

# Making a difference? The voices of Children aged 10 and 11 years old: London 2012 and the Olympic Legacy.

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## Abstract

This paper has evolved out of a much larger doctoral thesis which looked specifically at the voices of year 6 children in the Olympic borough of Hackney in east London. Between the years of 2007 and 2010 the views and thoughts of 236 children from east London were analysed in relation to the Olympic legacy. This paper forms part of a longitudinal study which builds on the earlier doctoral research and the data analysed here emanates from an additional purposive sample of 40 children from 2015. The data collected contributes to an existing body of knowledge where the vast majority of the work on pupil voice in the UK has been concerned with the core subjects (Maths and English) and with secondary schooling. The re-emergence of pupil voice as a pedagogical approach to inform policy and curriculum design is encouraged throughout. In addition to giving young learners a voice this paper also adds something new to the debate surrounding Olympic legacy, as to date their inclusion has been conspicuously absent from such discussions. The data collected examines whether the optimism and positivity initially demonstrated by Hackney's children in 2007 and 2010 has resulted in the legacy making a difference to the lives of the children or their families in 2015?

Key Words: Children, Sport, Education, Olympic legacy, Pedagogy, Learning and Pupil Voice

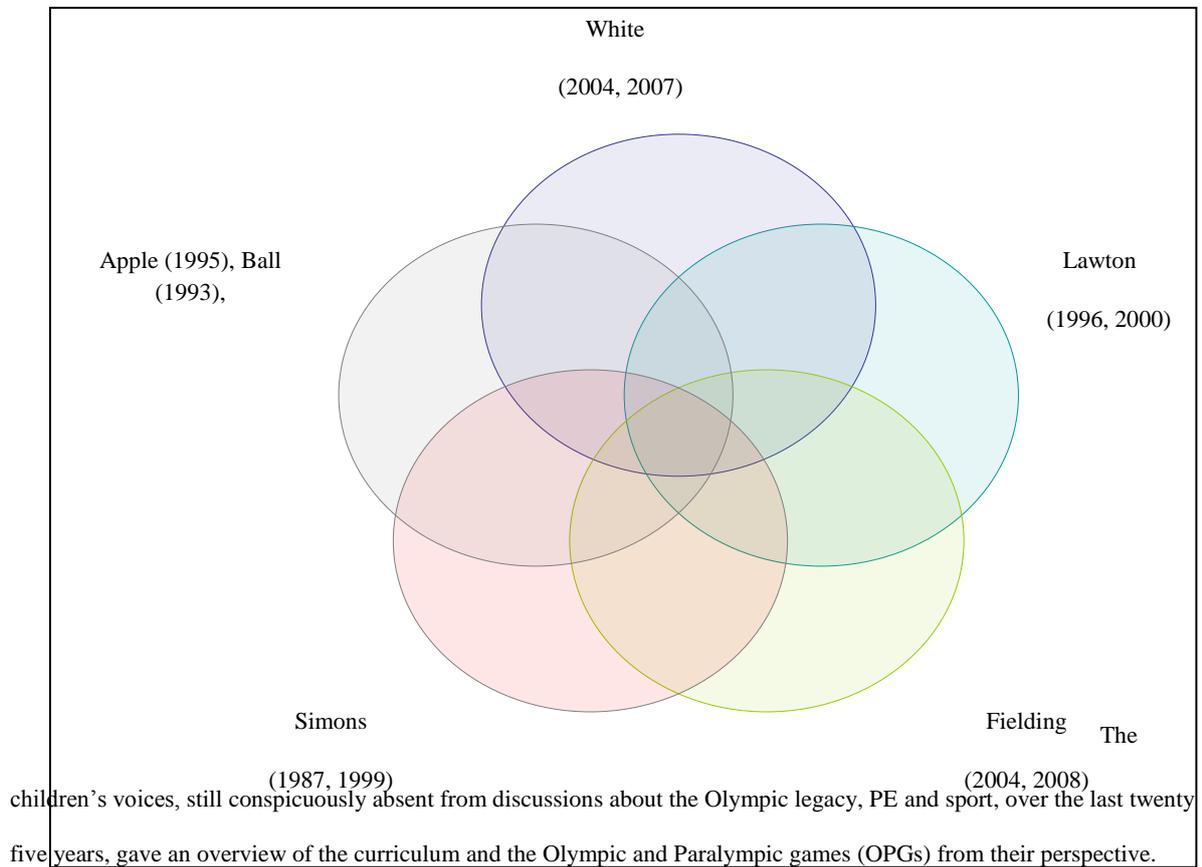
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## Introduction

