that can enable them to deliver quality PE.

4.2.20 In 2009, a seminar was held for Primary and Secondary PE Teachers on creativity and innovation in PE and Sport (CMeLD 73/2009). In 2008, two workshops were held for PE Peripatetic Teachers, one focusing on the teaching of mini-basketball (CMeLD 79/2008) and the other on a strategy for PE in Primary Schools (VEd 12/08).

4.2.21 In earlier years, courses were held on selected issues concerning the SEC PE Examination (DCM 59/2007); on the conduct of practical assessments during examinations for Option classes (C 13/06); on the teaching of handball (DCM 41/2006); and on Educational Dance in the PE Curriculum (C 21/05).

4.2.22 In the case of Primary School Teachers, NAO found that no in-service training or refresher courses have been organised, although during the scholastic year 2008/2009, the EO delivered presentations in six Primary Schools following an invitation from the respective Head of School. The presentations focused on improving the pedagogy of PE and on adopting an integrated curriculum.

4.2.23 Of significance, in the survey carried out with Primary School Teachers during scholastic year 2008/2009, a considerable number of respondents commented on the need for courses and teaching material (in the form of a handbook) with sample lessons and practical examples of techniques, different types of suitable physical exercises, games and movements that can be used to prepare and deliver quality PE lessons for different age groups.

Parents' views on the quality of PE lessons

4.2.24 The majority of surveyed parents of children and adolescents attending Primary and Secondary Schools gave high ratings on the quality of PE when interviewed by NAO in 2008. On the other hand, a significant proportion of parents were less satisfied. The ratings and comments given by the participating parents were as follows:

- (a) 52 per cent of parents of children in Primary Schools (n=444) and 65 per cent of parents of students in Secondary Schools (n=406) gave a rating of '4' or '5' on a scale of '1' to '5', with '1' being the lowest rating and '5' the highest. These parents were of the opinion that the PE lessons were suitable, enjoyable and well-organised.
- (b) However, a significant proportion of parents were less satisfied. 28 per cent of parents of children in Primary Schools gave a rating of '3' with the remaining 16 per cent scoring '2' or '1'. In the case of parents of students in Secondary Schools, 28 per cent gave a rating of '3' with the rest (7 per cent) giving a rating of '2' or '1'. Their main concerns were that PE lessons were few; the activities held in

the schools were limited and unvaried, and that the facilities for PE were inadequate.

- (c) The remaining 4 per cent of respondents in the case of parents of children in Primary Schools did not give a rating or an opinion in relation to this question.

4.3 Organisation of sport and structured physical activities

4.3.1 At the start of the scholastic year 2008/2009, NAO asked Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools to indicate through the NAO questionnaires, the type of activities organised in their schools:

- (a) In the case of Primary Schools (n=70), only twenty-one Heads of School responded that structured physical activities were organised during break, mostly football and games. On the other hand, almost all schools mentioned that they organised specific physical activity events in the scholastic year, including activities done in collaboration with the Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and KMS.
- (b) In the case of Secondary Schools (n=31), all participating Heads of School (n=28) confirmed that structured physical activities are held during school hours including breaks. The reported activities covered sport leagues as well as specific events or outings. Furthermore, certain Secondary Schools reported to have organised activities before or after school hours, with these being generally coordinated by KMS through structured programmes.

4.3.2 Similarly, responses received from PE teachers showed that:

- (a) In Primary Schools, PE Peripatetic Teachers were mainly involved in organising or helping to organise events during school hours, with a few also mentioning to have held regular structured physical activities during breaks. Only one PE Peripatetic Teacher reported to have organised an activity outside school hours. In brief:
 - (i) The events mostly mentioned by the PE Peripatetic Teachers held in Primary Schools were field or fun days, sport days, tournaments, fun walks, cross-country races, swimming outings and cycling. Thirty of the thirty-three PE Peripatetic Teachers reported to have assisted in the organisation of these events.
 - (ii) In contrast, only seven PE Peripatetic Teachers

responded that they had organised regular structured activities during breaks such as football and netball leagues. One of the main reasons is that these teachers have limited time available to plan and organise such activities.

