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‘Are PE Teacher Identities Fit for Post-modern Schools or Are They Clinging to Modernist Notions of Professionalism?’ A case study of Norwegian PE Teacher Students’ Emerging Professional Identities

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Abstract

The concept of the ‘professional teacher’ is highly contestable, and the array of definitions which circulate in teacher education draw upon competing theoretical and ideological positions. This paper explores what discourses about professionalism are currently available within Norwegian PETE, and in particular, asks whether they reflect the needs of post-modern teachers in a ‘knowledge society’ (Hargreaves (2003)? It acknowledges that there are currently two dominant discourses about the ‘professional’ teacher, so-called ‘activist-’ or ‘managerial’ professionalism, and asks whether, and in what ways, PE student teachers engage with and/or reject the discourses’ competing ideas about what counts as ‘good’ practice. By analysing the student teachers’ emerging professional identities the paper aims to reveal not only the students’ subjective meanings about professionalism, but also illuminate the current power structures which operate in PETE about relevant ‘professional’ knowledge.

It draws upon data from group interviews with 12 Norwegian PE students in their final year of study for a Bachelor Degree in PE teacher education, and a critical content analysis of PETE curricula at two institutions of higher education.

The paper highlights the way in which views about professionalism in PETE tend to be normative in nature, and are not founded upon explicit theoretical ideas about ‘good’ practice or theoretical understandings of the role of the teacher in post-modern schools. Indeed, PETE programmes seem to do little to disrupt recruits’ ‘apprenticeship-of-observation’, even though Lortie (1976) revealed this problematic aspect of professional socialisation over three decades ago. The student teachers’ narratives seem to be locked into ‘modernist’ or ‘classical’ ideas about good PE practice, which are inappropriate for meeting the challenges of working with socially diverse pupils or in collaborative teacher

groups. Recruitment to PETE via examinable PE appears paradoxically to accentuate the students' sports performing (teacher) selves, rather than providing them with a solid understanding of PE's content knowledge upon which to develop broader PE teacher professional identities. The paper therefore asks whether teacher educators need to reassess their recruitment policies to PETE, as well as to systematically re-analyse our 'taken-for-granted' notions of teacher professionalism.

Key words: PE teacher, professional identity, discourse, post-modern schools, PE teacher education

Introduction

A topic of conversation which increasingly engages my attention and that of my teacher educator colleagues is the way in which many of our student teachers' express a blatant desire to work solely with talented and highly motivated pupils, and their seeming *disinterest* for teaching pupils who they label as average or below average. Our anecdotes reveal that there has always been a group of PE teachers who openly have admitted a preference for working with gifted children and adolescents, many of whom have also pursued joint careers in coaching, but previously most PE students have developed their professional identity out of a basic desire to share their love of sport and physical activity with all groups of young people. We think it is paradoxical that on the one hand recruits to initial PE teacher education (PETE) have never been so 'qualified', at least with regard to their formal educational requirements, yet on the other hand, seem to 'disqualify' themselves as professional *educators* by their seeming narrow definitions of professional practice. Similarly paradoxical is the fact that PETE's professional knowledge base has never been as sophisticated as it is today, as indeed is our general knowledge about the ways in which teachers develop their professional identities and development, yet apparently with little impact with regard to nurturing complex professional identities. Of course these observations beg us to reflect upon our role in such a development, if it does exist beyond our 'personal troubles' (Wright Mills, 1959),

and not least to question in what ways our teacher education programmes inadvertently contribute to such views of elitism and/or whether they in fact challenge them. We need to ask ‘what concepts of teacher professionalism do we offer students explicitly and implicitly, intentionally and unintentionally, via our words, our actions and/or our inaction?’, and indeed, question whether our anecdotal revelations are grounded in reality? This paper represents thus a more systematic analysis of these ‘personal troubles’ from a point of departure which acknowledges the need for complex professional identities in a postmodern world with increasingly diverse school cultures and a new school mandate.

School and teachers in a ‘knowledge society’

There are, in fact, a number of substantial reasons for re-addressing matters of ‘professionalism’ within PETE, most of which relate to the current climate of change in public institutions, including schools. This perceived need for change mirrors the challenges of an emerging post-modern world which is characterised by many as a ‘knowledge society’ (Hargreaves, 2003), and in particular, a dominating global perception that neo-liberal, economic ideology, steeped with notions of accountability, can help meet the challenges of the new times. The ‘knowledge society’ is a society characterised by expanded scientific, technical and educational spheres; complex ways of processing and circulating knowledge and information within a service-based economy; and a need for corporate organisations to function in ways that facilitate continuous innovation in products and services, primarily via creating systems and cultures that maximise opportunities for mutual, spontaneous learning (Hargreaves, 2003). The shift from an industrial to a knowledge society has given unprecedented status to public education, and the need for high quality teaching and learning. The latter is defined as learning *how* to learn, with an emphasis on the ability for critical reflection, as opposed to modernist ideas about learning prescribed bodies of knowledge; it embraces computer and information technologies as important sources for knowledge; and it prizes cooperative learning strategies. These changes require dramatic transformations in the way teachers perceive and execute their work in schools.

