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**NEITHER SHAKING NOR STIRRING:
A CASE STUDY OF REFLEXIVITY IN NORWEGIAN
PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the place of reflexivity in the ‘philosophies’ and practices of physical education (PE) teacher educators in Norway. Using a case-study approach to one quite typical institution delivering PE teacher education in Norway, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 teacher educators. Analysis of the data generated by the study was inspired by the principles of grounded theory. Noteworthy among the findings was that the teacher educators viewed learning to teach PE in much the same way as they viewed PE itself – as an essentially practical process revolving around the teaching and coaching of sports skills. Consequently, there was little evidence that the teacher educators either engaged themselves or sought to develop in their students anything other than weaker forms of reflexivity; that is, focusing on the student-teachers’ development of their practical sporting and teaching skills. The discussion focuses on the contextual constraints – in the form of a combination of local and national contexts – that served to encourage the teacher educators at Nord UC to reproduce the kinds of (typically conservative) ideologies and practices in PETE that they were already habitually predisposed towards. In light of the evidence from this study, the paper concludes by reconsidering the claim that the rise of reflexivity as a dominant concept and a generic professional disposition has been one of the major trends in teacher education generally and PETE in particular.

Keywords: physical education, physical education teacher education, reflexivity, habitus, Norway.

INTRODUCTION

A feature of research on physical education (PE) over the last two decades or more has been the failure of PE teacher education (PETE), as Evans et al. (1996) so pithily put it, to ‘shake or stir’ the (typically conservative) beliefs and practices of nascent PE teachers. Still less has PETE been able to inculcate in student teachers that ‘holy grail’ of many academic commentaries: a predisposition towards ‘reflexivity’ among student and newly-qualified teachers (Tinning, 2006). All-in-all, the expectation that PETE could develop successive generations of reflective-practitioners – possessing the ability and inclination to critically reflect upon their roles as educationalists alongside the desire to effect change at the personal, professional and political levels – has been revealed as a vain hope. Put another way, a variety of studies have tended to confirm that PETE neither ‘shakes nor stirs’ newly-emerging PE teachers’ relatively conservative views and practices in relation to PE, let alone education more generally. This failure to impact, at the outset, upon teachers’ beliefs and attitudes has, nevertheless, merely served to reinvigorate calls from scholars (see, for example, Kirk, 2009) for teacher education to confront the seemingly uncritical, unreflexive dispositions of each new generation of PE teachers as they emerge from teacher education.

Since the early 1990s, one of the major developments in teacher education has been the rise to prominence of the notions of ‘reflective practice’ and reflexivity (Capel, 2005; Tinning, 2006), the roots of which lie in the work of John Dewey (1933) and, subsequently, David Kolb (1984). More recently, academic focus on reflexivity has paralleled a growing body of research pointing to teacher quality as the ‘single most important school variable influencing student achievement’ (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2005: 11). Against this backdrop, academics continue to argue the case for reflective practice and reflexivity to be ‘in the foreground of attempts to raise educational standards and maximize the learning potential of all students’ (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2006: 26). Before we move on to discuss the study it is worth saying a little more about the related concepts of reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity.

Reflexivity, as Roberts (2009: 230) points out, ‘is a very high profile concept in present-day sociology’ and one which has ‘occupied a “place of honour” at the table of ... social science’ (Webster, 2008: 65) for 30 years or more, ‘relied upon as a kind of talisman’ (p.65) of truthfulness in research. Indeed, Lynch (2000) observes a tendency for academics to deploy reflexivity as an ‘academic virtue’ (p.26). Yet, despite its ubiquity, as Webster (2008: 65; emphasis in the original) notes, ‘the term “reflexivity” remains poorly defined. No one *really*

knows what reflexivity means in the work of others, even if they claim to know what it means within their own'. Similarly, there is much confusion over use of the seemingly related terms reflection and reflective practice.

