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**An analysis of the ideological work of the discourses of ‘fair play’ and moral education
in perpetuating inequitable gender practices in PETE**

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Background: Physical Education (PE) is a subject which has a long history of legitimising itself on the grounds of its contribution to pupils' social and moral welfare. It therefore seems probable that PE teacher education (PETE) might embrace recent cries for the need to re-moralise society due to the conditions of the late-modern age, and not least the pleas for professional teachers to perceive their role within moral, as opposed to technical terms. It seems pertinent to ask does PETE culture strive to nurture tomorrow's PE teachers within a philosophy which values inclusive, local learning environments which celebrate and respect the diversity of citizens in a democratic, late-modern society, even though it has traditionally been founded upon scientific functionalism and a positivistic pedagogy?

Purpose: The study aimed to explore the extent to which PETE can be seen to nurture equitable learning environments, within a discourse of teacher professionalism which celebrates diversity, by using the lens of gender equity.

Research design and data collection: Qualitative data have been generated from individual, in-depth interviews, group interviews and the content analysis of PETE curricula. The sample comprised 8 PE teacher educators (2 female/6 male), 12 student teachers (3 female/9 male), and 5 supervisory teachers (1 female/ 4 male) from three institutions of higher education offering PETE in Norway. Participants were asked questions such as 'what do you see as being the most important knowledge in PETE?', 'how would you describe a *good, professional* PE teacher?', 'how do you interpret providing students with equitable learning experiences?', 'what type of gender theory informs your PETE practice?', and 'what does gender equity mean to you?' Local policy documents were collected from each institution, including PETE course outlines, overviews of compulsory literature, and PETE evaluation procedures. A critical hermeneutical analysis of the data drawing upon a range of theoretical perspectives and research findings on gender, moral education through the physical, and teacher professionalism, was used to explore the overriding research question.

Findings: The analyses revealed that the concept of ‘fair play’, combined with the prevailing gender discourses and dominant views of teacher professionalism in PETE, does considerable ‘ideological work’ to sustain inequitable gender relations. The discourse of ‘fair play’ draws upon actors’ common sense understandings of the concept as opposed to theoretical perspectives, as does the hegemonic discourse of gender which is evident in the data. Rather than developing professional identities which celebrate diversity, PETE culture in Norway seems to continue a subject tradition of constructing teachers, student teachers and pupils as universal, disembodied, and de-contextualised subjects.

Conclusions: The study warns us to the dangers of imposing ‘discursive closure’ if PETE culture legitimates discourses about gender and morality which limit actors’ understandings of the complexities of these phenomena. We advocate a PETE culture that emphasises plurality and acknowledges the inevitable power structures imbued in different ways of knowing.

Summary for practitioners

Many physical educators express a desire to provide positive learning experiences for *all* pupils. Research informs us, however, that this is no easy objective to fulfil. Research on gender relations in PE reveals for example that many actors within the field (both in schools and in institutions of higher education) are exposed to inequitable learning environments which favour white, mesomorph, middle class males, and marginalise males who do not live up to this ideal, as well as the majority of females. There are many complex structures which influence upon how gender is experienced in PE, not least the subject culture of PE and the attitudes and beliefs of teacher educators, student teachers, teachers and pupils. This paper analyses in particular the way in which beliefs about 'fair play' and moral education through the physical, combine together with beliefs about gender, to paradoxically create inequitable learning opportunities in Physical Education Teacher Education framed within rhetoric of justice and fairness.

Introduction

As a subject which has a long history of legitimising itself on the grounds of its contribution to pupils' social and moral welfare (Arnold 1980; Jones 2005, 2008; Hargreaves 1986; Hellinson et al 1995; Hellinson & Martinek 2006; Loland 2006; Siedentop 1994), it would seem reasonable to assume that actors within Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) might embrace recent cries for the need to re-moralise society due to the conditions of the late modern age (Giddens 1991), and not least the pleas for professional teachers to perceive their role within moral, as opposed to technical terms (Cochran-Smith 2005; Hargreaves 2003; Laker 2000; Sachs 2001). In this article we will, however, make the case that this very legacy of moral development through the physical can paradoxically be seen to do considerable 'ideological work' (Hall 1985, cited in Kirk 1992) which hampers the nurturing of inclusive, local learning environments which celebrate and respect diversity of citizens in a democratic, late-modern society. Indeed, it seems that the legacy might instead contribute to entrapping PETE in modern teacher discourses and promote PE lessons founded upon beliefs about universal, interchangeable, technically-proficient PE teachers and pupils. From our Norwegian perspective, we will argue that the PETE subject culture's persistence to pursue a positivist, scientific sport pedagogy, including a positivist view of moral education, continues to act as a "... silent partner in the development of physical education programmes that privilege the young, the able-bodied, the lean and the muscular, the middle classes, heterosexual and white Christians" (Dewar 1990:76).

