



## The professional socialisation challenge: Teacher education for a preferable future for physical education

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## Chapter 7

### The Professional Socialisation Challenge:

#### Teacher Education for a Preferable Future for Physical Education

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Occupational socialisation theory (Templin and Schempp 1989) has helped to facilitate inquiry into the recruitment, education, and careers of physical education (PE) teachers (Richards *et al.* 2014). When occupational socialisation theory is applied to physical education teacher education (PETE), the need for collaborative practice is apparent. Preservice and inservice teachers, teacher educators, and professional development providers can and should work together to address a multi-faceted professional socialisation challenge. This challenge begins with teacher recruitment and extends to PETE and initial and long-term socialisation in schools, all of which frame teachers' identity development (Richards *et al.* 2014). The challenge centres on how PE can break the cycle of reproduced programmes, policies, and personnel, given evidence indicating that these result in sub-optimal programmes and outcomes.

Teacher socialisation is a mechanism for programmes reproduction, and reproduced programmes promise to maintain inherited patterns of socialisation. This patterned relationship necessitates a dual strategy: Revisit the purposes of PE and revise teacher socialisation mechanisms to fit better programme designs. Questions of purpose invite debate. Acknowledging the dynamic nature of PE over time and across cultures and contexts, in many parts of the world, the *preparation of youth for a lifetime of engagement with physical activity* can be taken as the current overarching purpose (McEvoy *et al.* 2015).

We begin with the assumption that this overarching purpose of PE paves the way for analyses of the facilitators and challenges associated with teacher socialisation processes.

Mindful of international and intra-national differences and the risks and dangers accompanying “one-size-fits-all” proposals, our writing team is committed to a context-sensitive, collaborative model for teacher socialisation, a model in which teachers, teacher educators, and professional developers work, learn, and improve together.

Further, two related limitations should be acknowledged when reading this chapter. First, while we focus narrowly on the recruitment and professional socialization of PETE recruits, socialization processes span beyond initial teacher education and include teachers’ experiences in the social milieu of the schools in which they work, which are framed by larger social and political forces (see chapters 4 and 8). Second, teacher socialization and professional learning do not end with initial teacher education and need to be attended to through continuous professional development for both physical educators and PETE faculty members (see chapter 13).

### **Framing the Professional Socialisation Challenge**

Three interrelated sub-challenges invite attention because all are instrumental in the reproduction of sub-optimal programmes and teacher socialisation: (a) passive teacher recruitment, (b) persistence of recruits’ subjective theories through teacher education programming (Grotjahn 1991) and (c) pressures to meet institutional standards and accreditation requirements for teacher education. These sub-challenges are related, as indicated in Angela’s reactions in Table 7.1.

#### **Passive Teacher Recruitment Reproduces Programmes**

Professional socialisation challenges and opportunities begin with new member recruitment. The profession appears in some nations to lack a structured approach to recruiting new members, particularly in ways that challenge the status quo (Richards and Templin 2019). When recruitment is *passive*, recruits choose to enter PETE based on their respective

experiences, which give rise to ideas of what PE is or should be (Curtner-Smith 2017). Teachers and coaches recruit individuals who mirror their preferences, share their experiences, and promise to replicate teaching styles. While acknowledging important contributions made to promoting innovative practices (Lorente and Kirk 2013), in many countries there continues to be an emphasis on team sport using multiactivity and teacher-driven pedagogies (MacPhail *et al.* 2019). Accordingly, many prospective recruits associate PE with sport.

The continuous recruitment of these individuals contributes programme reproduction, inadvertently undermining programmes' grand purpose. Sport content continues to dominate in the programmes, despite evidence these activities do not promise to result in physical activity participation during adulthood (Fairclough *et al.* 2002). Passive recruitment persists despite a growing literature that emphasizes the importance of *active*, research-informed initiatives (see Ayers and Richards 2019). There is a need to attract, recruit, and select a diverse teacher candidate pool (Richards and Templin 2019). Recruitment of a more diverse PE workforce includes factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, as well as physical activity preferences (Flintoff and Webb 2012).