Roberts (2012: 59) observes that 'most terms in sociology are used in ways that are congruent with their meanings in everyday life, though in sociology the terms are usually used with more precision'. From this starting point, reflexivity is best conceptualized as having both a more general sense, akin to reflection, as well as a specifically sociological sense. Thus, ordinary people can be reflexive. They can, in other words, reflect upon their aims and desires and their likelihood of achieving these, taking into consideration their circumstances, and plot a course of action accordingly (Roberts, 2012). The specifically sociological use of the term reflexivity overlaps and extends the ordinary, everyday conception of reflection in order to indicate 'being aware of and trying to take into account one's own preconceptions, the fragility of one's conclusions, and the limitations and sources of error that may contaminate all types of evidence' (Roberts, 2012: 115). Here, the term reflexivity refers to a process often called 'self-referencing', whereby individuals come to recognize the way(s) in which their situations serve, in effect, to socialize them into ways of thinking and doing that they largely take-for-granted (even viewing them as 'natural'). This is the sense in which van Manen (1991:100) talks of reflection and reflective practice as 'a form of human experience that distances itself from situations in order to consider the meanings and significance embedded in those experiences'. In this stronger sense, being reflexive is said to be 'fundamentally different from simply reflecting external forces in a stimulus-response fashion' (Roberts, 2009: 230) of the kind often associated with socialization as a form of conditioned responses to various socializing influences. Thus, high levels or degrees of reflexivity are said to involve individuals (in the present case, teacher educators) becoming, on reflection, more detached and, in the process of recognizing their socialization (be it, for example, general acculturation or professional and occupational socialization), developing more critically-informed views and practices.

Thus, reflexivity can be said to come in three broad forms ranging, in effect, from a weak to a strong sense of the term. The weakest is also the most frequently used sense in which reflexivity is viewed as mere reflection; that is, primarily 'as a utilitarian mechanism for improving the execution of teaching skills' (Williams, 1993: 137). In this sense reflection is purely instrumental insofar as it is intended to help teachers replicate practices that both experience and empirical research have suggested are effective (Capel, 2005; Williams, 1993, 1998; Zwozdiak-

Myers, 2011): it ‘involves the identification of a number of specific strategies which are seen to be central to “good teaching”’ (Williams, 1993: 138). Somewhere towards the half-way point on the continuum of reflexivity is ‘reflection as a form of deliberation among competing views of teaching’: pedagogical research in this context ‘is used not to direct practice but to inform it’ (p.139). Thus, a teacher who is aware of and able to select and employ the most appropriate from a variety of styles of teaching to suit a particular activity and context is said to be more likely to be most effective. The strongest sense of the term interprets reflexivity as ‘the reconstruction of oneself as a teacher, with an expectation that teachers will become more aware of the cultural milieu in which they operate’ (p.140). In principle, this would necessarily involve teachers reviewing and reconstructing their taken for granted assumptions about PE, teaching and, for that matter, education itself.

In this paper, we examine the place of reflexivity in the philosophies and practices of PE teacher educators (subsequently referred to simply as teacher educators) in Norway and as a corollary, the role the teacher educators performed in the production and reproduction of (typically conservative) philosophies and practices among student teachers. More specifically, based on a case-study of one quite typical institution delivering PETE in Norway, the paper explores the ways in which their habituses, in conjunction with their perceptions of the context in which they operated shaped the ‘philosophies’ and practices of 15 teacher educators at Nord University College (Nord UC). In so doing, we also try to shed a little more light on PETE in a country, Norway (Møller-Hansen, 2004; Dowling, 2006, 2008, 2011), and a region, Scandinavia (Annerstedt 1991; Larsson, 2009), where only a relatively small amount of research has hitherto been undertaken.

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Methods

Nord UC was chosen as a case study on the basis that, as well as being one of the largest providers of PETE in Norway, the breadth of its teacher education provision made it, if not exactly then at least reasonably representative of the 15 institutions charged with teacher training in Norway. Nord UC cannot, strictly speaking, be defined as a representative case because it does not share all the characteristics of other higher education providers of PETE in Norway. Nevertheless, because it shares many, if not quite all, of the organizational characteristics of PETE at other institutions, PETE at Nord UC is best described as a *typical* case (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2009). More precisely, Nord was typical inasmuch as it provided three of the four possible

routes to becoming a PE teacher and was constituted of broadly comparable numbers and profiles of students engaged in different PETE programmes in Norway in the academic year 2008-2009.