Our discussion will build upon qualitative data generated in a project which used the lens of gender relations in PETE to explore 'what are the current available discourses about being a professional teacher?', and which asked 'are these identities framed within moral or technical terms'? Expressed differently, it investigated whether physical educators identify themselves

as transmitters of pre-defined knowledge to passive receivers and/or as transformers of knowledge in collaborative, democratic, moral relations (Hargreaves 2003), using their practical and theoretical constructions of the gendered subject as a symbolic example of their professional values? We wanted to find out whether the PETE culture has taken the research findings of the late 1980s and early 1990s about repressive gender relations on board (Dewar 1987, 1990; Flintoff 1993, 1994; Scraton 1992), and whether today's actors in PETE critically reflect upon the ways in which socio-political factors far beyond the gymnasium impinge nevertheless upon practices therein, which is a mandate of the National Curriculum for Teacher Education in Norway (UD 2003). Although more recent international research on gender equity has alighted us to the reticence of the professional community to embrace evidence of its role in reproducing gender inequalities (Brown & Rich 2002; Wright 2002), due to a dearth of research in this area of gender research in PE it seemed important to gain a deeper understanding of the processes within PETE which contribute to this reticence (Flintoff & Scraton 2005; Wright 2002).

In particular, the article will draw upon a significant feature of the project's interview talk which emerged in conversations with teacher educators (at institutions of higher education and in schools) and student teachers about their professional identities and beliefs about gender equality, namely, their frequent referral to the notion of 'fair play'. Indeed, 'fair play' slipped extremely readily off the tongues of most of the participants in the study. 'Fair play' could account for, and in some cases was conflated with, gender equity, as well as many other aspects of PETE such as inclusive teaching, multicultural understanding, a framework for games teaching, and the personal and moral development of students, pupils, and teachers. 'Fair play' seemed to be such a taken-for-granted concept and so firmly interwoven in the fabric of PETE culture that we began to question its innocence and felt a need to more

systematically analyse how it could be linked to so many different aspects of PE practice. Although 'fair play' is often used as a universal concept, referring to equitable opportunities for all players to pursue victory in competitive, sporting activities, historically it was a concept which emerged in relation to *male* sporting practice (Sheridan, 2003). As critical, feminist teacher educators we were therefore particularly interested in examining the extent to which today's PETE culture defines 'fair play' and moral education from a position which acknowledges a 'politics of difference' (Hekman 1995) in which moral voices are seen to vary according to gender, level of (dis)ability, class or ethnicity, because we believe that subjectivities are formed in varying social and cultural settings? Acknowledging that discourse analysis ought to include not only what is said, but also what is written and done, as well as what is *not* written, said or done (Ball 1990; MacLure 2003), our discussion will also draw upon the content analyses of PETE curricula with regard to how they structure the content knowledge of social and moral development, fair play and gender equity.

Our understanding of gender is that it is an expression, and embodiment, of the prevailing socio-cultural norms about what it means to be male or female and biological sex (Arnot & Mac an Ghail 2006; Connell 1997; Flintoff & Scraton 2005; Wright 2002). These female and male norms are inevitably expressed in relation to each other, as well as in relation to other social locations such as social class, ethnicity and sexuality. There exist multiple ways of being either female or male, but these different identities are not equally valued; individuals position themselves and/or are positioned, and perform gender, on the basis of the discourses available to them and their own discursive resources within the existing hierarchical, power structures. Given the dominance of patriarchal values in Norwegian society and the education system (Imsen 2000), we perceive that certain privileged groups of men maintain their status through the oppression of marginalised men and women, but we

believe that these social structures can be challenged and re-structured. We also recognise of course that there are many other competing theoretical perspectives about gender and gender equity. Imsen (2000) identified for example structuralist, neo-marxist, liberal feminist, radical feminist, standpoint feminist, neo-psychoanalyst, neo-masculinist and post-modern perspectives in Norwegian educational policy from 1975-2000.