Given the centrality of 'knowledge production' it is perhaps not surprising that governments have become more concerned about what goes on in schools, and within the neo-liberal ethos of 'value for money' they have imposed national standards for pupil attainment, more detailed curricula, a regime for regular testing, and generally speaking, expect 'more' from teachers (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 2003, 2006). These expectations include demands for teachers to work more collaboratively, both in relation to colleagues but also in relation to parents and other members of the wider community; demands for them to engage in career-long, continuous professional development; and to subject teachers to more systematic systems of work appraisal within management-based schools. In other words, teachers' work has been undergoing major revision, but moreover, it is situated within a series of conflicting pressures or what we might term competing discourses about teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2001). One such tension is that of the standardization of competencies amidst cries for 'back to basics' on the one hand, and demands for more fluid learning and metacognition (thinking about thinking) on the other hand. Another tension can be found between the rhetoric of inclusive education with standard-based learning for all, and the realities of the marketization of schooling, exemplified by league tables, which can often contribute to practices of exclusion (Hargreaves, 2003). Physical educators, like all teachers, are therefore inevitably faced with confronting these challenges and competing discourses, and to make judgements about how they might best develop the skills required for professional learning and teaching in post-modern schools. PETE educators are similarly faced with the need to reflect upon, and adapt themselves and their programmes, to meet the needs of tomorrow's PE teachers.

Teachers' work is also being affected by other features of post-modernity, such as the tension between self-interest and the common social good; the breakdown of traditional families; escalating violence; growing multicultural diversity; and increased numbers of disaffected youth (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 2003). Increasing insecurity, brought about by escalating instances of war, terror attacks, and more recently, the collapse of the global economic market, is another feature of today's teaching context. Hargreaves

(2003) draws our attention to the danger that extreme forms of the knowledge economy with its excessive desire for profit can

“... drive wedges between rich and poor, within nations and between them, creating anger and despair among the excluded. ... (Yet) state education is in a pole position to teach a set of values, dispositions and senses of global responsibility that extend beyond the bounds of the knowledge economy.

...(It) entails developing the values and emotions of young people's character; emphasise emotional as well as cognitive learning; building commitments to group life and not just short-term teamwork; and cultivating a cosmopolitan identity which shows tolerance of race and gender differences, genuine curiosity towards and willingness to learn from other cultures, and responsibility towards excluded groups within and beyond one's own society.” (2003:xix)

In other words, Hargreaves is advocating a professional practice which reaches far beyond the boundaries of a particular subject, such as PE, and encompasses teaching for social justice and democracy. Similar to scholars like Giddens (1991) and Bauman (2001), he purports that post-modern societies in global times are experiencing a “moral deficit”, and schools and teachers have a vital role to play in nurturing citizens who are fit to re-moralise social life. This view of teaching as a moral enterprise extends beyond the notion of ‘wanting to make a difference in the lives of students’ and caring for the individual pupil's welfare (Day, 1999; Elbaz, 1992; Noddings, 1984), although of course it does contain these elements, to encompass a view of professionalism which is more akin to a ‘social movement’, or what Sachs (2003) calls an ‘activist’ profession. It is a view of teacher professionalism which requires teachers to ask ‘what kind of difference do I want to make?’, ‘in what kind of world?’, and ‘why?’ she/he thinks these differences are important. It constructs the teacher as a caring adult, who is capable of forging respectful relationships and displaying empathy with pupils, colleagues and parents. According to Hargreaves (2003) the teacher's ability to develop ‘emotional understanding’, which is the ability to recognise what others feel, when they feel it, is

paramount to postmodern school cultures which depend upon well-functioning teams and groups in order to learn to meet society's needs.

Clearly this vision of professionalism contrasts with the modernist, more restricted concept of the professional teacher as someone who simply needs to possess the 'right' methods for securing classroom control, such that teaching and learning may occur: namely, the ability to maintain pupil attention, to secure coverage of subject content, to motivate pupils, and to provide them with some degree of mastery (Day, 1999; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Hargreaves, 2006). At the same time, it is nevertheless important to recognise that the latter modernist view, albeit in 'new neo-liberal, post-modern clothes' continues to co-exist alongside the activist view of teacher professionalism. This competing view of teacher professionalism attracts various labels, such as 'standardised performative professionalism' (Hargreaves, 2003) or 'managerial professionalism' (Sachs, 2001, 2003), and involves accruing certification for the technical and classroom managements skills in a standards-based workplace, such that the professional teacher may compete in the hierarchical differentiation of good, average and poor teachers.

A post-modern perspective of PE teacher professionalism

Indeed, the acknowledgement of co-existing ideas about what it means to be a professional PE teacher is another reason for the PETE community to rekindle the debate about professionalism. Insights from post-modern social theory about identity can provide new vistas for how we can provide student teachers with the necessary tools to help them develop themselves as teachers in post-modern schools. To date research on PE teacher professional identities has been carried out within a functionalist perspective (Lawson, 1983), an interactionist perspective on teacher socialisation (Templin & Schempp, 1989), a life history approach (Armour & Jones, 1998; Dowling Næss, 1996, 2001; Sparkes & Templin, 1992), a qualitative approach to workplace socialisation (Macdonald, 1995; Sparkes, 1994), a critical perspective (Gore, 1990; Fernandez-Balbao, 1997) and by studies focusing upon PE teachers' beliefs, knowledge and expertise (Graber, 1995; Green, 2000; O'Sullivan & Doutis, 1994; Revegno, 2003; Tsangaridou,

2006). This paper will address PE teacher professionalism from a post-modern perspective which builds upon the idea that what counts as professional knowledge and practice is an expression of regulatory discourse, imbued with power about what can be said, thought and done within the PE culture at any given socio-historical moment (MacLure, 2003; Sachs, 2001; Robson, 2006). Within the socially-constructed world of PE and schooling, PE student teachers' professionalism is understood as an expression of their engagement in and/or their rejection of competing, and often contradictory, ideas about 'good' practice. In other words, this approach acknowledges the existence of multiple meanings about what it means to be a 'good', 'professional' PE teacher, and the possibility for individual teachers to 'choose' between these competing viewpoints, as well as to identify with several of them at one and the same point in time. Hence, the research presented here can provide not only insights into how individual student teachers make sense of the professional identities on offer, but also of the current power structures within the hierarchies of meaning about professionalism which are currently operating in PETE. We can ask, for example, 'are PE teacher students engaging equally with both democratic and managerial notions of professionalism?', 'do they identify more strongly with one of them, or other versions of professionalism?', and 'why' do they choose their preferences at this particular moment in PETE? Rather than presenting a monolithic understanding of PE teacher professionalism, this approach enables the dynamics of the discursive struggle of professionalism to be illuminated.