(b) In Secondary Schools, all the PE Teachers reported to have been involved, in some form or another, in the organisation of structured physical activities as part of events during school hours and/or during breaks. In addition, a few Secondary PE Teachers mentioned that they organised activities before or after school hours:

(i) The events mentioned by the PE Secondary Teachers included sport days, tournaments, athletic meetings, cross-country competitions, trekking activities, beach games, swimming outings, as well as field or fun days.

(ii) The most frequently mentioned activities held during breaks were football, handball, basketball, volleyball and netball leagues. A few PE Secondary Teachers also commented that they had organised other activities such as gymnastics, table tennis and dance during breaks.

(iii) A PE Teacher explained that she held gymnastic classes before the start of the lessons in the morning. Seven other teachers mentioned that they were involved in sport activities and training programmes that were offered after school hours.

4.3.3 The surveys carried out by NAO in 2008 with parents provided further insights on whether students were physically active during their school breaks. In the case of respondents with children in Primary Schools (n=444 parents), 93 per cent indicated that their children use the time to be active and play with friends. Only 8 per cent of parents reported that their children participated in school-organised games, perhaps because few structured opportunities were offered. In the case of respondents with children in Secondary Schools (n=406), 39 per cent of the parents indicated that their children were physically active by playing with friends. Only 15 per cent of the parents responded that their children participated in school-organised activities, despite the opportunities reported to be offered in these schools.

4.3.4 In addition, the NAO surveys with parents identified a number of issues related to the quality of physical activities and sport (apart from PE lessons). Of significance were the different ratings given by parents to the quality of these activities:

(a) In Primary Schools:

(i) 44 per cent of respondents rated highly the physical activities and sport of the schools attended by their children, giving scores of '4' or '5' on a scale of '1' to '5', with '1' being the lowest rating and '5' the highest. These parents were of the opinion that the activities held were well-organised and varied.

(ii) On the other hand, 56 per cent were less satisfied, with 16 per cent giving a rating of '3', 14 per cent giving a rating of '2' and a significant 26 per cent rating the activities with a score of '1'. Parents complained that the schools attended by their children organised few or no physical activities or sport events (apart from PE lessons) or activities could not be held properly due to poor facilities.

(b) In the case of Secondary Schools:

(i) 55 per cent of respondents rated '4' or '5' the physical activities and sport of the schools attended by their children. Parents were mostly satisfied with the quality of activities in terms of organisation, the type of activities held, and that the children found these activities enjoyable.

(ii) However, a noteworthy 43 per cent were less satisfied, with 23 per cent giving a rating of '3', 9 per cent a rating of '2' and 11 per cent giving a rating of '1'. The parents' main concerns were that the activities were too few or that none were held in the schools attended by their children.

(iii) The remaining two per cent did not respond to this question.

4.3.5 Of relevance, 26 per cent of the open-ended comments (n=390) given by parents of children in Primary Schools when asked for general feedback related to the need for more time to be allocated for physical activities in the school timetable. A further 13 per cent of the overall comments referred to the need for more varied physical activities in the school curriculum.

4.3.6 Similarly, a significant number of Primary School Teachers participating in a separate NAO survey carried out at the start of the scholastic year 2008/2009 highlighted the need for increased activities before assembly in the morning, throughout the school day and breaks, as well as after school hours. When asked to provide general feedback on PE, sport and physical activity in their schools, class teachers suggested various measures of how to improve structured physical activities, including, for example:

- (a) The organisation of more activities with the support of specialist trainers and sport associations to promote different sport disciplines and to offer opportunities for the children to learn basic skills and be active. These can include various sport, such as swimming, gymnastics, netball, volleyball, handball, aerobics, cross-country training, baseball and basketball.
- (b) More sport or fun days, leagues and tournaments within the school and with other schools.
- (c) Other initiatives such as walks in the countryside.

4.3.7 Similar opinions were also expressed by PE Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools. Respondents

commented on the overall need to increase sport and structured physical activities and events organised during and after school hours, as well as within and between schools and Colleges.