Discourse, ideology and ideological work

When we talk about ‘discourse(-s)’ we refer to systems of beliefs and values which produce power-imbued social practices and relations. We refer to the meaning-making activity (intentional, unintentional, explicit, tacit, reflexive) which occurs when individuals within PETE communicate their understanding of their own and others’ activities, and of events in the social world around them, and in doing so, affect what can be said and done, and by whom (Kirk 1992). Following, Luke (1995, cited in MacLure 2003) these discursive *texts* which saturate our daily lives teach us how to recognise, represent and ‘be’ for example a physical educator, a pupil, a girl or a boy. The discursive and the real are always entangled (MacLure 2003). The way participants in our project talked about ‘fair play’ and how they embody ‘fair play’ in everyday life constitutes ‘fair play’, as indeed do our own discourses about gender and morality, yet the role we play in their objectification is often concealed (Foucault 1972, cited in Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2000). By analysing the discourses of ‘fair play’ and moral education in PETE our intention is therefore to disrupt these common sense and ‘taken-for-granted’ concepts, and in doing so, unveil the workings of power and material interests in these seemingly most innocent of texts (MacLure 2003). Above we used the term ‘ideological work’ to describe the processes by which the texts of ‘fair play’ and moral education interact with other discourses within PETE to construct meanings about teacher professionalism and gender equity. Kirk (1992, citing Eagleton 1991) defines ideology as a

specific form and function of discourse, “in which there is an arbitrary linking and fixing in ways that seem, or are made to seem, natural and necessary, and that have a range of effects on social relations and power” (Kirk 1992:43). We believe it is important to bear in mind that ideologies operate in discursive chains or clusters, and are continually being contested; hegemonic values can in other words be replaced by competing sets of beliefs. At the same time, we must not forget Gramsci’s observation that many inequitable power relations are maintained by the willing compliance of the oppressed due to the appearance of the inequalities as being part of the natural order of things (Gramsci 1971, cited in Kirk 1992). We have therefore been interested in examining the level of the actors’ consciousness of their interaction with the existing texts.

Methodology

As we mentioned above, the article builds upon data generated from interviews and content analysis of policy documents. The sample comprised 8 PE teacher educators (2 female/6 male), 12 student teachers (3 female/9 male), and 5 supervisory teachers (1 female/ 4 male) from three institutions of higher education offering PETE in Norway. We sought to interview equal numbers of women and men, but the majority of the physical educators who volunteered to participate were male. Although no official statistics are currently available, there is a widespread view that there are larger numbers of men than women, both in terms of who lectures and who studies PETE courses, at the 20 institutions providing this professional training, which is perhaps a condition reflected here in our sample. Two of the participating institutions offer a 3-year Bachelor Degree in Teaching PE, whereas the remaining institution offers the equivalent of a 1-year PGCE course in PE, building upon a 3-year Bachelor of Sports Science Degree. Informed consent was sought from the Dean of each faculty, as well as the participants themselves. Individual, in-depth interviews (Kvale 2001) were carried out

with the teacher educators and supervisory teachers, which lasted for c. 1.5 hours at a place convenient to the participants. Group interviews (Kitzinger & Barbour 1999) with groups of 4 students were conducted with the students, which lasted between 1-2 hours, and also took place where, and when, it best suited the informants. Interview guides reflecting the project's conceptual framework were utilised (Mason 1996), and the interviewers strove to facilitate an open and trustful dialogue with the interviewees. Interviews were tape recorded, and later transcribed *verbatim*, although pseudonyms were of course used to ensure the anonymity of the people and places in the dialogues. Local policy documents were collected from each institution, including PETE course outlines, overviews of compulsory literature, and PETE evaluation procedures. The data have been analysed using a 'content analysis approach' (Mason 1996) and 'critical hermeneutics' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), where the texts relating to 'fair play', moral education, and gender equity have been identified and interpreted in terms of the ideological work that they can be seen to do. Below we will present fragments of these texts to illustrate our emerging discussion.

Fair play and moral education 'take care' of (gender) equity in PETE

In order to gain an understanding of the value systems or discourses upon which the physical educators in the project construct their professional selves, and their beliefs about gender equality and equity, we started off by posing a number of open-ended questions concerning the nature of PE and how it ought to be taught. These questions included ones such as, 'what do you aim to teach students in PETE?', 'what do you see as being the most important knowledge in PETE?', 'how would you describe a *good, professional* PE teacher?', 'how do you interpret providing students with equitable learning experiences?', 'what type of gender theory informs your PETE practice?', and 'what does gender equity mean to you?' Not surprisingly, the interview talk revealed that the participants' meaning-making drew upon a

number of competing discourses which contribute to the social practice known as Physical Education, such as sports science, the popular health and fitness movement, and competitive sport (Kirk 1992). With regard to the particular focus of this paper, gender equity in PETE, discourses about inclusive education, liberal individualism, biological determinism and competitive sport (which include texts about moral development and 'fair play') were the most evident. Below we will reconstruct some of the interview talk and PETE policy to illustrate how in many ways the overriding text about gender equity in PETE might be summarised as "fair play takes care of all that!"