The context of PE teachers' work has most definitely been undergoing significant changes during the past decade, illustrated not only by the general changes in education policy and practice as discussed above, but more explicitly, for example, by the wider provision of PE as an examinable subject in several European countries (Annerstedt, 2008; Green, 2005); by the emergence of Specialist Sport Colleges in the UK (Green, 2005) and so-called private 'Elite Sports Colleges' in Norway; and the establishment of the 'Sport Co-ordinator Programme' in the UK (Flintoff, 2003). Physical educationists are also increasingly being called upon to combat broad social issues, such as the so-called 'obesity crisis' (Evans et al, 2004) and the growing numbers of disaffected youth (Sandford et al, 2006). Against such a backcloth of change it therefore seems pertinent to

be asking how these structural and political changes are affecting the ways in which tomorrow's PE teachers perceive their professional role, and whether our professional programmes are successful in capturing the complexity of a PE teacher's work and provide students with the conceptual tools and practice required in order to forge 'relevant' professional identities.

PETE in Norway

PETE in Norway, like elsewhere in the developed world, has been subjected to the marketization of higher education (Kårhus, in press) and is currently offered at 18 institutions nationwide, despite a modest population of 4.8 million inhabitants. There are accordingly multiple courses, or combinations of courses, which can lead to becoming a 'qualified' PE teacher (Dowling Næss, 1998; Kårhus, in press): for example, a 3-year subject specialist degree course, a 3-year Sports Science Degree course plus a PGCE, a generalist teacher degree course plus a 1-year PE course; or an Outdoor Education degree course plus a 1 year PE course. In effect, 'qualified' PE teachers may have been exposed to a wide range of 'professional knowledge' and 'technical cultures', and not necessarily, a shared professional culture (Lortie, 1975; Sparkes, 1989), although the introduction of a National Framework for Teacher Education in the 1980s, and its subsequent revisions, have provided a compulsory structure and set of guidelines for teacher education content knowledge. PETE institutions are in fact obliged to provide students with five main teacher competencies centring upon: subject knowledge, general didactics, social competency, research and development skills and teacher ethics (UFD, 2003). In particular they are also expected to pay special attention to the following challenges posed by post-modern changes in society:

“Tomorrow's teachers need to continue to promote society's basic values and norms, such as equal rights and equity between the sexes and groups. At the same time they must be able to orientate themselves about, participate within and influence upon a society characterised by diversity. They must be able to reflect upon how conditions for development and learning, up-bringing and training are changing. And they must be able to build learning institutions and develop

teaching strategies which respect the needs of children and adolescents from different ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds.” (UFD, 2003:7)

Discourse analyses of the national policy documents has shown that the two dominant discourses of ‘managerial professionalism’ and ‘activist professionalism’ are evident in the texts, sometimes in contradiction to each other, and yet, at other times, complimenting each other (Carlgren & Klette, 2000). In the face of such tensions, it is timely to ask how do PE teacher educators ensure that student teachers gain an understanding of these partially conflicting attributes of the ‘good’ teacher within their local PETE curricula and programmes, and moreover, how do the students themselves make sense of what is being asked of them as professional teachers?

The research

In order to explore the latter, the data presented in this paper were generated from a larger project investigating whether teaching in PETE is perceived to be framed more, or less, in technical-rational and/or moral terms for the actors (teacher educators, supervisory teachers, students) involved and how, in particular, gender, gender equality and equity are constructed therein. The lens of gender was chosen because gender equality has a thirty year history in official education policy, and could provide a starting point for discussing the ways in which teacher students perceive themselves and pupils as subjects, and to illuminate whether PE teacher professionalism embraces such a social vision as teaching to promote gender equity. Although clearly gender equality is a contestable domain, a focus on gender was an aspect of teacher identity to which all PE teacher students could relate. Critical discourse analysis, individual in-depth interviews and group interviews have been used to generate data. (With regard to insights into how PE teacher educators frame their professionalism and construct gender relations in PETE see Dowling, 2006 & 2008). The data in the paper have been generated from focus group interviews (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) with a purposeful sample (Patton, 1990) of 12 PE student teachers in their final semester of a 3-year subject specialist PE teacher education degree, as well as a critical discourse analysis (MacLure, 2003) of the local PETE curricula.

The advantage of group interviews is the way in which they illuminate the meaning-making process by individuals within given social contexts (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999:4), in this case local PETE cultures. Informed consent was sought from the dean of each PETE faculty, as well as the individual students, who volunteered to participate in the study. The students were recruited from two different institutions, one of which has over a hundred year history of providing PETE, and the other merely a 7-year long history of providing this type of PETE. Although we were interested in talking to equal numbers of female and male students, it transpired that there were a greater number of male PE students attending both programmes, and the gender background of our voluntary informants reflected this: 3 female and 9 male students. 11 of the students were 'traditional' recruits (22-23 years old), although 1 student was a late entrant (over 30 years old). All the participants were ethnic Norwegian, which also reflected the homogenous profile of PE recruits. The interviews were conducted by two researchers (me, a female, 45-year old senior PETE lecturer and a male, 59-year old senior PETE lecturer) together with a group of 4 students (one of these groups comprised 3 female and 1 male PE students, the two remaining groups comprised 4 male PE students), where we strove to create a trusting atmosphere. We were acutely aware of the power imbalance in the interview relationships.