This paper builds upon an earlier piece of research, Costas (2011), which formed the basis of a doctoral thesis in the run up to the Olympic and Paralympic games in London in August 2012. As in that thesis I again take a constructivist-interpretivist stance, Geertz (1973), Schwandt (1994), Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Burr (1995). My constructivist-interpretivist position looks at the unique or individual viewpoint and then endeavours to construct general 'trends' based on what the individual is saying, to form more robust arguments, as opposed to isolated random responses. Schwandt (1994) writes of constructivism and interpretivism as *sensitising* concepts, which steer researchers towards a particular outlook. He states 'Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it.' (p.233) In this piece of research I used a questionnaire to give a voice to 40 children from Stoke Newington in Hackney east London with the aim of exploring what the children thought about the Olympics, with a goal of widening and informing current policy, practice and research in relation to the National Curriculum (NC), Olympic legacy, Physical Education (PE) and Sporting provision. As White (2004, 2007), Lawton (1996, 2000), Simons (1987, 1999), and the sociologists Fielding (2004, 2008) Apple (1995), and Ball (1993), have all argued, children must be included to a much greater extent in their own learning, if education is to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As figure 1 shown below demonstrates, all emphatically make this point although their expertise emanates from different academic fields of enquiry. They all argue that in education we need to move away from seeing the young learner as a passive recipient of knowledge,

and to place them at the heart of their own learning. Through the concept of the Olympic legacy I use pupil voice to illuminate and broaden the discussion.

Figure 1



Through the vibrancy of their voices, their views on the Olympic legacy, primary PE and Sport were examined, and in so doing showed that through democratising the discussion, the children were more than just 'empty vessels', and were able to offer informed views. This paper then, as part of a longitudinal study, examines whether the excitement, optimism and overall positivity recorded by the children in 2007 and 2010 in relation to the OPGs, *the greatest show on earth*<sup>1</sup> coming to London in 2012 has come to fruition in any way. This is important because as White (2004, 2007), Lawton (1996, 2000), Fielding (2004, 2008), Simons (1987, 1999), Apple (1995), and Ball (1993) have argued their voices need to

<sup>1</sup> This is a common phrase often used by many sports commentators and the popular press to describe the Olympic and Paralympic games. The phrase originates from the 1952 film called *The Greatest Show on Earth* and stars Betty Hutton and Cornel Wilde in an American drama film where the circus is centre stage. The film won Academy awards for best picture and best story and the film's box office remains among the highest grossing films in the USA and Canada.

be included as we move towards the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To date these voices have not been heard and yet they are to be the generation who will inherit the legacy in the future. Has the legacy of the OPGs influenced or impacted on the quality of the children's lives or their families, or given them access to greater sporting provision I wondered, and who better to ask I thought than to ask the children themselves? The children who took part in this research were the same children who

took part in the Olympic Games opening ceremony with me (as their teacher), where they performed one of the Maypole dances as part of the *Green and pleasant land* section immediately before the *Brunel's* appeared as part of the introduction to the industrial revolution sequence. The children were then in year 4 (aged 7 and 8yrs old), and were in year 6 aged 10 and 11yrs old respectively at the time of this research.

### **Defining Olympic Legacy**

Defining legacy is notoriously difficult and complex. A legacy in the most literal sense is what someone, some body or something leaves behind after they have moved on or, changed position, or passed away. The use of the term *legacy* in the present context is as Piper and Garratt (2013) and Griffiths and Armour (2012) have argued, both informative yet also most problematic. Its most common usage refers usually to an intergenerational bequest, in which the receiver (or beneficiary) need only be passive. MacAloon (2008: 1984) identifies further problems in the application of the term in the context of the bi-lingual Olympic movement, because the 'equivalent' in French is the word *heritage*. Whilst sharing some common ground in translation, the French term as argued by Piper and Garratt (2013) and MacAloon (2008), is more weighted towards the past arriving in the present as opposed to the more restricted English translation in the Olympic context of leaning towards creating the present which may or may not arrive in the future. As they argue in this *French* context, it cannot be merely a passive process. For an Olympic legacy to be of benefit to any inheritor, the individual or groups of individuals targeted to gain from the legacy have to be included and active, that is to say to play a role in and understand their position within the whole process from start to finish. I contend that sport policy, indeed Olympic legacy policy cannot be implemented in a vacuum outside of the wider society. An approach which does not work in tandem with the social groups it is seeking to influence cannot be successful and as Piper and Garratt have argued (2013:2), 'such an approach to legacy achievement and widening sporting participation is naïve, and likely to be at best only partly successful.' Legacy is usually interpreted as something positive but not necessarily always so. What of the enormous debt that Athens<sup>2</sup> was riddled with after the games of 2004, or the underused resources of the less popular sports after Sydney 2000?