A male supervisory teacher's remarks were typical for the physical educators' views of the potential 'fair play' has to contribute to moral education and gender equity when he proclaimed:

"Sport provides an arena with very clear cut rules, which apply to everyone irrespective of which country you come from, you know, 'fair play'. So PE lessons provide a place for developing these things across gender and culture barriers, more so than in other subjects." (Carl, supervisory teacher)

Carl's sentiments were echoed by both teacher educators and student teachers alike, as the following series of quotations exemplify:

"I can't say I know exactly what the national curriculum states about gender equality, but here at Pine College we've dealt with it through the issue of setting appropriate learning tasks according to pupils' individual needs in the different sports. I think PE lessons offer a unique setting to get to know pupils, and they have to learn about treating each other equally, respect for each other." (Are, teacher student)

“I can’t exactly recall that we’ve had a lot about gender equality on our PETE course, but we’ve had an awful lot about differentiated learning, about how to set relevant tasks according to how skilful the pupils are. ... And of course, there’s a lot of teamwork going on in the gym, and the need to respect others, the rules, ‘fair play’ and the like.” (Hanne, student teacher)

“There’s just no getting around the fact that PE is the most sociable subject! You’re forced, if you like to get on with the others on your team, when you’re all moving around together – compared to sitting in a classroom. I’m not saying that it’s not integral to other subjects because clearly morals and communication are ever present when you’re talking about people relating to each other, but through play and sport these dimensions are somehow greater. I suppose I mean ‘fair play’. Whether we’re on a team together, playing a game, solving a task, trying to complete a circuit, you know, we have to cooperate! ... The physical aspect of PE lessons provides a good means for practising morals.” (Jane, teacher educator)

“It’s essential that you combine physical upbringing with moral development otherwise you risk having the ‘perfect body’ yet lack human morals. You have to learn to live with other people, accept society’s rules, and PE offers this through ‘fair play’.” (Ronny, teacher educator)

From our critical, feminist perspective we think it is interesting to observe the way in which the main focus of the conversations, namely, that of gender equity was consistently realigned by the physical educators to a discussion about equity in general. Rather than illuminating their views about the significance of teachers’/students’/pupils’ gender identities in learning

situations the interviewees systematically framed their talk around seemingly gender-neutral actors. The ability to construct equitable learning environments was linked to the discourses of 'fair play' and 'sport and games': the logic appeared to be that if actors' are exposed to team tasks, usually in the form of team games, then they 'learn' about 'fair play'. The latter was described as a series of traits or virtues, which clearly were perceived to be positive in relation to the social development of the individual, and deemed appropriate for facilitating equitable classroom relations. The virtues were constructed as universal in nature, and their historical origins seemed largely to be ignored. No one with whom we talked questioned the dilemma that 'moral athleticism' was originally only accessible to upper class, white men, and when its ethos was adopted by the state school system via the subject of PE it was in fact being used as a means of social control (Evans & Davies 1997). None of the participants in the study alluded either to the well recognised problem of the need to distinguish between *knowing* what is 'right' and *doing* what is 'right', or the fact that different contexts in PE (or other walks of life) can affect various forms of moral behaviour (Jones 2008). The hotly contested debate about conceptions of 'fair play' (Jones 2008; Sheridan 2003; Singleton 2003; Wigmore & Tuxill 1993) was also significantly absent in the interview talk.

Indeed, the physical educators in the study described an uncomplicated set of relations: the PE teacher demonstrates respect by setting learning tasks which are appropriate for the individual learner, the learners develop self-respect and respect for others by abiding by the rules of the game, and then they all learn to cooperate. The 'positive' traits which can be learned in PE can then without further ado be transferred to other walks of life beyond the sports hall.

Herein lay a paradox from our critical research perspective. On the one hand, the discourses of 'fair play' and the social and moral development of pupils were constructed as having far-reaching consequences for learners in society at large, yet on the other hand, the possibility of

the complexities of power-laden, socio-economic structures in society, including gender relations, affecting the learning going on in the ‘gym’ were all but ignored in the texts. Conscious reflection about the way in which team games, and for that matter other physical activities, can carry gendered messages (Flintoff & Scraton, 2005) was practically absent in the interview talk, as was the notion that ‘ability’ or a learner’s skill level can be conceived an expression of socio-cultural values (Evans 2004; Wright & Burrows, 2006). The texts thus combined to construct PETE and the PE lesson as taking place in a socio-cultural vacuum, and the virtues which can be learned from sport in PE are reified as unproblematic and universal, as opposed to complex and local. Of course we recognise the latter as a legitimate perspective and our intention is not to replace one logic with another (Lather, 1991), yet we do think it is problematic if this perspective is detached from the scientific world view upon which it is inevitably based.