New initiatives launched by KMS

4.3.8 Since the conclusion of the NAO surveys in January 2009, significant improvements have been made through the launch of sport programmes and events by KMS-SPU in a selected number of Primary and Secondary schools (Table 4.1). The Unit was established by KMS at the start of the scholastic year 2008/2009 and its schemes were first piloted in three Colleges. The following year, KMS-SPU increased its level of involvement by organising schemes in five of the ten State Colleges, apart

Table 4.1 KMS-SPU programmes and events organised during school hours during scholastic year 2009/2010¹

Programme	Events Offered	Targeted Students	Targeted Colleges
College Based Activities	Play and Recreational Games	Year 1 - Year 2	3 State Colleges
	In housing coaching clinics: Handball Rugby Dance Sport ² Traditional Karate ² Weightlifting ² Rambling ²	Year 6 - Form 5	
	Fun Runs	Year 6	
	Arti Sport Programme	Year 6	
	Swimming Galas	Year 6 - Form 5	
	Gymnastics	Year 3	
Fundamental Basic Sports Skills³	Athletics	Year 4	5 State Colleges
	Swimming	Year 5	
	Outdoor Activities	Year 6 - Form 5	
National Sports Festivals	Athletics	A team selection to represent the Primary or Secondary school in each discipline from Year 6 to Form 5	All State and non-State Schools
	Basketball		
	Football		
	Gymnastics		
	Handball		
	Rugby		
	Volleyball		

1 Programmes offered in three of these Colleges form part of the Schools on the Move Programme (explained in Table 4.2).

2 These sport disciplines are being promoted in collaboration with the respective sport associations. The participating Colleges include those schools that accepted KMS-SPU's invitation.

3 These are obligatory lessons targeting all children in the respective Years.

Source: KMS - SPU, 2010

from national sport festivals in different sport disciplines and other events targeting all or selected schools in Malta. The schemes being offered in 2009/2010 by the Unit cover various physical activities such as play and recreational games, in-house coaching clinics (by professional coaches in various disciplines), fun runs, gymnastics, athletics, swimming and outdoor activities. Up to the age of eleven, the emphasis of KMS-SPU is to teach basic fundamental skills rather than channel children to a specific sport discipline.

4.3.9 In parallel, KMS has a team of coordinators organising, in conjunction with sport associations and Local Councils, national and College-based programmes and

initiatives for children and adolescents. The programmes range from a small-scale Walking Bus initiative for children in a Primary School to larger initiatives offered to different target groups and covering various activities and sport disciplines (Table 4.2).

4.4 Conclusions

4.4.1 The appointment of an EO (PE) in 2008 led to the launch of several initiatives aimed at improving the quality of PE in Primary and Secondary Schools. These initiatives included workshops for PE Teachers, improvements to the PE syllabi and regular assessments of lessons carried out by specialist teachers. The EO also acts as a focal point

Table 4.2 Other KMS programmes for school-aged children

Programme	Details
Schools on the Move	From scholastic year 2009/2010, this new overarching programme brings together the Walking Bus Initiative organised in a Primary School before school hours, as well as during and after-school sport activities in three State Colleges for both Primary and Secondary school children. Schools on the Move offers opportunities to practice different sport disciplines such as volleyball, basketball, handball, rugby, football, judo, lotta, aikido, gymnastics and athletics. This programme includes also activities organised during school hours mentioned in Table 4.1.
Girls on the Move	This programme aims at increasing opportunities for girls aged between 9 and 16 years to participate in sport and other physical activities in a safe and supportive environment. It is offered in the evenings on weekdays and on Saturdays between November and June. Girls on the Move covers individual physical activities as well as team sports. The offered sport disciplines include athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, football, gymnastics, handball, hip hop, keep fit, netball, pilates, rugby, table tennis, traditional karate and volleyball.
Skolasport	This KMS programme is held on Saturday mornings between October and May. It comprises of a Foundation Programme for children aged between 4 and 7 years, as well as a Participation Programme for children aged between 8 and 10 years. Skolasport includes training in basic skills, educational gymnastics, physical education and sport.
Summer on the Move	The main aim of this eight-week recreational programme is to encourage children of all ages to keep active during the summer holidays. It includes swimming lessons, indoor games, adventure sport and sailing.
Active Youngsters	This evening programme, also offered during the summer months, targets children aged between 9 and 16 years and offers a choice of different sports. These include football, handball, volleyball and basketball. Participants also have the opportunity to choose more than one sport and be physically active more than once a week.
Sports Buzz	This programme is held every Wednesday for children aged between 6 to 8 years from the Cottonera area every Wednesday. The main objectives of this programme are to offer opportunities for children to have fun and enjoy sport, as well as encourage greater social integration.
Sports Fun	This programme comprises of a series of half day sport events for Primary and Secondary school children.
Sport for All	This community programme, covering different sport disciplines, is organised by KMS in conjunction with interested local councils. It is offered to both children and adults.