In terms of an Olympic legacy, there should always be an aspiration towards positivity across a range of criteria in line with the statute set out when the modern Olympic Games as we know them came into being in 1896 under the auspices of Baron de Courbetin. However on closer inspection the notion that an Olympic Games should leave a legacy only really gains pace in the 1940s, and it is only from the post war years in the late 1940s that the word legacy appeared in Olympic

<sup>2</sup> Some Greek Commentators have argued that in part many of Greece's economic problems stem from an over investment in the Games of 2004, and the legacy has never come to fruition. In January 2015 the left wing party SYRIZA of Alexis Tsipras came to power in Greece elected as a government against austerity measures imposed by the European Union and the Troika Bank (Political Manifesto January 2015). Elsewhere as Toronto in Canada looked with interest at staging the 2024 Olympics, Chris Selley a Sports journalist warned in the National Post, 'Montreal which staged the 1976 Summer Games, finally paid off the debt on the Olympic stadium in 2006 – 30 years later. (Au revoir Montreal, Kali' mera Athens, the risks are enormous.)' National Post pages A8 & A12 Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

documentation. (Torres 2011, McIntosh 2003). A legacy in this context is what an Olympic city leaves behind after the Games have come and gone.

As part of ‘the bidding process’ before a Games are awarded to a city, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) advocate that each bidding city for the OPGs must from the outset articulate in great detail how they will utilise the benefits from the event to bring long lasting, positive outcomes for the area and the citizens of the city. This process had begun in earnest for London 2012 as Lord Sebastian Coe working with the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) had a detailed vision and plan in place as early as 2005 when the host city elections were taking place. As Lee, Ghaye and Dixon (2013:581) commented the vision for 2012 and beyond included:

‘The regeneration of a massive industrial wasteland in East London, providing the local community with world class sporting venues to train and compete in, new parks and residential areas, better transport connections and infrastructure, employment and business opportunities, and the creation of the next generation of sporting champions by inspiring young people everywhere to become more involved in physical activity’. This vision was not going to be unproblematic for as Vigor (2005) so astutely noted following the Olympic Games of Athens 2004, that an investment on *hard infrastructure* like new sports facilities or railway terminals is not enough as the extent of an Olympic legacy. Vigor (2005) argued that if long term benefits were to be delivered, policy makers must equally focus on *softer infrastructure* (my italics) such as community involvement, sports participation and employment and skills policy. As Wimbledon reminds us every year, we still have a lot to learn about using an elite sporting event to deliver sustained increases in grassroots participation. There is much that has been written about Olympic legacy in recent times, see for example the work of Brunet (2009) and the Barcelona games, Cashman (2006 2011) and the Sydney games, Brunet and Xinwen (2009) and the Beijing games, or Panagiotopoulos (2009) and the Athens games of 2004. What is evident is that all of these writers have argued that whilst there are many similarities between host cities, there are also many differences, and any analysis of the success or failure of a legacy has to be viewed individually as no single template guarantees success for each and every venue. As Poynter (2006, 2009) hypothesised London 2012 would not be unproblematic even if lessons from previous Olympiads were heeded. Not dissimilarly, the title of Cashman’s paper (2006) *The Bitter-Sweet Awakening: The Legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* is most informative in itself.

Elsewhere lessons about successful legacies are also present. For example community involvement from the very beginning was vital to the very successful entrepreneur and motivational speaker Tim Smit (2002), Director of the Eden Project in Cornwall UK. He tells in his narrative how he actively sought out local expertise and harnessed community support for the project believing that this was a crucial aspect in making the initiative sustainable. In just over five years, Smit and his team turned what many people believed was a worthless, polluted un-useable site into Britain’s fifth largest tourist attraction. It attracts over a million visitors every year, has raised over 120 million pounds sterling, and invested over 500 million in the local economy.

The Eden Project continues to employ over 500 local people in an area which has traditionally had high unemployment and has now, almost without wishing to, become a national example of a very successful sustainable regeneration project, that is to say everything that an Olympic legacy hopes to achieve. It will be insightful shortly to see whether the young people who grew up as part of the local Olympic community see the legacy of London 2012 in the same way as locals see the Eden

Project. As Duran (2005) has shown, the Olympic Games of Barcelona 1992 are arguably the most successful games of the last 25 years, as the legacy there saw Real Club Deportivo Espanol de Barcelona inherit the Olympic<sup>3</sup> Stadium as their home, and the *Barcelonetta* area of the city (formerly the Olympic village) is now home to hundreds of local people and their families, and such was the effectiveness of the long term strategy that underpinned the legacy that tourism still continues to thrive in Catalonia. Nello (1997) looks at the concept of the Olympic village and argues that to be successful it must be a common and shared experience, and the title of the research is most informative as it lists planning and sharing as key concepts of a legacy. *The Olympic Village of Barcelona 92 in Olympic Villages: Hundred Years of Urban Planning and Shared Experiences*.