The interviews were conducted at a time convenient to the students on college premises. Each group interview began with a conversation about establishing a set of 'ground rules' for the conversations, such as not to put each other down, not to interrupt each other, and most importantly, to respect each others' views with confidentiality beyond the interview situation itself. The remainder of the interviews, which lasted between 1.5 – 2 hours, were conducted by the help of an interview guide (Mason, 1996) developed on the basis of the project's conceptual framework of teacher professionalism as discussed above. The conversations were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using a 'content analysis approach' (Mason, 1996), where themes were identified in relation to how the PE student teachers perceive their professional identities. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the process both for the protection of the students and the institutions which they attended.

The local PETE curricula were provided by the participating teacher educators and/or downloaded from the PETE institution's website, and were systematically analysed with regard to meanings about teacher professionalism and gender relations in PETE. These analyses provided an important context within which the student teachers' meaning-making has occurred. The themes which emerged in the analyses of the data are presented below in the form of a 'realist tale' (Van Maanen, 1988).

The students' views about being a professional PE teacher:

Being a 'good', (modernist) PE teacher

A significant feature of the group interview data was the fact that none of the 12 informants thought it was natural to talk about their 'professional identity' and preferred instead to talk about what it means to be a 'good' PE teacher, because as Oscar inquired,

“... a 'good' teacher is also a professional one, isn't it?”

When prompted, Tor described a professional teacher as,

“Maybe a teacher who regularly attends courses, yes, someone who wants to find out about new things compared to his colleagues. Someone who wants to renew himself. I think that's what it means, but I can't really remember us having discussed this, although I suppose the term has been mentioned in pedagogy, come to think about it!”

In other words, he described an 'objective' trait of the teaching profession, rather than a 'subjective' identity. Tor's comments about the need to attend courses in order to develop oneself may well reflect elements of the neo-liberal concept of 'standardised performative professionalism' (Hargreaves, 2003), yet further prompting about this possibility merely led to additional comments about not remembering the contents of pedagogy lectures, rather than a conscious awareness of and/or understanding of this contemporary discourse. Similarly, Elsa described professionalism in a traditional fashion, or what Hargreaves & Goodson (1996) term 'classical professionalism', when she claimed that a professional teacher is a teacher who “has a specific competence, a proper education”.

The majority of the PE students were, in fact, more comfortable with discussing the attributes of a ‘good’ PE teacher, and there seemed to be consensus about how they all strove towards having a ‘good grasp’ of their subject matter. This entailed gaining knowledge about, and the ability to teach (motivate, demonstrate and provide useful tips), a wide range of sports and physical activities; gaining knowledge about the principles of training; and gaining knowledge about how to organize the wide range of activities. Following Hargreaves (2006) these attributes are seen to be central to the ‘instructional flow’ of the PE lesson, and once more, I interpret them as having ‘classical’ or ‘modernist’ overtones of teacher professionalism. The following interlude from interview talk illustrates this viewpoint,

“Jens – A good PE teacher creates an interest for his subject and shows just how important physical activity is. You need to make your lessons fun, so everyone thinks it’s exciting to take part.

David – Yeah, and you’re sure of what you do and you’re *able* to teach.

Are – Yes, you’ve got to have a wide knowledge base. Know how to play a lot of different sports: football, bandy, basketball, gymnastics etc.

David – You know the kids know if a teacher *knows* what they’re doing and can give lots of tips etc.”

The students’ notion of what it means to be a ‘good’ physical educationist appears, therefore, to resonate with previous studies (Graber, 1995; O’Sullivan, 2005), and implies that such a conception has been considerably stable during the past three decades, despite the dramatic changes which have been occurring in society at large, and despite the calls for Norwegian teacher education to nurture broader notions of teachers’ work. It places subject didactics at the heart of being a ‘good’ teacher, that is to say, it places the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of PE teaching centre stage, and marginalises the ‘why’ questions, not least with regard to broader pedagogical aims.

A minority of the informants certainly believed that in order to be a ‘good PE teacher’ you also had to show that you were a caring adult and could treat pupils fairly, as the sequence from the data below illustrates, but they talked about a ‘restricted notion of

caring' rather than a vision about teaching PE for social justice and democracy in a post-modern society threatened by risk in its many guises:

Hanne – It's very important that you can provide variety, adjust the learning to the level of the pupils, so you can reach all of them.

Elsa – Yeah, 'cause we're not talking about elite sport, are we! We're talking about sport for all and getting the inactive to be active!

Max – I think you've come a long way as a teacher if you show that you're fair, that you don't treat pupils differently, that you try to be as fair as possible."

In keeping with the discussion above, the PE student teachers exhibited a type of 'utilitarian caring' for their pupils within the confines of the PE lesson itself, which contributes to the instructional flow of the PE lesson, rather than a desire to educate tomorrow's citizens for social worlds beyond the gymnasium.