Source: KMS, 2010

with key stakeholders on PE issues. These measures have had a positive impact on the delivery of PE. However, there is scope for further action on several fronts in order to ensure that improvements and beneficial changes are made to the delivery of PE lessons at both levels of schooling.

4.4.2 PE Peripatetic Teachers in Primary Schools and PE Teachers in Secondary Schools are guided by syllabi and guidelines developed or recommended by CMeLD. They also participate in regular workshops and events aimed at improving standards and quality. Delivery of PE lessons by specialist teachers can be constrained by unsuitable facilities and equipment, as well as limited time to cover the syllabi in more depth. In addition, delivery of PE lessons (particularly those in Secondary Schools) could be hindered by the reluctance of some students to participate in physical activities.

4.4.3 Most Primary School Teachers reported that they integrate, to varying extents, themes related to PE, physical activity and a healthy well-being in their lessons. Several teachers also reported that they carry out simple physical exercises and games between lessons. However, considerably few Primary School Teachers reported to deliver comprehensive PE lessons as a continuation of those held by the PE Peripatetic Teachers. Moreover, with the introduction of weekly ninety-minute sessions dedicated for curricular development, Primary School Teachers have remained with little or no time to shadow and observe the weekly lessons delivered by the PE Peripatetic Teachers and to discuss the lesson variations that the Primary School Teacher should carry out.

4.4.4 Overall, the quality of delivery of PE lessons by Primary School Teachers is influenced by the degree of creativity and commitment of the individual class teacher and can be constrained by the inability of certain class teachers to carry out PE lessons or manage their timetables more effectively. Furthermore, some Primary School Teachers indicated that they required additional training and teaching aids to be able to deliver quality PE lessons with respect to the type of techniques and activities that can be undertaken.

4.4.5 Few Primary Schools reported to organise structured physical activities during breaks. This contrasts with the situation in Secondary Schools where such activities were regularly organised.

4.4.6 Although the majority of parents of children in Primary and Secondary Schools were highly satisfied or satisfied with the quality of PE lessons, a significant proportion were less satisfied or dissatisfied as the lessons were few, activities were limited and unvaried and facilities for PE were inadequate. In the case of structured physical activities, a significantly higher number of parents rated

the quality on a lower scale, expressing concerns related to the insufficient organisation of sport activities.

4.4.7 A positive development in the quality of structured physical activities and sport practices in schools has been the broadening of programmes and events organised by KMS (during and outside school hours). Colleges and schools also mentioned that they organise structured activities, apart from specific events. However, structured physical activities before school hours are minimal with the only identified good practices being a Walking Bus initiative and a teacher holding gymnastics lessons before the morning assembly

4.5 Recommendations

4.5.1 NAO recommends that initiatives launched by the EO (PE) are continued and given the resources required in order to succeed. Work on improving the existing syllabi and developing teaching aids should be sustained. Furthermore, NAO recommends that more attention is given to training and teaching aids for Primary School Teachers (such as guidelines and tips in the form of handbooks). The fact that Primary School Teachers have less time to shadow the PE Peripatetic Teachers has further underlined the urgency of this issue. Moreover, the problem could be stemmed even earlier by offering students pursuing academic studies to become Primary School Teachers more hours of obligatory training on the pedagogical aspects of PE and on the techniques to teach different activities.