### **The Olympic Legacy and London 2012**

In 2008 the government published the draft of what the legacy for London 2012 would entail. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) stated that the legacy would cover eight different aspects that would impact on not just local communities but communities across the entire UK. In what was a sixty page document, I summarise the categories below:

- 1) The Regeneration of East London including all host boroughs. In this category it was envisaged that the Games would provide opportunities for jobs, business creation before, during, and after the Games had left town.
- 2) Venues. It was felt that by staging the games in this part of London that the most enduring aspect would be the regeneration of an entire community for the direct benefit of everybody who lives there.
- 3) Legacy for participation in Sport. It was hoped with the Games being staged in London that more people of all ages would be inspired to do more sport across the entire UK.
- 4) Economic Legacy<sup>4 & 5</sup>. It was anticipated that 7000 full time jobs would be created in the construction industry, and that up to 12,000 jobs might be created as a result of legacy development.
- 5) Tourism. Not unlike the vision set out and realised in Barcelona 1992, it was predicted that the net economic benefit from tourism would increase by 50%-70% over a 7-10yr period.
- 6) A Cultural Olympiad. Although this is a comparatively new aspect of the Olympic legacy, it is a new and exciting

<sup>3</sup> At present in the spring of 2016 it is West Ham United Football Club formerly of Upton Park who will move into the Olympic Stadium in time for the beginning of the 2016-17 soccer season in August 2016. The stadium has already been re-named The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that the London Delivery Authority had pledged to employ local people and to provide training and apprenticeships, creating a skills legacy for East London, figures released under the freedom of information act showed that 1 in 3 people employed at the main Olympic site were not local people. The building work had taken precisely 115 people off of local dole queues, but by contrast local boroughs have lost 93 companies employing 1245 employees. Figures supplied by The London Delivery Agency 2nd June 2009 (Now known as The Olympic Delivery Agency available at <https://www.olympicdeliveryagency>)

<sup>5</sup> As the economic climate worsened and the 'credit crunch' bit even harder for some, a number of large national employers have made staff redundant, and in June 2009, Reuters reported that there were now 2.26 million unemployed and job vacancies hit a record low in the UK, This was the highest figure since 1974. (Reuters News Agency 18th June 2009)

feature which sits comfortably with the cultural diversity of East London. (This was envisaged as a four year period from 2008-2012, where *celebrations of culture*, which reflected the diverse communities of London and the UK were to be held.)

- 7) An Olympic Trust. Essentially this trust was going to be endowed with a total of £40 million in residual income and be responsible for leaving a lasting legacy of the 2012 Games for future generations.
- 8) A legacy for the nations and regions. The vision here was that if these goals were achieved, there would be increased participation in sport, an increased awareness of the UK as a touristic destination, and a greater engagement with elite sport through contact with other national teams in training.

The aim of this study was to focus on the children's views on the re-generation of East London and their uptake in Sport and *Physical activity*. These two areas were identified in the research because the re-generation of East London, has a specific issue with unemployment in the area, as this is an issue that has plagued the borough of Hackney for a very long time.

Details released from the London Poverty Profile Agency (LPPA) showed that in 2010, Hackney was ranked as 2<sup>nd</sup> as the most deprived local authority in the whole of the UK, coming second to only Liverpool. Unemployment continues to be above both the London average for 2014, 7.0%, and the national average of 6.2%. LPPA (2015) Perhaps not surprisingly, such figures are reflected in the data provided by the school for the children who helped in this research. Of the 434 pupils on roll, the school was receiving the Pupil Premium Grant which is funding to support the most vulnerable pupils for 163 of the total cohort a large 37.6 %. The increased participation in Sport and *Physical Activity* for local people and beyond, was also identified as a key issue and a key aim of the OPG legacy. (My italics as physical activity can of course be very different to Olympic and Paralympic Sport.) Here I examined Sport and physical activity provision by the children specifically.