Active recruitment facilitates better teacher candidate selection. Selection is structured by entry requirements developed through institutional policies and accreditation requirements. These requirements vary across contexts, with example criteria including academic profiles, scores on examinations, admissions exams, and motor skill and fitness performance tests (MacPhail *et al.* 2019). Motor ability, sport-specific skills tests, and fitness tests sometimes act as gatekeepers to PETE programme entrance, as is the case in a number of European countries (MacPhail *et al.* 2019). Ward (2019) lamented that stringent entry requirements related to high

cognitive abilities, including academic achievement and standardized test scores, may preclude some otherwise promising students from entering PETE.

### **Persistence of Recruits' Subjective Theories**

Although non-traditional, teacher certification programmes are increasing (Ward 2019) and school-based teacher education has become more common in some European countries (MacPhail *et al.* 2019), PETE programmes in higher education settings remain the dominant teacher education mechanism. An important dynamic occurs inside this PETE experience: Teaching recruits with subjective theories focused on sport content and teacher-centred pedagogies are likely to be met by teacher educators who emphasise content beyond sport (MacPhail *et al.* 2019). These differences signal an implicit power struggle over the purposes of school programmes, and they justify socialization frameworks called “dialectical.” Freely translated, PE teaching recruits can and do exercise their sense of agency and resist the forces of those seeking to socialise them (Schempp and Graber 1992), while PETE faculty members serve in powerful roles as gatekeepers to programme completion. Mindful of an imbalance of power in this dialectical relationship, preservice teachers may opt for strategic compliance and impression management or engage in covert acts of resistance (Lacey 1977).

Significantly, recruits may not be cognisant of how their prior socialisation experiences influence how they perceive PE content and how they react to PETE programmes (Gillespie 2011). Without intentional disruption, the socialisation process can be somewhat automatic and with predictable results. A cycle of passive recruitment leads to reproduction of current practices and beliefs, followed by a resistance to PETE learning experiences that challenge such beliefs and the preservation of traditional practices and attitudes. The second professional socialisation sub-challenge thus relates to developing and implementing innovative PETE curricula. These

curricula are designed to pose challenges that enable preservice teachers to reconsider their subjective theories.

### **Pressures to Meet Institutional Standards and Accreditation Requirements**

In many countries, accreditation bodies provide a framework of requirements for teacher education programmes (Johnson *et al.* 2005). While accreditation bodies provide guidance, there is typically space for flexibility in programme structure and content. As such, opinions and approaches about the specific knowledge and skills needed to teach PE vary, even within a single PETE programme (Ayers and Housner 2008). Some teacher educators and practicing teachers, for example, have emphasized the importance of integrating social justice into teacher education (Walton-Fisette and Sutherland 2018), whereas others have stressed the importance of preparing physical educators for the sociopolitical aspects of teaching (Richards *et al.* 2013). Such a variety may not be inherently problematic. However, it does frame a consequential choice for PETE design (Metzler 2009). PETE programme leaders are forced to decide; depth or breath.

The structural location of PETE in higher education also can create challenging conditions. For example, the development of sports science curricula in departments around the world has resulted in an increase in performance analysis courses (e.g., biomechanics, exercise physiology), oftentimes necessitating accommodations in PETE (Lawson and Kretchmar 2017). As PETE curricula are adapted in response to these institutional expectations and professional accreditation requirements, space for content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and field experiences is limited, and opportunities to gain qualifications for teaching more than one subject are constrained, and so are opportunities for PETE faculty to interact with teaching recruits.

Further, these realities potentially inhibit PETE faculty members' ability to prepare students for technical and sociopolitical aspects of teaching, perhaps provoking them to consider their subjective theories (Richards *et al.* 2013).

### **Addressing the Professional Socialisation Challenge**

The three sub-challenges indicate needs for a coordinated approach that involves (a) active recruitment, (b) constructivist-oriented PETE curricula, and (c) advocacy for better alignment in institutional and accreditation requirements. Each is summarized next. Angela's reactions from the perspective of an inservice physical educator are included in Table 7.2.

#### **Active Recruitment into Physical Education Teacher Education**

An active approach to recruitment "reconceptualises recruitment as an intentional activity through which inservice physical educators and PETE faculty members attempt to identify, communicate with, and recruit highly qualified students" (Richards and Templin 2019, p. 16). By taking an active, intentional approach, the PE profession can work to promote diversity within the field. This diversity refers to characteristics such as ethnicity and linguistics, as well as gender. It involves an alternative to an international mould: the athlete-turned-physical-educator. Teacher educators can become involved in recruitment, for example, by talking with students during campus visits and at secondary schools and by marketing their programmes through social and print media (Ayers and Woods 2019). Many universities have recruitment offices that can provide resources that integrate with PETE faculty member efforts to ensure accurate messages about the nature of careers in PE are communicated (Bulger *et al.* 2015).