Being a good *subject* teacher

Not surprisingly, given the nature of their specialist PETE courses, the informants constructed strong subject-oriented identities. Their 'everyday PE ideologies' mirrored those of their teacher colleagues, both nationally (Dowling Næss, 1996, 1998, 2001) and internationally (Graber, 1995; Placek et al, 1995; Armour & Jones, 1998; Green, 2000), and they voiced aims such as getting young people interested in sport with the view to lifelong leisure; teaching motor skills through sport; providing pupils with the experience of competitive sports; and countering a sedentary lifestyle and its resulting obesity crisis. In other words, their goals were specific to the subject matter itself, rather than more general educational visions. None of the students mentioned the personal and social development (PSD) of pupils as being a major objective of their work, although when prompted by the interviewers they acknowledged an awareness of this often stated objective for the subject, and seemed to be well-rehearsed in discussing how 'fair play' in PE lessons with competitive sport or Outdoor Education could contribute to PSD by:

Per – "...teaching pupils to respect the rules of a game, to respect the referee"

Bjørn – "... learning to respect nature and protect the environment"

Max – "... learning to respect that we're all not equally good at sport, but that we respect each other as people"

Hanne – “... learning to socially interact through activities in the gym”

In keeping with the research findings of Theodoulides & Armour (2001) and Theodoulides (2003), the students displayed somewhat simple, rather than complex, understandings of PE teaching for moral development, and once again they constructed their professional role within the confines of the PE lesson, rather than reaching beyond it. Their objective, modernist view of teacher professionalism constructed the pupil in objective terms, and accordingly the pupils' gender identities (or indeed their ethnic or social backgrounds, or their morality and citizenship) were issues with which a 'good' PE teacher need not concern herself:

“... because biology is biology, and we can't escape it ... and I wonder if there's too much talk about differences in discussion of gender equal opportunities. We're all different, if you know what I mean. Individuals! We're all ourselves (agitated voice)! And we all need to be met where we are, irrespective of gender!” (Elsa)

Indeed a characteristic of the 'good' PE teacher, according to the students in this study, is to see the individual child for who that person is in terms of their physically performing self, rather than as an individual with a gender, social, sexual and ethnic identity. Pupils' diverse and intersecting identity axes are bracketed in the student teachers' talk about their work in PE. Echoing Goodson (1983), the idea of the neutral, above all eminently interchangeable pupil, seems thus as vibrant today among tomorrow's PE students as it was in the 1960's. The latter is of course partially explicable in the light of the neo-liberal reforms of education where the subject has largely been displaced in favour of objective learning outcomes (Fairclough, 2000), but another explanation may lie in the fact that the field of PE, with its long history of being influenced by the ideology of individualism and meritocracy (Tinning, 1990) is simply loathe to relinquish these ideas. Individual effort is prized above everything and the influence of socio-economic variables in learning environments is overlooked. My analysis of the composition of PETE and its theoretical perspectives would seem to support the latter, but this is a point of discussion to which I will return later on in the article. What does seem apparent, however, is that these PE teachers appear to be poorly equipped to meet the diversity

among school pupils in today's multicultural society with social inequalities, or to contribute to the vision of re-moralising society via post-modern schooling.

Egocentric rather than collective professional visions

The students' professional visions could in fact be characterised as individualist nature and they did not reflect the discourses of either 'activist-' or 'standardised performative-' professionalism. For the majority of those interviewed, PETE represented a journey of self-realisation and a consolidation of one's physically performing self. The data therefore reaffirmed earlier insights into PE teachers' careers (Armour & Jones, 1998; Dewar, 1989; Dowling Næss, 1998; Dowling 2002), and showed little evidence of moving beyond these problematic identities. Tor's and Tom's comments are typical concerning their choice of education:

“the chance to combine my love of sport with work” (Tom, male),

“to work with the school subjects I liked the best, PE and Sports Studies” (Tor, male).

When discussing their future visions for teaching, these tended to be framed within a discourse of the 'dream job', which for many meant working in upper schools with talented and sports-interested young people teaching Sports Studies (a 3-year course of study where examinable sports science subjects comprise 40% of the pupils' baccalaureate curriculum), and in no way reflected any broader social visions. Given that 7 of the informants have been recruited to PETE via this type of upper school, their future professional identities seemed therefore to be a continuation of their pupil identities, and could be described as egocentric as opposed to altruistic in nature. Are's reflections are fairly typical for the group:

“I've always been active in sport, right from my early childhood. ... I've competed in most sports! And then I took Sports Studies at upper secondary school, so it was sort of natural that I started here (read:PETE institution). And of course I'd love to get a teaching job working with Sports Studies.”

Teaching 'normal' PE lessons seemed to be viewed as 'second best' and wrought with problems of motivating disinterested pupils:

"I can't be bothered to use a lot of time with pupils who're no good at PE. Let them sit on a bench and watch." (David)

Per expressed his views in this way:

"A Sport Studies teacher, of course! It has to be a job in Sports Studies! There you get pupils who are more motivated and you get the chance to teach both practical and theoretical subjects. That's got to be motivating, that you put more effort into planning that type of lesson."

Max commented that working with Sports Studies courses he would have the chance to "...enjoy sitting around the campfire with pupils really interested in Outdoor Education"; Elsa saw a possibility for "specializing in dance and rhythmic movement, which I love"; and Tor (male) perceived it as a way "to work with pupils who have *chosen* to learn about sports"

Accordingly, some of the PE student teachers in the study confirmed my 'personal troubles' about their narrowly-defined professional identities, and they exhibited a strong desire to simply work with talented pupils. Although previous research has unveiled similar findings, such as Tousignant & Siedentop's study in the 1980s, which concluded that physical educators prefer to work with highly skilled pupils, and in effect, cast competent (yet average) pupils as passive bystanders in the process, I think it is important to recognise a shift in the discourse, at least in the context of this study. Whereas Tousignant & Siedentop describe the *unintended* outcomes of PE teachers' preference for paying more attention to highly skilled pupils, the quotations above demonstrate an *intended* teacher role. It is seemingly legitimate amongst PE student teachers in Norway to dismiss the vast majority of pupils as being 'uninteresting' and as potential 'time-wasters'. Moreover the talented pupils are in effect constructed as being there for the PE teacher, as opposed to the PE teacher being there for the good of (all) the pupils. I wonder if this elitist discourse is emerging in other countries where examinable PE is part of the recruitment stage for tomorrow's PE teachers, and where PE specialist colleges and programmes like the 'Sports Co-ordinator initiative' are becoming sought-after

workplaces, because clearly such a development has serious implications with regard to the type of PE educational experiences on offer for the ‘remainder’ of the pupil population. Even though these types of jobs represent a minority of the total number of teaching positions on offer for PE teachers, the discourse of the ‘potential dream job’ can nevertheless exercise wide-reaching power in the way professionalism is constructed.