### **The Context of the Research**

Even with an understanding of the idiosyncratic nuances of the UK education system, it was with great shock and disbelief that in the immediate run up to the OPGs commencing, the Conservative government announced that funding for the teachers and coaches who were *School Sport Co-ordinators* (SSCOs) was to be stopped. This seemed a bizarre and illogical decision because one of the reasons why Team Great Britain (GB) went on to excel at the Games was because these SSCO had been working and linking primary schools with secondary schools, sharing expertise. (Association for Physical Education, afPE 2012). Moreover it was at odds with what the Department for Children Media and Sport (DCMS:2008) set out to achieve in terms of its London 2012 legacy aspirations. Perhaps not surprisingly a number of commentators myself included, reacted by petitioning the DCMS to rethink this strange decision, the afPE (2012). Vasager & Campbell (2012), Piper and Garratt (2013), the Observer (2012:32). These successful athletes at London 2012 had been the lucky recipients of 10yrs of expert teaching and coaching in PE and Sport as a partnership. (afPE 2012). Notwithstanding ideological differences between the incoming conservative government and the Youth Sport Trust who were perceived as being too close to the out-going labour government it remains a strange decision. Early anecdotal indicators from local teachers for example, are that *our children's sporting legacy has not been fulfilled.to date*. Elsewhere this is also apparent in the unpublished Masters dissertation by Ayles (2014) which shows that the Olympic Legacy has had no discernible effects on secondary school children's sporting provision in the London borough of Brent. Perhaps acknowledging that the abolition of the School Sport Partnerships was a mistake, Prime Minister David Cameron appeared to back track significantly in

February 2014 by announcing in a press notice that the government ‘has today committed to keeping the £150m a year Primary PE and Sport Premium until 2020.’

Specifically he stated:

‘Sport is so important because it encourages children to be active, lead a healthy life style, make friends and of course, have fun. That is why I am committing to guarantee the primary school sports funding until 2020.’ (The Prime Minister’s Office: Number 10 Press Notice to the BBC: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014.)

### **Giving Pupils a Voice and Ethical Considerations – Methodology**

Pupil voice is seen as imperative throughout this paper as a means of valuing what the pupil has to say in their own right. That is not to say that everything that is said is always correct or indeed of value but as a pedagogical tool, pupil voice can be a very useful teaching aid. Penney (2004) calls for a radical refocus, and for a more flexible, interconnected and inclusive teaching approach which is geared to children’s current and future lives with greater opportunities for choice given to schools and pupils. These views sit comfortably with those advocated by White (2004, 2007), and Robinson and Aronica (2015) in terms of making teaching and learning relevant for young people in the twenty first century. What better way to inform our practice as teachers (and policy makers) than to invite suggestions from the key stake-holders in the overall process, by asking the children themselves? As part of such a process to be made possible, Penney argues (2004:149) that educationalists may need to consider a radical re-orientation and re-structuring of their approach and in that process embark on a possibly uncomfortable view of their own professional identities. Moreover this challenge will involve moving away from the notion that children are *empty vessels* or should be *seen and not heard*.<sup>6</sup> The children of today are, the adult citizens of tomorrow, and I contend that they are capable of contributing to and taking a role in their own learning, where teaching should extend beyond out-dated boundaries like transmitting knowledge solely, and connect with the needs, interests, and lives of all children and their roles in the transformation of communities and societies.

Prior to commencing the data collection in 2015, written agreement from the head teacher and the board of governors was sought and gained. All children and parents/guardians were given, and were required to complete, an informed consent form detailing the nature of the proposal and relevant background information. All involved had the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. All parties involved were assured that all information collected, would remain strictly confidential and only used for the purpose of this research. Data was collected from two classes totalling 40 children in Year 6, aged ten and eleven years old from the same primary school where I analysed the responses qualitatively. A decision was taken to work

<sup>6</sup> The earliest reference that I have found to ‘children being seen and not heard’ comes from John Quincy Adams the 6th President of the United States of America, who in his memoir published in 1875 recalls: “My dear mother’s constant lesson in childhood, that children should be seen and not heard” (1875: Vol V. xii) published by J.B. Lippincott & Co. Philadelphia)

with this year group because it was the children’s last year of primary schooling, and very little research has been done with this age group before outside of the UK core curriculum subjects like Maths and English. The majority of work on pupil voice to date in the UK has focussed on secondary schooling in the belief that 10 and 11 year old children were too young to

say anything of note. Fielding (2008), Robinson and Fielding (2007) and Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1995) for example, strongly contest this view. Moreover as an aside 16 of the children had performed at the Olympic Games opening ceremony in August 2012 also.