Another approach is to recruit teachers of PE rather than PE teachers. This conceptual shift promotes a *teacher-first* identity rather than the emphasis on PE content. Such an approach may involve addressing populations interested in teaching as a career and offering PE as the

medium. This contrasts with the current paradigm in which individuals tend to be recruited based on their affiliation with sport and see PE as continuation of their sport identity (Curtner-Smith 2017). It is also crucial that recruitment efforts involve inservice PE teachers as partners and advocates. Inservice teachers can act as key agents of change in the socialisation of future physical educators. Providing high-quality instruction that models effective practices to help potential recruits to develop subjective theories aligned with the goals of the field may help to challenge the intergenerational socialisation cycle. Intentional strategies can include (a) having conversations with students who have diverse physical activity backgrounds about careers in PE, including those who want to teach and could use PE as a medium; (b) setting up campus visits for students who are interested in teaching; and (c) sharing PE resources (e.g., journal articles) with students (Ayers and Woods 2019).

Importantly, active activities require that recruitment agents have subjective theories that align with effective practices. Recruitment partners should, therefore, be selected intentionally and professional development can be coordinated to aid in defining and articulating goals for the discipline and the type of students should be recruited. Further, PETE faculty members have often not been prepared for the challenges accompanying the recruitment of preservice teachers (Kern *et al.* 2019). If they are to become involved, they would need adequate support, which could be provided first in the context of doctoral education. It should also, however, be scaffolded through professional development for inservice PETE faculty members (chapter 13) and targeted supports on campus, such as a relationship with offices of admissions.

### **Constructivist-Oriented Physical Education Teacher Education Curricula**

When initial socialisation experiences lead recruits to associate PE with team sports, and this reproductive pattern needs to be interrupted, something new and compelling must be offered



in PETE. Further, it is one thing to adopt innovative ideas, but another to have the requisite knowledge and skills for implementation within school contexts. All preservice teachers need preparation in the technical and sociopolitical aspects of teaching (Richards *et al.* 2013), so it is likely that elements of their subjective theories will need to be reformulated. When teacher education adopts a constructivist perspective (Richardson 1997), PETE faculty members are positioned as partners in the process of learning to become a teacher. They can, therefore, help preservice teachers question and reformulate their subjective theories rather than telling them what they should think or forcing the outward projection of dispositions that do not result in lasting change (Graber 1991).

Field-based PETE programmes that provide preservice teachers adequate time in schools are essential (chapter 4). The best ones are framed by constructivist theories of learning (Hanson and Sinclair 2008). Such approaches recognise preservice teachers' biographies as relevant to their developing professional identities, and they also provide a platform to discuss the purposes and goals of the field. Furthermore, these constructivist approaches can help preservice teachers to consider and prepare for the realities of teaching in schools (MacPhail *et al.* 2019). They proceed with open and honest discussions of school sociopolitics and the influence of policies, programmes, and people who marginalise the discipline and isolate its teachers (Laureano *et al.* 2014). This PETE preparation can help promote early induction, whereby preservice teachers begin to understand and view schools as a teacher rather than as a former student (Lawson 1983).

Examples of teaching and learning strategies that align with the constructivist agenda include case-based learning, project-based learning, critical incident reflection, and small- and large-group discussions. Discussions should empower preservice teachers to articulate and

navigate their own ideas of what PE is and could be so as to help them take ownership over their professional identities (Gillespie 2011).

### **Advocacy for Better Alignment in Institutional and Accreditation Requirements**

Ideally, institutional strategies and professional body requirements foster learning environments in which intentional recruitment are prioritized and time is dedicated to assisting students in confronting their subjective theories. Such a scenario, however, requires institutional supports and accreditation requirements which support the creation of such a learning environment. The decision-making committees within institutions and accreditation bodies usually involve significant representation from academia and the professions. Accordingly, it is therefore not ‘them’ but ‘us’ who can control key decisions. Both PETE faculty members and inservice teachers should ensure their voices are represented on such committees so that they can continue to advocate for space and time in the curriculum for the kinds of activities that will, in the long term, address the professional socialisation challenge and advance the field toward a favorable future. Teachers and teacher educators can advocate for policies that provide flexibility within curricula so as to maximise the quality of contact time with preservice teachers.