4.5.2 The channels of communication that have been established between the EO and the PE Teachers, as well as between the EO and the College Principals/Heads of School should be further strengthened and exploited. These interactions and partnerships are essential for the continuous improvement and collaboration.

4.5.3 The regular assessments of PE lessons being carried out by the EO (PE) are important for the continuous monitoring of quality and adherence to professional standards. NAO recommends that a more structured form of assessment is carried out with documented and communicated definitions of the criteria to be applied. Moreover, these assessments should be used to record and track improvement and identify areas where training may be required.

4.5.4 Furthermore, NAO recommends that College Principals and Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools place greater emphasis on the quality of PE and structured activities being held in their schools by working closely with the EO to identify shortcomings in the delivery and implementing tailored action plans. Measures to improve quality of PE, sport and physical activity need to incorporate actions to improve facilities and equipment

available to teachers and to ensure that the recommended time for PE in Primary Schools is fully utilised by class teachers and Peripatetic staff.

4.5.5 NAO opines that Heads of School are key to sustaining performance and improvement in their schools. Each College Principal should also ensure that the values of quality PE, sport and the development of healthy habits are defined and instilled in the ethos of the College.

4.5.6 NAO also recommends that the resources and organisational support being provided by KMS to Colleges is eventually extended to cover all Colleges and all students. The programmes during school hours organised by KMS-SPU, although not intended to substitute PE lessons, are critical as they provide additional opportunities for children to be active. This is even more essential given the high prevalence of children that are overweight or obese, and that many children do not participate in other forms of physical activity and sport in their free time. The optional programmes offered after school by KMS should also continue to be further strengthened. For example, take-up and retention can be further facilitated through the provision of transport after the events.



Appendices

Appendix A - Methodology

Appendix A describes the different stages of the study and the range of information sources and analytical techniques that were used.

Prevention within MHEC; the Chair of the ICCO; as well as practitioners and researchers in the field.

A.1 Phase One – Preliminary Research: This phase incorporated:

- (a) An extensive review of literature on PE, sport and physical activities in primary and secondary education to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the standards applied in the teaching of PE and Sport, as well as to collate good practices in this field.
- (b) Additional literature review on related issues to identify the research that exists in each field, including a review of: reports on studies on childhood obesity and its effect; reports published by various individuals and organisations on PE and Sport in schools; the legislative framework governing the provision of education in Malta; the NMC; as well as the applicable syllabi, guidelines and circulars issued by the Education Authorities.
- (c) Informative meetings with the senior management at MEEF and College Principals to learn more on the relevant policies, standards, strategies, priorities, programmes and initiatives, as well as on the structure and functions of the organisation.
- (d) Learning visits to a number of schools to obtain information on the factors contributing to the achievement of quality PE and the effective organisation of structured activities in a school environment.
- (e) Consultations with a number of stakeholders and experts, including the CfC; KMS; FTS; IPES and the Faculty of Education at UoM; MUT; the MOC; the Department for Health Promotion and Disease

A.2 Phase Two – Development of the instruments to be used in the study: This phase included:

- (a) The developmental work included the design of eight different questionnaires that were subsequently used during fieldwork. The questionnaires were reviewed by an expert in the field and following further fine-tuning were piloted among selected respondents. The questionnaires used in the study were then finalised.
- (b) The objectives of the surveys were to provide quantitative and qualitative data in support of the findings and to collect additional insights by focusing on respondents' experiences, perceptions and expectations.
- (c) One of the difficulties faced by NAO at the start of the audit was the serious lack of data on PE, sport and structured activities in schools. As a consequence, it was necessary to carry out extensive fieldwork to collect sufficient information to support in-depth analysis.
- (d) Furthermore, it became clear from the early stages of the study that it was best to consider Primary and Secondary Schools as two separate environments due to:
 - (i) the observed diversity in the role of the teachers involved at each level of schooling;
 - (ii) the different timetables;

- (iii) the type of facilities and equipment available;
- (iv) the nature and frequency of structured physical activities that are organised; as well as
- (v) the different behaviours and motivations of Primary School children when compared to young people in Secondary Schools.