The children's first names are used to demonstrate the very rich cultural make-up of the area in which the research was carried out. (At the time of the research 19 different home languages were spoken by the children at the school and 12 of these by the children who took part in the research, these included Polish, Bengali, Spanish, Kurdish, Yoruba, French and Sylheti amongst others.) No family names are ever used nor is the school identified anywhere, and the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors were happy with this decision. Equally, the voices and views of the children are presented exactly as they were recorded or written, their own language is used and nothing has been changed or edited. Moreover the children were encouraged to complete the questionnaires by themselves with minimal instructional support by the class teacher and they hand wrote their responses. They completed the questionnaire during curriculum time as part of a literacy lesson on surveys in the early spring term of 2015.

#### **Data analysis and presentation of the data from the questionnaires – an Overview**

Through the use of questionnaires the children's responses have been analysed and used to inform the two areas detailed as points 1 and 3 of the OPG legacy. In analysing the data provided by the children I have grouped the responses to directly address and link with two of the legacy proposals as detailed by the former Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2008. Using the constructivist-interpretivist stance outlined earlier, I also drew upon the work of Benjamin Bloom in his Taxonomy of Learning (1956) in order to help me interpret the data that the children shared with me. Notwithstanding the point that there has been a number of interpretations and additions to Bloom's taxonomy since his original work, see for example Harrow (1972), Dave (1975), the taxonomy serves as a very helpful guide in terms of categorising the children's responses. In his taxonomy Bloom identified three different types of educational activity, which he called domains of learning.

- a) The *Cognitive*, which he associated with mental skills and were linked to *knowledge*
- b) The *Affective*, which was linked to growth in feelings or emotional areas and associated with *attitudes*
- c) *Psychomotor* learning was linked to the development of manual or physical activities and associated with *skills*

So for example in answer to the question, *Has the Olympic or Paralympic Games made a difference to your life or anybody that you know?* Tyrik wrote 'People who are disabled can each do things that a normal (sic) person can.' This clearly shows Tyrik thinking about what he has seen. Elsewhere in answer to the same question Aisha wrote 'It made a difference to my life because I used to hate sports, but then it turned into my favourite thing. I love hockey and football the best.' This shows Aisha thinking about the OPGs and is linked with emotional areas and associated with attitude. In relation to psychomotor learning, Ciara wrote 'I've learnt how to swim better and I learnt how to ride.'

#### **The Re-Generation of east London – Employment and use of the Sporting facilities.**

In this section it was envisaged that all host boroughs would witness an increase in job opportunities for local people and there would be an investment in business creation. Notwithstanding the very successful *Westfield Shopping City* to the east of Hackney at Stratford which boasts all the very large multi-national corporate shopping brands, very few small totally independent of franchises business' exist, (apart from street vendors and small market stalls), since they cannot afford the prices to function profitably as a business on the site. As the London Legacy Development Corporation state 'The high levels of development in the area have the potential to negatively impact existing business, causing them to relocate or reducing their confidence in investing in their premises if there is a perceived threat of eviction. (2014) Moreover of the 40 children who were asked *Do you know anybody who worked at the Olympic Park or anybody who works at the park now?* Only 4 children responded positively that they did know somebody, and that was when the games were taking place. No child stated that they knew anybody who had secured a job working since the games had ended and moved on. With regard to the sporting facilities specifically which have changed the landscape of east Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham unequivocally for ever, I asked the children *Have you or anybody that you know visited the Olympic Park since the games ended?* Of the 40 children who took part in the research, 4 children said that they had visited with family members, one child said that he had watched a race there and 7 children had visited the park as part of an organised cycle ride around the borough and where they had stopped for a picnic lunch. Two children mentioned that they had seen the park when they had gone shopping with their parents at *Westfield*. I was especially interested in finding out if any of the children who had visited the park with family members had used any of the new sporting facilities on offer to local people. One un-named child (they chose not to write their name on the questionnaire), said that he had run there in 'the people's run' a local fun run, Megan had indicated that she participated in something but did not say what exactly, and only Matteo stated that he had used the elite Olympic pool. Ciara claimed to have been to the fun fair in the park. 36 children, that is a very large 90% of the targeted group had not used any of the sporting facilities left over from the games as part of community's legacy to date. However and perhaps on a more optimistic note I now turn to a discussion of the data shared in relation to the legacy goal of increasing and improving local children's well-being and activity levels, through participation in sport as a result of being inspired by the world's elite athletes visiting London's east end.