Two PE student teachers in the study did, on the other hand, construct a different future identity which was associated with providing adapted PE for pupils with special needs. Birgitte stated for example that she thought it

“... would be more challenging and enriching to work with primary school pupils who are physically and mentally handicapped, and show them that it’s possible to be active and to respect one’s body”.

Yet, common for the two students was their wish to work in special educational institutions, rather than mainstream schools, and in this way their narratives also contributed to a view of ‘normal PE lessons’ as having less status. Furthermore, they constructed the pupils with special needs in relation to a normative picture of the non-disabled pupil, rather than ‘celebrating difference’ among pupils (Penney, 2002). In other words, their professional discourses also seemed to be framed within a modernist view of teaching.

Whilst pupils’ sporting talents or special needs seemed to be relevant factors affecting the student teachers’ perceptions of work, the PE department, its members and the wider school community seemed almost to be *irrelevant* to the teacher students in the study. Certainly it is not uncommon that teachers report that positive pupil relations are an extremely important feature of their careers (Dowling Næss, 1998; Day, 1999; Nias, 1989; Huberman, 1993; Sikes, et al, 1985), but the informants’ disinterest in the professional and cultural world of the school beyond the gymnasium/classroom was surprising given the emphasis in the national framework for teacher education on the need to understand the teacher in a school-, local community- and societal perspective, and the length of time designated to school teaching practice, in ‘post-modern’ schools. Certainly, teacher socialisation theory which favours the idea of linear ‘stages’ and

'phases' of teacher development would argue that neophytes are mostly concerned with individual 'survival' and therefore 'disinterested' (or lacking the energy and confidence) in wider school matters, yet insights from critical discourse analysis in education (MacLure, 2003; Sachs, 2001, 2003) would lead us to expect that the rhetoric of 'community' and school culture would at least have left some traces in the student teachers' talk. Even if PETE is failing to provide sufficient insights into the changing nature of teachers' work and the school as a workplace, and school mentors are failing to significantly problematise teacher professionalism, the media in Norway is saturated with education discourse on a daily basis, so I am left wondering as to why PE students resist the discourses so unequivocally? One is tempted to ask whether the physically talented, performing teacher ego is so all embracing that it leaves no room for other ways of seeing and experiencing the social world?

Physically competent, performing PE teacher selves

Certainly when they were asked about the role of national curricula or the way in which different theory (for example, gender theories, or theories about the school as an organisation) might inform their teaching, the PE teacher students displayed a superficial understanding of how these ideas could affect their practice. Max exclaimed, "No, I haven't got a clue!(hearty laugh)", when asked about equity policy in education, and many others expressed only faint recollection of having 'gender' on their PETE programme. Policy requirements about differentiated learning were more frequently mentioned by the majority of the students, but yet again their talk tended to remain at a superficial level. Typical for the participants, Birgitte suggested that it entails "...making sure every pupil feels they are seen in your PE lesson, whatever their starting point." The complexities of 'who the pupil is', or indeed, the complexities of 'ability' (Evans, 2004; Wright & Burrows, 2006) and the organisational challenge of providing learning tasks which reflect the variation inevitably present in a group were not a part of their discourse. Indeed, the discourses of pupil diversity, collaborative learning, standardized learning objectives, managerial or activist professionalism and/or an increasing need for the skills of meta-cognition in today's schools were significant by their absence in the student teacher talk. Despite their detailed, 3-year PETE programmes, most of the students

expressed a sense that they had *really* learned ‘how to teach PE’ whilst out on teaching practice. In response to a question, ‘what part of your 3 year teacher education do you think has provided you with most ballast for the future?’, Jens and David answered in a chorus,

“Teaching practice, of course!”

David added,

“...because in teaching practice you have to tackle different situations with pupils and know how to act”

Hanne expressed herself in a similar fashion, comparing the advantages of teaching practice in relation to pedagogical theory sessions at the university:

“Pedagogy could be more practical! There’s too much theory, and you sit and talk the whole time, so you don’t get any feedback on how you are as a teacher. But teaching practice gives you that type of feedback. I think pedagogy would be better if it were organised via lots of life-like drama!”

In keeping with the student teachers’ views of a ‘good’ PE teacher, they also valued the many sports and physical activity courses which they had received. Per, who explained that he was a competent and experienced outdoor pursuits enthusiast prior to entering PETE, declared for example that practical courses, such as outdoor education in PETE were extremely relevant because,

“A good PE teacher knows his subject well. If you know how to perform, then you can teach others how to, too.”

The student teachers’ sentiments thus echo Graber’s (1989) observations about what she termed ‘studentship’, which describes the way in which students prioritise the skills in PETE they believe are important while ignoring those they believe to be irrelevant. Once again, as a teacher educator, I am left puzzling over why Norwegian PETE has seemingly failed to develop a model of professional preparation which challenges and extends the beliefs of its recruits rather than consolidating their ‘years of apprenticeship’ (Lortie, 1975), which for many now means socialization via selective ‘Sport Studies’?