‘Fair play’, liberal individualism and inclusiveness combine to remove gender equity from the agenda

Due to our explicit interest in gender relations we attempted to reintroduce ‘gender’ into the interview talk on numerous occasions by, among other strategies, suggesting that from our ontological and epistemological position it seemed problematic to exclude socio-cultural factors, like gender, from PETE. Again and again the participants in the study removed the focus away from gender, and addressed instead the ‘neutral’ teacher/learner. Often the discourse of ‘fair play’ was combined with the discourse of liberal individualism, and neo-liberal inclusiveness. In other words, we could trace an underlying belief in the idea of meritocracy, the notion that achievement is a reflection of individual effort and skill, which historically has been a commonly identified set of values in PETE culture (Dewar 1990; Tinning 1990). Alexander (teacher educator) stated, for example.

“Gender is an aspect, I suppose, of differentiated learning, and I have had some positive experience of offering single-sex activities, but my aim is to go further than that, and to establish respect in a student group at the individual level. To value every individual, regardless of their background, although I see that ethnicity and gender do form us to some degree. ... For me, though, it’s about giving the students the opportunity to find themselves, to find their place in the world. I need to know them as an individual and help them from there. I tend to say my work isn’t simply about movement but it’s also about moving the person involved!”

Max (student teacher) constructed a similar viewpoint:

“I think girls and boys should be treated in the same way. For me it’s a question of being a PE teacher who treats pupils fairly. You shouldn’t be seen to treat them differently.”

Birgitte (student teacher), Kristoffer (teacher educator) and Jane (teacher educator) all stressed the need for the teacher to *see* and show the individual student/pupil respect, as a way of creating a just and fair classroom, regardless of gender:

“You ought to speak to each and every one of them in the course of a lesson.”

(Birgitte)

“...know the students by their name after first the session.” (Kristoffer)

“I hope they’ll remember me because I was a lecturer who *saw* them.” (Jane)

Our interpretation of these fragments of texts is that fairness easily becomes linked to the question of ‘how to’ treat students/pupils in the *same*, just way (know them by name, look them in the eye, address them individually each lesson), rather than an inquisitiveness about the complexities of what exactly do we mean by ‘fairness’ (Penney 2002)? The idea that fairness might for example entail ‘celebrating difference’ is not evident. Certainly the

physical educators acknowledged that learners require different learning tasks due to differential levels of motor skill proficiency, but this was on the whole seen as a technical and not a moral matter, although Alexander did extend his reflections to include a desire to provide PETE students with an arena for exploring existential questions. The overriding majority of the participants did not however question whether the content of PE is a just and fair one, nor did they doubt the notion that all pupils necessarily ought to learn the same skills. Alexander (teacher educator) did actually represent a slightly alternative view, because later on in the interview he argued that new forms of physical activity such as snowboarding and skateboarding might be more appropriate for today's youth, yet as the quotation above illustrates, he continued to frame PETE students and youth within a liberal individualistic education system. In other words, new PE content would still entail treating the learners in the same, 'fair' way irrespective of their gender, social class, or ethnic backgrounds.

These common sense views of inclusive education omitted reference to gender because the acquisition of technical skills was seen to be paramount whether these skills are required for practising traditional team games or physical activities in the late-modern age. They appear to confirm Flintoff & Scraton's (2005) observation that gender is perceived as peripheral in the current debate about inclusive learning in PE. Gender was also largely omitted from the interview talk because our probing about gender theories revealed that relations between women and men in PETE are largely taken-for-granted, 'biological givens'. Elsa (student teacher) agitatedly proclaimed,

“... 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! And we all need to be met where we are, irrespective of gender!”

Andreas (supervisory teacher) shared Elsa's viewpoint:

“There will never be equality as such because there are different sexes, each with its own set of characteristics and premises for learning”.