### **Sport Participation**

My lead question here for the children was *'Do you do more sport and physical activity now as a result of the Olympic Games?'* Six children stated that they did not and nine children said that they did the same amount including Maariyah who wrote 'Not really, as I have always done lots of sport.' Rami wrote 'I used to do a bit more, but now I don't' and Jameela wrote 'Well I suppose I do a little bit more but maybe not really?' However the largest group, 25 of the cohort of 40 children a large 62.5% of the cohort, stated that they did do more sport and physical activity as a result of the games coming to east London. Many of the children's responses here were most illuminating: Both Cara and Kareen stated 'Yes I do more sport and exercise', India who performed at the opening ceremony wrote 'Yes, I now play badminton on Wednesdays, and Saturdays and Sundays.' Rodiot was very clear when he wrote emphatically 'Yes, definitely, before I never done that much

sport but now I do lots.’ Aisha gave the most detailed response of all ‘Yes, because I love moving about and people tell me its good exercise. I love it when I am kind of out of breath because it makes me think that I am doing a good job.’

After the children had finished performing at the opening ceremony they had to leave the stadium and start making the journey home and return to school where they were to be collected by their parents and relatives. However, as we were leaving the stadium the athletic teams from around the globe were making their way into the stadium at the same time as we were departing and in transit we passed the Jamaican team including the charismatic Usain Bolt. To this extent my final quote in this section is from another child Tyrik who wrote ‘Yes, Usain Bolt made me want to run even more than ever’. Another child Samuel wrote ‘I saw handball, running and table-tennis on the TV when watching the Olympics and I do them all now’.

In this section I have given an overview, a flavour of some of the things that the children shared with me. In the following section I seek to interpret and analyse the responses as a means of answering my lead research question and the question of Olympic legacy.

#### **Discussion, interpretation and analysis of the data**

At the present time of analysing the data provided by the children, it is a very fair and clear interpretation of the data to state that no observable or measurable benefit has been experienced by the children or their families in terms of economic improvement or by a re-generation of the area and environment to date. No family member or relative has gained a position of employment on the Olympic Park since the games had moved on or even at *Westfield Shopping City*, (and I understand that this could be interpreted as an ‘economic improvement’ to the area of course, but the issue is that the shopping malls are filled with large multi-national shops, not local or indigenous retailers.). No family or relative had benefitted from the new accommodation at the former Olympic Village, once the athletes had departed and gone home. While 12 children had visited the park either with family members or as part of a guided cycle ride, only one child had used *any of the sporting facilities* since August 2012. Clearly the re-generation of east London has made no discernible difference to the children of Hackney or their families from an economic perspective to date. Notwithstanding the complexity of measuring covert economic improvement, like increased business during the games for local shops, in the children’s view nothing had changed much at all that they could see.

I acknowledge that if my work were to be critiqued the charge that children as young as 10 and 11 years old might not be the best people to ask such profound questions is a valid one, but such a charge misses the point, although I would agree that one would get a much more informed and detailed response by an adult or adolescent for example. However, the children responded at a level commensurate with their own chronological age and that I think is worthy of note in itself. See also the work of Gallahue and Ozmun (2000) who argue that it is in precisely this age range that the motor specialist phase develops most, which will then impact most on movements in adult life and recreational and competitive activities. By including them in such conversations and valuing what they have to say at the very least, we are sharing and demonstrating democratic

practices in a very undemocratic place like a school,<sup>7</sup> and moving away from the notion that even as young as 10 and 11 years old children are so much more than just blank slates and empty vessels.

However in terms of accessing greater sporting opportunity and experiencing an increase in physical activity, there appears to be a much brighter legacy, where perhaps for some of the children their hopes and aspirations as detailed in my work of 2007, 2010 and now 2015 may indeed be realised in the short term at the very least. As stated by Vigor (2005) it is the *soft infrastructure* not the hard infrastructure (the stadium, the swimming pool, the velodrome, or the ‘copper box’) which is making a difference in the children lives, but rather the *Primary Premium funding*, the money used by schools to improve the quality and quantity of PE and Sport provision that is making a difference to the children. The Primary PE and Sport Premium committed by David Cameron (2013) retrospectively after the completion of the games to the sum of £750 million, in real terms meaning £150 million to be spent each year until 2020 guaranteed to secure the Olympic and Paralympic sporting legacy is proving very helpful, to schools and of great benefit to the children. For example Samuel wrote that he now did “Hockey, handball, running and table-tennis at school.” Murt said that he now does more “football and basketball like I saw in the Olympics.” Amrit stated “Yes, we do a lot more now in PE.” The point to be made here is that the children’s school now offers the children a much wider range of activities than they could previously afford for example, table-tennis, cycling, swimming, athletics and they also employ a peripatetic soccer coach and a visiting PE specialist to work directly with teachers. This point appears to be crucial if the funding available at present is to really make a difference, as it is the training and developing of the teaching staff long term that looks to be key.