A.3 Phase Three – Fieldwork, data processing and reporting: This phase consisted of:

- (a) Eight customised questionnaires were used to collect information and views at the start of the scholastic year 2008/2009 from all the College Principals, the Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools, the PE Peripatetic Teachers, the Primary School Teachers and the PE Teachers in Secondary Schools, as well as from parents of children attending mainstream State Primary Schools and State Secondary Schools. Relevant data to identify the various populations and to extract the required samples were supplied by the School Information System (SIS) Section, the Human Resources Department and the Colleges within MEEF.
- (b) In parallel, several visits were made between October and November 2008 to a number of Primary and Secondary Schools in Malta and Gozo in order to complement the information being collected from the surveys, as well as to observe at first hand the factors that are affecting the level of PE, sport and physical activity. During the visits, the audit team held interviews with schools' senior management and/or PE teaching staff.
- (c) Moreover, documents forwarded by the Education Authorities on related issues were reviewed and analysed. Relevant information extracted from these documents was used as a basis for discussion with auditees and as supplementary evidence during analysis and reporting.
- (d) The bottom-up approach of the Drawing Conclusions methodology was used to determine from the full set of emerging findings what the main conclusions should be and to prepare the final report. This analytical tool led to the development of a framework of issues and sub-issues.
- (e) The following paragraphs provide a more detailed explanation of the methodologies used for the surveys.

Surveys with College Principals, Heads of School and teachers

- (f) The College Principals, the Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools, the PE Peripatetic Teachers, the Primary School Teachers and the PE Teachers in Secondary Schools had the option of completing the questionnaires electronically or on paper. The questionnaires were sent out in October 2008 and collected by January 2009. Heads of School and College Principals facilitated the process by acting as contact points during the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. In order to respect confidentiality, respondents also had the option of returning the questionnaires directly to NAO by separate postal or electronic mail.
- (g) This approach ensured a high response rate in each category. In total, questionnaires were received from:
 - 10 College Principals (100 per cent response rate);
 - 66 Heads of Primary Schools (94 per cent response rate);
 - 28 Heads of Secondary Schools (90 per cent response rate);
 - 33 PE Peripatetic Teachers in Primary Schools (100 per cent response rate);
 - 67 PE Teachers in Secondary Schools (85 per cent response rate); and
 - 644 Primary School Teachers (71 per cent response rate).
- (h) Data collected from these surveys was validated, processed and analysed by NAO and incorporated into the final reporting.

Surveys with parents

- (i) In the case of the two surveys with parents of children in mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools, priority was given during sample creation to ensure that opinions across the entire spectrum of both school populations were solicited and that all the schools, no matter how small the population, would be adequately represented. The reasoning behind this approach was to ensure that as wide a perspective as possible would be obtained from the surveys.
- (j) As a result, simple random sampling was not used by itself, given the large number of schools (especially in the case of Primary Schools) with a small number of attending students. Had simple random sampling been opted for, there would have been a significant risk of having students attending these schools not

represented in the samples. Instead a mixed-mode approach to sample selection was opted for. Each sample was divided into two sub-sets, with one being chosen through stratification techniques and the second using simple random sampling.

- (k) Given the nature of the questions to be asked and the wide-ranging population, it was decided that structured telephone interviews based on the pre-set questionnaire would be the most cost-effective medium to carry out the survey. The interviews were outsourced to the National Statistics Office (NSO) and these were held during August 2008.
- (l) 850 completed interviews were conducted: 444 interviews with parents of children in Primary Schools and 406 interviews with parents of students in Secondary Schools. On completion, NSO ensured data response was cleaned from errors. The collected data was then analysed by NAO and integrated into the final reporting.

Appendix B - Selected Bibliography

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