Indeed, many of the physical educators ascribed women and men different sets of traits:

“Girls are more dutiful, proper, punctual, a bit quieter, careful. Male students tend to answer more questions, demand more of my attention, are loud-spoken, stand out more.” (Fredrik, teacher educator)

”Boys are more visible whereas girls tend to keep in the background, they're afraid of making themselves look stupid. Girls are also far more interested in how they look!”
(Tor, student teacher)

Similarly the stereotypical viewpoint that certain team games and physical activities are more suitable for one of the sexes seemed to be widely held:

“To my mind, girls lag far behind the boys in football. ... I actually like to dance, but I'd say that it's mainly women who like dance”. (Fredrik, teacher educator)

“In my experience, girls seem to dare to get more involved in dance lessons, whilst boys try to sneak away. There are differences! ... A bit to do with attitudes, but they have different skills ... take football, there the boys are much stronger and faster than the girls.” (Elsa, student teacher)

In terms of what is *not* evident in the texts, we found little evidence of multiple theoretical perspectives about gender, and when we confronted the physical educators about this gap in PETE knowledge, the lack of gender theory was largely explained in terms of its unimportance:

“Equality of opportunities and equity simply don’t interest my students” (Per, teacher educator)

“Gender does not seem to interest the students who come here to do their teaching practice, and it certainly doesn’t assume centre stage in my book!” (Brede, supervisory teacher)

“Theory about gender? (long pause) Oh, when I think back, we did do something about the body and women in the media. We discussed the way elite sportswomen dress. It was in the module on ‘Sport, Culture and Society’ ... Mind you, that’s not exactly about PE, is it!” (Hanne, student teacher)

Jane (teacher educator) did in fact offer a competing explanation about the lack of gender theory in PETE, namely:

“We don’t have many discussions about PE teaching in general, let alone gender and PE! It would be nothing more than informal lunchtime chat in response to a TV programme, something like that! My colleagues have very different interests than me, in fields that span from physical activity and psychiatry to biomechanics!”

The majority of interviewees confirmed Jane’s observation, as indeed did our analysis of local PETE curricula. Theories about motor skill development, motivation, physical fitness, active lifestyles and biomechanics were all deemed to be more relevant and prioritised fields of knowledge by physical educators in PETE than theories about gender. Norwegian physical educators display a preference for technical-rational ways of knowing as opposed to socio-cultural ways of knowing, which is a preference long identified internationally (Dewar 1987, 1990; Fernandez-Balboa 1997; Kirk 1992; Tinning 1990), and which helps to explain the marginal position of gender equity in the discourses of ‘fair play’ and moral education. The variable of biological sex is to be found in much of the natural science literature in PETE courses, and the ‘universal’ (male) learner pervades much PETE policy. Our analyses of local

PETE curricula revealed that gender relations continue to be ‘dealt with’ in one-off modules of socio-cultural perspectives in sport and PE from the sub-disciplines of sociology, history and philosophy (which together comprise no more than 16% of the total number of course credits), or is fleetingly touched upon in lectures about pedagogical theory or subject didactics. Common for both of these technical-rational approaches to knowledge is the superficial nature of the theoretical perspectives which are introduced, which more often than not are in the form of generalist text books as opposed to primary research sources. In two of the PETE colleges’ course curricula the only reference to gender was for example a vague aim to explore “sport and sex roles” as part of a course entitled ‘Cultural Perspectives in Sport’, whereas in the remaining college’s course documents gender was simply not mentioned explicitly in any form.

The (in)visibility of ‘fair play’ and moral education in PETE practice and curricula

Interestingly we would argue that ‘fair play’ and moral education are also subject to being taught superficially in PETE curricula, despite their seeming higher status among physical educators, although the dominance of technical-rational ways of knowing can of course explain this observation. In the same vein as gender is presented for students, ‘fair play’ and moral education through the physical are merely touched upon in generalist textbooks about the philosophical, historical and sociological aspects of sport, rather than studied as complex, philosophical and practical concepts. There was little evidence to suggest that moral education is taught from a psychological perspective either, even though this is a significant field of study (e.g. Shields & Bredemeier 1995). Following Jones (2005), it seems that neither the PE teacher nor the pupil has benefited from the long and sophisticated philosophical debate about moral development in sport and PE (e.g. Arnold 1980; Jones 2005, 2006; Loland 2006; McNamee 2005; Sheridan 2003; Singleton 2003; Wigmore & Tuxill

1995), and the texts in this project revealed that PETE cultures in Norway are imbued with ‘everyday philosophies’ (Green 2000) of ‘fair play’ and moral education. Despite the physical educators’ preference for practical, technical knowledge we did not find evidence of systematic approaches to teaching affective behaviour changes via engagement in physical activities, such as the programmes developed in North America (e.g. Hellinson et al 1995; Laker, 2001; Morris 2003). Indeed, our analyses of local PETE curricula revealed that the term ‘moral education’ was only to be found in one college’s PETE course objectives. Within a course entitled ‘Physical Activity, Culture and Society’ the students should address “moral questions associated with physical activity at different levels”. An examination of the course literature revealed that this entailed reading a chapter about ‘fair play’ in elite sport and a short article about drug abuse in sport. In other words, there was no literature which illuminates moral questions in the context of school PE. The term ‘fair play’ was in fact absent in the official PETE course outlines.