Professional organisations also have an important role to play in this new teacher socialization initiative because they are in a position to represent the voice of the profession. In some contexts, professional organisations are involved in the development of accreditation policies that guide the content of teacher education (Scanlon *et al.* 2019). These organisations can serve as advocates for change to government policies that restrict who can enter teacher education programmes and what they need to become certified teachers. This is particularly critical in considering that challenges associated with becoming a teacher have become

increasingly burdensome in some contexts (Darling-Hammond 2017), giving rise to alternative pathways that circumvent teacher education (Ward 2019).

In many countries, education policy changes at the national level are slow to take shape and play out in fluid, densely packed spaces that are difficult to navigate (Scanlon *et al.* 2019). As a result, PETE programme faculty members may consider the ways in which they can effect short-term change locally through their institutions while simultaneously attempting to influence accreditation and institutional requirements in the longer term. For example, it is possible that a specific course could be developed to collapse science requirements from several courses into one that more directly meets the content and pedagogical needs of PETE students.

Finally, and related to programme structure, we suggest the need to revisit discussions about the positioning of PETE programmes on university campuses (Lawson and Kretchmar 2017). We argue that there may be some value added to repositioning PETE in departments focused on education rather than those focused on sport science. We believe that positioning PE in education could further accentuate the educative nature of PE as opposed to the focus on sport. When PETE programmes reside in departments of sport science, this organizational location implicitly suggests that PE is more aligned with disciplines such as exercise physiology, sport management, and health sciences than education. This perception can perpetuate the attraction of recruits with sport-oriented subjective theories.

A programme relocation could also promote multisubject specialisation, where graduates are qualified to teach multiple school subjects (Iannucci *et al.* 2018). Currently, when multisubject specialization does occur, it sometimes requires education across multiple units (e.g., sport science and the school of education; Iannucci and MacPhail 2018). It is possible that

such arrangements could promote a teacher-first identity and also help teachers of other subjects value PE, thereby reducing marginality (Laureano *et al.* 2014).

### **Conclusions and Future Research Directions**

While the sub-challenges forwarded in this chapter and the corresponding solutions are discussed individually, we believe the connections between them are key. Both PETE recruitment and curricula, for example, are influenced by institutional and accreditation requirements (Lawson and Kretchmar 2017). The overarching socialisation challenge requires a return to occupational socialisation theory and a reconceptualization of the profession towards a teacher-first attitude. Teacher socialisation tends towards reproduction, and is cyclical in nature. Left uninterrupted, teacher socialisation reproduces PE, PETE, and policy (Richards and Templin 2019). Teacher socialisation theory and research has the potential to frame and recommend strategic action. In addressing the challenges, the intention is for those who study and work within this cycle to become more responsive to the ever-evolving purpose of PE, while also working toward a favourable future for the discipline.

An important priority for future research and practice relates to evaluation of recruitment initiatives that seek to draw in a more diverse cadre of preservice teachers. Similarly, the design of PETE programmes should be considered more carefully in relation to constructivist approaches that engage preservice teachers in purposeful critique of their initial subjective theories and the development of identities aligned with the purpose of PE. Acknowledging that the purpose of PE shifts over time, a learning orientation that will prompt physical educators to remain engaged in continuing professional development throughout their careers is equally important (chapter 13). This work should be supported by policy and advocacy research in the

field of PE, focused on promoting an international agenda related to the role of PE in children's overall education and schooling.

### **Chapter Epilogue**

The development of this chapter represented an interactive, non-linear process for our writing team. Despite logistical challenges associated with managing an international authorship team, we found time to communicate over video conference and drafted the first version of the chapter. Following editorial review, however, we realized that the first draft did not include an explicit focus on the practitioner perspective and was overly US-centric. We asked Angela to review the chapter content, to which she had contributed, and provide reflective text that we could integrate into the chapter. We explored multiple different approaches for highlighting this contribution, eventually settling on the development of two tables that highlight Angela's reactions to the challenges and proposed solutions. The US-centric nature of the chapter reflected Kevin's experience and was influenced by the fact that most socialisation research has been done in the US. Cassandra and Eileen were able to revise sections of the narrative to provide stronger international flavour and move the chapter toward conceptual rather than comparative analysis.

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Table 1.