Despite the increasing attention which continuing professional development has received nationally (UFD, 2002), and internationally (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Macdonald et al,

2006) in recent years, and its central position in the national framework for teacher education (UFD, 2003), none of the PE student teachers conveyed a sense of just having embarked upon a life-long journey of professional learning. Indeed, with the exception of one student teacher who expressed a desire to pursue post-graduate studies, the informants gave the impression that their initial PETE had provided a sufficient and solid identity as a PE teacher. It is perhaps important to note here that the Norwegian education system does not in fact require newly qualified teachers to successfully complete a probationary period and nor are teachers subjected to a formal, annual system of work appraisal. One would nevertheless have expected their professional preparation to have nurtured a sense of 'early beginnings' on a life-long career passage (Day, 1999; Huberman, 1993), in schools which are steeped in the discourses of neo-liberal change. Of course it is positive that the students felt that they were secure in their roles as PE teachers, but the content analysis of their PETE curricula revealed that they had in fact been exposed to a number of competing professional discourses than the ones they conveyed, and clearly from a teacher development perspective the sense of closure in their narratives is hugely problematic.

The professional discourses of Norwegian PETE

In turning to the discourse analysis of the PETE programmes at the two institutions in the study, both curricula contained more complex, theoretical understandings of teacher professionalism than the students' talk implied. In spite of the inevitable 'slippage' (Ball, 1990) between the national framework for teacher education and the local PETE curricula, both institutions (albeit to greater or lesser degrees) organised their pedagogy courses (representing c. 17 % of 3-year programme) within the structure of the five teacher competencies as discussed above (see p. 11). Both programmes structured their courses with the view to nurturing ethically caring, reflective, co-operative PE teachers who possess strong subject knowledge, and who are capable of systematic research and renewal in an ever-changing school environment. These objectives were reflected in both the choice of course literature and the ways in which student learning was organised. With regard to the latter, two thirds of the students' formal assessment was based on group problem-solving tasks (requiring meta-cognitive skills, collaboration, empathy

etc), and coursework was also often structured in groups with the aim to help students to bridge the gaps between pedagogical theory and practice. The PETE curricula could also be seen to offer students a more complex view of the social diverse pupil than the universal pupil they constructed, although it was apparent that little time was allocated to this objective (with one of eighteen sub-goals in pedagogy centring on this theme, and as a small part of a course entitled 'Sport, culture and society', representing c. 5% of total PETE), and in effect, the pupil was quite often constructed as 'a (universal) learner'.

My analysis revealed, however, that whether the curricula talked of PE teachers or their pupils they did so in a way that objectified everyone. The professional teacher was not constructed as a subject, and neither was the social diverse pupil. In this way the curricula created distance between the PE student teachers' biographical selves and their professional selves, and may explain why the informants did not seem to engage with this objectified portrayal of the teacher, nor with pupils as socially diverse individuals. Furthermore, the programmes' seeming failure to integrate the five teacher competencies more explicitly within other parts of the PETE programme (which comprised of c. 17% didactics; c. 17% sub-disciplinary subjects like 'motor development', 'sport, culture and society'; 'principles of fitness'; and 'physical activity and health'; c.41% practical physical activities like dance, outdoor education, team games, swimming; and teaching practice) may provide another plausible explanation for the students' low level of engagement with competing discourses of professionalism, than the ones they sketched in the interviews. Moreover the five teaching competencies tended to be presented in a normative way rather than *possible* relevant professional competencies which are available within competing paradigms of teacher professionalism. The following student learning outcomes from one of the institution's PETE programmes are typical examples of the latter: "the teacher student should know what is meant by the term 'the professional teacher'", or "the student must be able to master mentoring colleagues as a means for co-operative work".

The PETE programmes could be characterised as fragmentary and were organised within approximately twenty different modules/courses, as well as three periods of teaching

practices. Many of the courses, such as the practical modules and the sub-disciplinary courses, were also open to non-teacher, Sports Science students, on account of the marketization of higher education and the need for institutions to be flexible, effective and attractive for 'student consumers', which as Løvlie (2001) has pointed out, may result in individual preferences being put before professional priorities. It may well be that discourses about the professional role of the teacher and diverse pupils become marginalised in such mixed student groups, and knowledge about the physical activity *per se* assumes centre stage, strengthening the student teachers' performance identities rather than challenging them. Certainly Kårhus' (in press) recent study of higher education institutions offering PETE in Norway would support the idea that the need to attract, and then to keep 'student customers', is an overriding concern for the designers of PETE, rather than the professional needs of PE teachers in post-modern schools. In a similar vein, Gower & Capel's (2004) study points to the difficulties which UK students encounter when trying to see the connections between core knowledge in broad Sports Science degrees and the knowledge needed to successfully complete a PGCE in PE. It is easy to see how knowledge about sports and physical activities may assume even greater status in Norwegian PETE when c. 41% of the entire 3-year programme is devoted to them.

My analysis of the content of the curricula and the structure of PETE programmes revealed that theoretical subjects were seldom linked to practical physical activities and *vice versa*. The theme of teacher professionalism was for example taught in pedagogy modules and there were no explicit traces of it being taught in modules like skiing or swimming skills, although indirectly we might assume that professional decisions concerning appropriate learning tasks and methods would to some degree reflect overarching pedagogical objectives. Formal evaluation tasks tended to reflect specific modules, such as 'sport, culture and society', rather than the application of these theoretical understandings to the context of PE teaching. In this way the PETE programmes did little to help students to see the links between the separate entities which as a whole constituted their professional preparation; the structures of PETE accentuated the sharp differences between the various courses rather than revealing the blurred

boundaries between them. The ways in which teaching practices were organised seemed to reflect this trend, too, and were constructed in a manner which did not appear to encourage the PE teacher students to perceive their professionalism in broad terms (either as managerial or activist) and concentrated instead upon the ‘management tasks’ or ‘instructional flow’ of (modernist) teaching.