The teachers must learn from the outside agencies and coaches employed by the schools whilst the funding is in place. It is not sustainable or effective practice (as it has been reported anecdotally) to use the outside agencies to cover teachers planning and preparation time. This will mean that schools will be in the same position as they were before the funding was pledged with many teachers lacking the training, confidence or ability to teach PE and Sports effectively. Whilst The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) will have a remit to inspect how the funding is used, it is unclear how schools will spend the money to ensure it is used to bring about long term sustainable goals. It is evidently making a difference to the children of Hackney in east London. However on a related issue in terms of the educational context (schools, teachers, the children and their parents) are receiving mixed messages about the importance of PE, sport and physical activity.

September 2013 saw the introduction and rolling out of the new National Curriculum for all subjects including PE (2013). Surprisingly the distinction between *core* subjects<sup>8</sup> and *foundation* subjects remains, with the core subjects being given greater value in terms of coverage and timetabling. PE continues to be a foundation subject and although a mandatory subject which has to be taught, at no point is it stipulated how much, how little or when it should be taught? The Association

<sup>7</sup> See for example the work by Burke and Grosvenor (2003) entitled *The School I'd Like* where children are actively encouraged to share what they like and dislike about their schools.

<sup>8</sup> In the UK National Curriculum, core subjects English, Maths and Science are given greater weighting in terms of time-tables and curriculum coverage as opposed to foundation subjects like PE, Music, History, Art or Geography for example. Department for Education 2013.

for Physical Education recommends a minimum of at least two hours in curriculum time. Perhaps even more bizarrely it seems odd that a government that appears to put so much emphasis (and money) on achieving the Olympic legacy, does not think it necessary to move the status of PE from foundation status to core status. There does appear to be a contradiction of reasoning here? The new NC in the UK in its entirety is 224 pages long and PE is located as the final subject in alphabetical order and comprises of just *four pages* out of the full 224 pages – Have our policy makers ‘missed a trick’ here in terms of giving a clear and direct message to all, that PE and Sport and the Olympic legacy are valued in our ever increasing sedentary society in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

I conclude this paper by once again making the point that defining the term legacy continues to be problematic. This difficulty is compounded further if we examine the notion of time in relation to seeing whether the aims or outcomes of a legacy have been achieved. If I were to critique my own work it could be argued that an examination of the Olympic legacy in 2015 is too soon to get a meaningful overview of whether it has been successful or not. Is two and a half years long enough, or should the position be reviewed after 5 years, 10 years or even 20 years I wondered? This concern does not easily dissipate. However the Department for Culture, Sport and Media (2015) in their publication *A Living Legacy: 2010 -2015, Sport Policy and Investment* have anticipated that their goals are indeed long term. They state:

‘We expect that the Park will bring over 10,000 new homes (around half of which are affordable) by 2031, and over 15,000 new jobs to East London by 2025’ (p.16). The first cohort of children who took part in this research in 2007 will be 29yrs old in 2025 and 35yrs old in 2031 – Whether they will be living and working on the iconic Olympic Park and using the swimming pool or using the velodrome remains to be seen?

This paper adds to the body of knowledge on Olympic and Paralympic legacy for Olympics past, London 2012 and beyond. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that children have been asked their views on two aspects of the legacy, and this has not been done before as far as I am aware. The data that I have presented is an overview of some of the things that the children shared with me, it is their voices that are missing from many debates, and through the notion of Olympic legacy I call for a greater involvement of learner voice as a pedagogical tool. Children are able, if given the opportunity to offer fresh insight into a range of discussions and play a part in decision making and an investment in their own lives. Leaving such practice to secondary schooling is too little, too late. It appears at best unwise, at worst invidious that the debate about the OPG legacy goes on ‘around’ the children when they will be the inheritors of the legacy. As this paper shows the children are perfectly willing and able to speak for themselves if given the opportunity.

What is clear at the moment is that to the cohort of children and their families who performed at the Olympic opening ceremony, the legacy has made no difference at all economically or in terms of the re-generation of the south of the borough to date. However in terms of increased sporting opportunities and physical activity, the legacy is still alive provided that the schools continue to use the money wisely and to invest in their own teaching staff as a long term sustainable legacy, and the

sporting facilities be made as accessible as possible for the next generation. Time will bear witness to the success or failure of the Olympic legacy.

Finally as I reflect, I acknowledge that this piece of research is not without weaknesses, (and I have yet to see a perfect piece of research,) but what is apparent to me as a new researcher is that I have not been passive in the process of researching. For engaging with the concept of learner/pupil voice I too have learnt so much as it is not a one way relationship, and hearing and listening can be two very different things.

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