Indeed the discursive texts convey that ‘fair play’ and moral education “simply occur” in the ‘unique’ and ‘extraordinary’ social arrangements of PETE/PE lessons. As indicated above, moral learning of the kind talked about in this study reflected the values of competitive sport rather than a broader interest for nurturing moral citizens who are prepared to meet the challenges of late-modern local and global democracies. As well as teaching the ‘rules of the game’, modest strategies such as giving students/pupils responsibility for organising equipment or expecting polite forms of communication in lectures/lessons were offered as examples of how ‘fair play’ and moral education were taught when we probed for such details. Birgitte (student teacher) informed us,

“I was shocked by some of the pupils’ bad language when I was on teaching practice, so I used the best part of a lesson to explain why the way we communicate is important for the common good of the PE lesson.”

Alfred (supervisory teacher) conveyed,

“I get the students to understand the importance of giving the pupils responsibility in lessons, like getting them to look after the equipment, stress the importance of things like that. Things like how we need to respect each other, how we greet each other at the start of a PE lesson and how we leave the gym. Good manners, basically!”

Indirectly, several of the interviewees cast themselves as being an important role model for the values which they believed team games in PE can nurture, but nobody problematised their gendered subjectivities and the ways in which these could symbolise norms for ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ behaviour. Generally speaking, the list of virtues which the physical educators claimed PETE promoted was somewhat limited, and a range of virtues which are often discussed in the literature in relation to moral development in PE, such as wisdom, tolerance, and compassion was omitted from their talk. Similarly we observed that the discourse lacked any reference to the vices which participation in sport ought to discourage, such as ignorance, spite, and cruelty. In short, the texts lacked any depth of reflection about ‘what exactly is moral education in PE?’ Questions, such as ‘what competing theoretical perspectives might inform moral education in PE?’; ‘what implications are there for the PE teacher if moral education is caught rather than taught? (Arnold 2001; Jones 2008); or ‘in what ways do different contextual factors affect moral education?’ (Jones 2008), did not seem to be posed. Indeed the texts illustrate how “...the language of morality trips easily off the tongue” and how the words of the discourse can “... simplify what is a manifestly complex issue” (Jones 2008:338). Theodoulides & Armour (2001) and Theodoulides (2003) confirm that we in fact know very little about the way in which physical educators address these issues in practice.

When we questioned the goodness of sporting values from our critical, feminist perspective, not least by referring to high profile examples of cheating and ugly violence in elite competitions or instances of female athletes being excluded from so-called male sporting arenas, the physical educators we interviewed admitted that ‘fair play’ could be seen as problematic. Yet at the same time, many of them consistently constructed a strong dividing line between top level sport and the subject of PE, and in doing so, seemed able to dismiss this dilemma as ‘irrelevant’ within their professional space. Kristoffer (teacher educator) concurred succinctly:

“Well of course in football ‘fair play’ is limited to respecting or breaking the rules, but in PE, and in everyday life for that matter, it refers to much, much more! ... It’s about justice, showing that you care, the ability to empathise with others, being helpful.”

Similarly, Oscar (student teacher) reflected,

“Well in the ‘Sport, culture and society’ course I suppose we did discuss things which are far removed from PE in schools, things like performance enhancing drugs and how to combat that kind of cheating, but in terms of ethics, sport and ethics, you could say it was sort of relevant.”

And Tor (student teacher) shared a similar point of view,

“I agree professional sport is full of cheating, if you like, but moral development in schools has to include a lot more than that! And there’s no getting around the fact that PE lessons are dominated by different sporting practices, so pupils have to learn about the rules of sport, the need to work together as a team, how to compete by respecting the rules and your opponents.”