Finally, my analysis revealed a conflation between compulsory, generalist PE for all pupils (6-19 years) and specialist ‘Sports Studies’ for a select few (from +16years). Even though the National Framework for PE Teacher Education explicitly calls for differentiated approaches to teaching and learning on account of the contrasting pedagogical aims of these very different school subjects, the local PETE curricula did not allocate time to problematise these differences either in relation to pupils’ needs or to teachers’ work. Indeed, there was little evidence that PETE encouraged teacher students to critically reflect upon the diverse nature of PE teachers’ work or its increasing complexity in a neo-liberal, school market place. The latter appeared to be a taken-for-granted schooling context, rather than an expression of a set of ideological conditions which could be deconstructed and challenged.

Concluding comments

In drawing the discussion to a close, the analyses of data in the study raise a number of important issues. First of all, I interpret that the Norwegian PETE institutions in the case study lacked clarity in their local aims about professional practice and tended to address the development of PE teacher identities in normative ways. There was little evidence that the PETE programmes were constructed with the aim to encourage students to see definitions of ‘good’ or ‘professional’ practice as expressions of an on-going, struggle about knowledge in the field of PE and the related area of Sports Science, or in relation to broader educational debates about teachers’ identities in post-modern times. The way ‘professionalism’ was ‘taught’ reflected instead a ‘hybrid text’ (Penney & Evans, 1999) which drew upon the re-contextualisation of the National Framework and taken-for-granted socio-historic subject traditions within PETE. By presenting ideas about ‘professionalism’ in pedagogy modules as opposed to being integrated within other areas

of PETE, it seems that student teachers struggled to bridge the theory-practice gap and to perceive ideas about the 'professional' PE teacher as relevant to their emerging teacher self(-ves). The PETE programmes appeared to do very little to 'disrupt' and/or 'transform' recruits' perceptions of the 'good' PE teacher as centring upon the competent performer, despite the growing body of research which sees this narrow view of excellence in teaching as problematic. They failed to provide students with the conceptual tools to enable them to envisage alternative professional identities or come to terms with the idea that a PE teacher can have competing and contradictory identities (e.g. activist or managerial performative professional identities), which are bound to change and/or develop with time and in different contexts.

Indeed, the students' talk revealed that their 'studentship' (Graber, 1989) entrapped them in modernist notions of 'good' practice which means teaching memorisable knowledge through a standardized curriculum, and looking inwards to the custom and certainty of their own expertise and routines, rather than outwards to the concerns of pupils, families and communities (Hargreaves, 2003). The informants appeared to be locked into what Hargreaves (2003) calls the 'Julie Andrews curriculum' of wanting to teach 'my favourite things', whether this be in 'Sports Studies' or in special schools. The student teachers' narratives had a striking likeness with research on PE teacher students from the 1980s (Dewar, 1989; Graber, 1989; Templin & Schempp, 1989). It is as if time, and education in schools, have stood still and the PE teacher is still cast as someone whose work is confined to the vacuum of the gymnasium, rather than as an educator who nurtures society's citizens of tomorrow. By casting themselves, or being cast via PETE, as knowledge recipients, the PE student teachers seem ill-prepared to develop cross-curricula learning opportunities for their socially diverse pupils or themselves as teacher collaborators (Hargreaves, 2003; Wenger, 1998) within changing patterns of work in post-modern schools.

The recruitment of students to PETE programmes via three year Sports Studies courses in Upper Schools, which in many ways are 'mini' versions of Sports Science Degrees, seemed to strengthen the student teachers' 'studentship' (Graber, 1989), as well as their

future instructional discourses, leaving little room for knowledge from the primary field (such as research on teacher professionalism or oppressive gender relations) to become a part of their professional identities (Bernstein, 1990). Paradoxically, the perceived status and the expansion of the workplace for PE teachers which examinable PE at baccalaureate level has provided (Dowling Næss, 1998) may well prove to be the subject's, and its teachers', ultimate enemy. If, and when, the market place no longer benefits from Sports Studies, PE teachers may have excluded themselves from the educational debating arena by constructing narrow, individualistic, subject-orientated professional identities, leaving them ill-equipped to adapt to the challenges of schools in transition and to providing embodied education for *all* pupils. It is easy to see how attrition rates might increase if work dissatisfaction increases due to a mismatch between PE teachers' and schools' expectations about their roles.

Following O'Bryant et al (2000), I believe that PE teacher educators need to critically assess recruitment policy to PETE, and ask whether competent sports performers are the most suitable candidates for teacher education, or whether post-moderns schools and pupils would be better served by recruits with broader educational visions than a desire to reproduce their own joy of movement. I also believe that PETE programmes need to embrace alternative ways of knowing than bio-behavioural approaches to PE, such as narrative stories about teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Clough, 2002), to enable PE student teachers to cognitively and emotionally engage with their performance biographies and to develop a critical analysis about the inextricable relationship between their subjective, performance identities and PE teacher identities. Pedagogy needs to be integral to all aspects of the programme and related to the emerging PE teacher self(-ves). Evocative stories about pupils from a diverse range of social backgrounds and (dis)abilities could in addition assist student teachers to develop greater 'emotional understanding' and to prioritise pupils' needs above their own. PETE programmes might also benefit from discerning the multiple career paths within the subject area and helping students to delineate the often contrasting educational objectives of generalist PE and more specialised Sports Studies courses. Finally, I think the data presented here is a reminder to all PE teacher educators that we need to constantly revisit our taken-for-

granted worlds of professional practice, and to continually and systematically re-appraise whether our well-intended programme goals are met. Quite simply, we need to ask ‘do our PETE programmes provide tomorrow’s PE teachers with appropriate professional identities in post-modern times?’

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