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**Round table Primary Physical Education Pre-Conference Symposium**

**Wednesday 25th July 2018**

*Generation Next: The future of Primary Physical Education in England*

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***Introduction***

Aims of the round table:

1. To share findings from a large scale study undertaken in England examining the current landscape of Primary Physical Education (PE) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from school-based experience
2. Critique popular forms of policy critique
3. Pose questions to the table about the subject’s aims and purposes at ITE and the preparation of the Primary PE workforce

Defining terms:

* PE – curriculum Physical Education, taught as part of statutory school-based curriculum
* PST – pre-service teacher in training at the ITE phase and before qualification
* Primary - refers to the educational phase of children in school years between 5 – 11 years old
* OFSTED – England’s education inspectorate

Context

PE globally remains a contested concept struggling to find its identity within the crowded political spaces of sport, health and education (Penney 2008, Griggs and Ward 2012, Coulter and Ní Chróinín 2013, Griggs and Petrie 2016). In England, PE has been placed in an arguably unique position to other countries through recent political agendas, including the post London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy (Griggs and Ward 2013); the Government Primary PE and Sport Premium (Griggs and Petrie 2016), the Childhood Obesity Strategy (DoH 2016) and a revised national curriculum, which places competition in the subject’s purpose of study, aims and content (DfE 2013).

The issue of teacher competency has been a subject of focus in many policy decisions concerning primary PE over the last two decades (Ofsted 2009; Revell 2000; Warburton 2000; Griggs 2007). Although there has been an improving trend in standards, achievement, opportunity and continued professional development (CPD) within primary PE, concern still exists over teachers’ subject knowledge (Griggs 2015). The current political agenda in England has been reinforced the subject a specialist area of knowledge and expertise with the launch of a government funded specialist route.

Although The Education Act of 2002 prohibits the Secretary of State for Education from prescribing the amount of time to be spent on any curriculum subject (Foster 2017), the former Labour Government’s PE and Sport Strategy aimed to increase the percentage of school children in England participating in two hours a week of curriculum PE (DfES/DCMS 2003). In order to meet this target, the number of adults other than teachers delivering the curriculum has risen dramatically – this has led to a growing trend in the use of sports coaches to deliver curriculum PE. This pattern is also prevalent in in other countries, with a view that the outsourcing to external companies has been viewed as a ‘solution’ to the teacher competency problem. With an increased visibility of ‘others’ in the PE curriculum space, teaching and coaching have been regarded as synonymous (Lyle 2002). The practice of outsourcing PE can be seen as being at odds with the ethos of primary education, as it has historically focused on a holistic child-centred rather than activity centred model.

Although the Premium was not intended to displace or replace teachers, there has been a growing trend to use the funding in this way (Smith 2015). This has supported the critical location of neoliberal ideological perspectives, such as that ‘the teacher is a provider of services to a client and is accountable to the market in terms of improved production and measurement against external standards’ (Brooks and DinanThompson 2013: 237). OFSTED (2014: 6) reported that in the 22 primary schools they visited, most of the funding was used to ‘deploy new sports coaches and other personnel qualified in sport to teach pupils in PE lessons’. However, while it may be tempting to read the outsourcing of PE as evidence of the victory of a neoliberal agenda, we would suggest it is instead primarily motivated by the poverty of discourse and understanding of PE as a subject area in all contributing contexts (policy-making, schools, teacher education etc.). PE is outsourced because it is a marginalised subject area; it is not a marginalised subject area because it is outsourced. Outsourcing, though, in turn, contributes to the debasement of PE as a respected and significant subject area.

The purpose of the research we are going to share has been about improving understanding of the current landscape of primary PE ITE following policy direction in England and offer empirical claims to these arguments.

The two questions that have driven this research are:

1. How prepared are PSTs to teach primary PE?
2. What factors affect the development of primary physical educators during their ITE provision?

Research was undertaken in two phases:

* Phase 1 was a snap shot to gauge further examination of the issues was warranted (n=1118)
* Phase 2, a detailed exploration of the issues (n=625)
* 22 providers over each region for England – range of programmes

This was not just about evidencing concern, but to move forward with examples of good practice.

Phase 1

* *Lessons taught*: The mode response was 0 lessons taught **(48.7%)** and only 12.3% of the sample were able to teach a series of lessons
* *Who taught PE:* 34.9% of lessons were being taught by the class teacher, 33.5% by an outsourced company/sports coach without a teacher present, 4.6% a sports coach alongside the class teacher. In total 47.1% of lessons were delivered by a non-qualified teacher.
* *Others* *in the workforce* (p. 32): swimming teacher, teaching assistants, school governors, dance teachers, university/college/school students

Reasons why lessons weren’t taught on school experience (p.33)

* Main reason cited was outsourced providers (n=76)
* Second reason priority of subject (n=39)

Willingness to teach (p.35 and p.39)

* A Spearman’s correlation analysis was undertaken to identify if a PST’s willingness to teach was a factor in the number of lessons taught when on placement. The data set indicated a significant, positive weak correlation between the number of lessons taught and willingness to teach PE, suggesting that willingness to teach was not a factor in the number of lessons taught.

Confidence to teach (p.36 and p.40)

* A further statistical analysis was undertaken to identify if a correlation existed between a PST’s confidence to teach and the number of lessons taught. In this data set there is a statistically significant moderate correlation between the number of lessons taught and confidence to teach PE relative to the stage of training. These findings suggest that the number of lessons a PST teaches in school will influence their overall confidence to teach PE

What was taught? (p. 38)

* Games activities - 32%
* Fundamental movement skills -18%
* Gymnastic activities - 14%
* Dance activities - 13%
* Athletic activities - 8%
* Swimming activities - 4%
* Outdoor and adventurous activities- 2%
* Sports day - 2%
* Fitness - 2%
* Warm ups - 1%

Positives Experiences during School-Based Placements (p.48)

* A total of 16 themes were identified from 538/625 responses. A total of 123 participants were unable to leave any positive comment, which was the most cited response for this question.

Barriers Experienced During School-Based Placements (p.51)

* In total 13 themes were identified from 462/625 responses.

**Facilitated discussion (30 minutes)**

* If primary PE occupies a multi-disciplinary space, does it require a multi-disciplinary workforce?
* Is having a diverse workforce for primary PE an issue – is it global?
* Where has the issue come from?
* What role does policy play in shaping the future direction of the subject – is this a convenient place to put blame?
* What is meant by a ‘specialist’ teacher of primary PE?

*Conclusion*

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| **Topics/Questions** | **Reponses** |
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