A practitioner's perspective on the sub-challenges related to professional socialization	
Sub-Challenges	Angela's Response from a Practitioner Perspective
Passivity and Reproduction in Teacher Recruitment	During my senior year before completing my bachelor's degree I was asked by a PETE faculty member to be a tour guide for prospective students. I would represent the view of a PETE student and be accompanied by another senior in the Kinesiology and Health programme. At the last minute, the faculty member said I was not needed because there was no interest in PETE, just Kinesiology and Health. I feel this was a mistake because most freshmen may not know exactly what they want to do when they get to college. This was an opportunity to recruit future PETE students, and we failed to capitalize on it. Reflecting back on that experience has led me to appreciate the importance of taking a more active approach to recruitment.
Persistence of Recruits' Subjective Theories	The alternative routes to certification are problematic in our field. From those that I have spoken with that took the alternative route, many had the mindset that teaching PE is "easy." At times, I think this comes from a belief that if you are good at sports, you will be a good physical educator. Additionally, many who think they are good coaches perceive themselves to be a good teacher of PE, which is not always the case. When speaking with PETE faculty members, they have indicated that it is also very hard to find quality cooperating teachers for field experiences. This represents a challenge because if a preservice teacher is placed with a cooperating teacher that does not support the content and methods taught in the PETE programme, teacher education could be "washed out." For instance, if a preservice teacher is placed with someone who rolls out the ball, they may start asking "why do I need to adopt these other teaching behaviours if this is okay in the real world?"
Pressures to Meet Institutional Standards and Accreditation Requirements	I remember taking an exercise science class during my last semester of PETE and thinking, "many of this information does not apply to me or my field." The content was so specific it no longer became applicable to PE. Additionally, there were times during the PETE programme where I wish we had more time and space to invest in deeper conversations about content and the lives and careers of physical educators. For example, we spent two or three class periods discussing case studies of teachers in the field. I would have preferred this to be an entire class because I learned so much in the short time period.

*Note.* PE = physical education, PETE = physical education teacher education

Table 2.

A practitioner's perspective on the proposed solutions to the professional preparation challenge	
Solutions	Angela's Response from a Practitioner Perspective
Active Recruitment into PE Teacher Education	I wanted to be a teacher when entering college because of my father who was a music teacher. I was not initially sure, however, what I wanted to teach. I decided to enter PE because I was active and wanted to help others become active. This route aligns with the recruitment of teachers of PE rather than the recruitment of PE teachers. I also believe that one of our most influential recruitment tools are inservice teachers. I try to provide my students with a well-rounded curriculum that targets a diverse set of learners. I have become critical of more sport-centric curricula because they can create environment that disadvantage lower skilled students. I also believe that it is important for teacher educators to develop relationships with inservice teachers that can help with recruitment and may also lead inservice teachers to question their practices.
Constructivist-Oriented PE Teacher Education Curricula	During PETE, I was introduced to a variety of physical activity experiences that broadened my subjective theory of PE. These experiences included non-traditional team-sport experiences such as swimming, skiing, hiking, and fishing. My professors also encouraged reflection on and comparison to my own PE experiences. Additionally, I believe that my teaching experience in the schools during PETE helped me to better understand and support the purpose and goals of PE. We used systematic observation tools to code teaching behaviour and would debrief based on the results of these evaluations. The constant reflection allowed me to formulate my own ideas and develop an identity that aligned with program goals. One of my professors used case-based learning to discuss sociopolitics and marginalization. We would read case studies and discuss how we would handle a case, which was a great learning experience.
Advocacy for Better Alignment in Institutional and Accreditation Requirements	There were multiple classes I took during PETE that I thought to be irrelevant. The content was so specific to exercise science that I could not see the connections to PE. To make these courses relevant, I think there needs to be collaboration with the PETE faculty members, or courses should be adapted for PETE students. I also see value in relocating PETE into colleges of education. This could help reduce the number of recruits who enter the field because they simply want to coach and help foster a teaching-focused rather than sport-oriented outlook. Having the ability to work with other educators in different subject areas would also help address marginalization issues encountered in schools. There have been so many instances as a practitioner where I am trying to persuade other teachers that I am something other than a babysitter. They are unaware that PE has standards, goals, and a purpose. Developing stronger connections with other educators may help to reduce this occurrence.

*Note.* PE = physical education, PETE = physical education teacher education