The examples we offered as representing discriminatory behaviour against women athletes were, not surprisingly given the logic of the prevailing gender discourse, dismissed by most of the physical educators as expressing unavoidable, *natural*, biological differences:

“Women are simply not suited to ski jumping. They don’t have the right state of mind.” (Tom, student teacher)

“When I put groups together to go hiking, I make sure there are some strong male students who can carry the heavy equipment in each group. I’m not saying that the women can’t carry the stuff, but in my experience they get tired and start complaining, so I take precautions.” (Randi, teacher educator)

With the exception of Jane (teacher educator), sport’s historical legacy of bearing traditional male values was barely paid any attention in the physical educators’ texts. PETE’s policy of equal opportunities for learning sports skills appears to naturalise the ‘male’ values of sport as now being accessible to all, including females. They become ‘universal’ values. Our critical hermeneutical analyses of the data would cohere with Flintoff & Scraton’s (2005) observation that PETE cultures tend to espouse liberal feminist notions of gender equality where equal access to (male) sport and physical activities in PE is valorised. Similarly, our analyses support Hekman’s (1995) claim that moral theory represents one of the last bastions of modernist thought.

Concluding comments

In drawing our discussion to a close, we reiterate that our purpose has been to disrupt common sense views about ‘fair play’ and to explore how the ‘naturalness’ and ‘inevitability’ of the concept, linked to taken-for-granted ideas about gender, can affect what can be said

and done in today's PETE culture in Norway. From our critical, feminist perspective the 'innocent' texts about fair play, moral education and gender relations in PETE mask inequitable gender relations, as well as inequitable ways of knowing. The continuing hegemony of natural sciences and technical-rational ways of knowing in PETE marginalise socio-cultural ways of knowing, which in turn, exclude a wide body of knowledge, including an extensive range of theories about gender and theories of morality. We argue that the exclusion of these understandings of gender and morality, combined with the taken-for-granted ideas of 'fair play', do little to pave the way for notions of PE teacher professionalism which embrace the idea of teaching for social justice and democracy (Hargreaves, 2003; Sachs, 2001). On the contrary our critical hermeneutical analyses indicate that these knowledge hierarchies can create unequal learning opportunities and construct actors within them as universal, disembodied and de-contextualised, rather than subjects with diverse social locations. Our interpretations of the data cohere therefore with earlier, international research findings about gender relations in PETE (Brown & Rich 2002; Dewar 1990; Flintoff 1993, 1994; Scraton 1992; Wright 2002): gender is most often understood as the biological sex of the teacher/student/pupil, and gender equality is framed within a notion of providing equal access to sports and physical activities. We believe that our analyses may provide a modest insight into one of the mechanisms which helps to sustain these values in PETE culture, namely the ideological work of 'fair play'.

Our analyses of the data in the study reveal how the physical educators' inadvertent use of the vocabulary of equality and fairness actively creates, in subversive ways, PE environments which favour some participants and disadvantage others, and they implicate their own subconscious role in doing so. The data analyses show how male teacher educators/student teachers/pupils are privileged above female actors, and the technically proficient and hard-

working privileged in relation to the less-able and 'lazy', all in the name of 'fair play'.

Although we have not systematically explored how other social locations are reified through the language of 'fairness', given the interrelated nature of class, ethnicity, sexuality and gender (Flintoff, Fitzgerald, & Scraton 2008), we might predict that the ideological work of 'fair play' and moral education in PE can lead to further constellations of marginality. The seeming lack of theoretical sophistication in the discourses of 'fair play'/moral education and of gender relations in the texts, combined with the strong 'feeling rules' about gender (Dowling, 2008), seem to result in limited ways to ascribe, enact and embody gender. We would argue that the rhetoric of teaching 'fair play' becomes entangled with narrow descriptions of gender to make arbitrary links between the two, which nevertheless are constructed as though they are necessary and natural links, and as a result, combine to do powerful ideological work in the distribution of gendered identities in PETE.

Here it is important to note that we do not of course believe that any of the physical educators to whom we spoke knowingly aim to oppress students/pupils or colleagues, either by their theoretical understanding of gender or their commitment to 'fair play' as a means for offering moral education in PE. It would be ridiculous to assume that anyone would wish to create *unequal* learning opportunities, or strive to nurture 'wrong' moral decisions or unfair behaviour. Rather we interpret the data as illustrative of how we all "...are hegemonized as our field of knowledge and understanding is structured by a limited exposure to competing definitions of the sociopolitical world" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000:283). We would also like to stress the point that we do not wish to privilege our critical, feminist position because we acknowledge that there are no "innocent positions" in research (Lather, 1991). On the other hand, we would argue that our data analyses can alert us to the dangers of imposing 'discursive closure' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) if PETE culture legitimates discourses

about gender and morality which limit actors' understandings of the complexities of these phenomena. We advocate a PETE culture that emphasises plurality and acknowledges the inevitable power structures imbued in different ways of knowing.

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