At the heart of the study of PETE at Nord UC lay semi-structured interviews with 15 of the 16 teacher educators working there. In a manner similar to the profile of teacher educators nationally, the ages of those at Nord UC ranged from 25 to 70 years distributed along a bell-shaped curve, with one PETE under 30 years of age (10 percent of Nord UC staff), eight between 30-40 years (26 percent), seven between 40-50 years (29 percent), seven between 50-60 years (26 percent) and one over 60 (10 percent). A purposive sampling method was used to identify the teacher educators for interview. Several key themes (and related questions) formed the basis of the semi-structured interviews: teacher educators' 'philosophies' regarding PE and PETE; the role of teacher educator; the national curricula; the local and national context for PETE; teaching in PETE; the PETE students; and, the personal histories of the teacher educators. The interviews lasted between 65 and 95 minutes with the majority (10) lasting 80 minutes or more. The construct validity of the interviews was reinforced by all the teacher educators in the sample answering the same questions.

Analysis

Analysis of the data generated by the study was inspired by the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, as soon as possible after completion each interview was transcribed and subjected to coding. The coding process involved a mix of line-by-line coding – 'naming' every line in the written data and breaking the data into component parts and properties – together with what Charmaz (2006) refers to as coding 'incident-to-incident'. Performing line-by-line coding together with incident-to-incident coding helped identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements. After all of the interviews had been coded, all codes were written down and then systematically categorized the codes into themes. At this point we had a document of 25 pages with initial codes categorized in themes. For example, we had a theme labelled 'research', and the initial codes within this heading included: 'teaching eats research time'; 'important to involve students in research'; 'don't like to go in depth in theory and do only that'; and, 'research is done in leisure time and holidays'.

Once the initial codes had been reviewed what seemed to be the most fruitful initial codes were selected. This is the next step in the grounded theory analyzing process and is referred to as

focused coding. Focused codes are more directed, selective and conceptual than initial codes (Charmaz, 2006). The initial codes from the theme 'research' were, for example, refined into the following focused codes: 'research important', 'research not important', 'research topics', 'teaching and research'. At the end of the process of elaborating the focused codes, we had a 10 pages document of focused codes, and we started the process of doing focused codes of all the interviews. Both the initial and focused coding was performed 'by hand'. To minimize what Charmaz (2006) identifies as a potentially critical aspect of grounded theory analysis – namely that the different stages of the coding process risk taking the researcher away from the original data – we used both the initial and focus code documents, as well as the interview transcripts and the tapes themselves, to help us monitor the 'big picture' throughout the analysis process, alongside the smaller developments that occurred in the coding process.

The next step in the coding process was theoretical coding wherein potential relationships between categories developed in the focused coding were identified (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, it was at this stage that the analytical process moved in a theoretical direction. In the spirit of a grounded theory approach to analyzing data, while some of the theoretical 'coding families' (Charmaz, 2006) referred to the analytical terms identified in the process of coding, others drew on those sociological concepts most common in extant research on PETE generally and that have been claimed to offer a great deal of explanatory potential. These included such concepts as, power, ideology, socialization, habitus, roles, networks and interdependencies.

In the spirit of a grounded theory approach to data analysis, while some of the theoretical 'coding families' (Charmaz, 2006) referred to the analytical terms identified in the process of coding others relate to sociological concepts commonly used in extant research on PETE generally that have been claimed to offer a great deal of explanatory potential. We will consequently discuss teacher socialization and constraints towards a weaker form of reflexivity in relation to concepts relating to how the teacher educator's habituses (in a broad sense) shaped their 'philosophies' and practices. In the paper habitus is understood as 'the durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person's action throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life – in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mould of the personality' (Camic, 1986; cited in Van Krieken, 1998: 47). On this view, 'the real forces which govern us' (p.47) are our habits or habitus and it is because we tend not to be aware of the ways in which our seemingly free choices are influenced by our deep-seated predispositions that 'the choices involved seem to be made naturally' (Tolonen,

2005: 356). In a similar vein, we will discuss the ability of teacher educators to have their more-or-less factual, more-or-less fictional ‘philosophies’ or ideologies prevail in terms of the particular resources they have access to (in other words, power) and the networks within which their roles (the patterns of beliefs and behaviours associated with a position, such as teacher educator) are, at least in part, negotiated with other individuals and groups on whom they are inevitably and increasingly dependent.

The next section outlines the main findings from the study germane to the particular topics under consideration in this paper; namely, the role of teacher educators in ‘shaking and stirring’ the beliefs and future practices of student teachers of PE and, more specifically, the inclinations towards reflexivity among the latter.

FINDINGS

In presenting the main findings of the study, each theme is supplemented by illustrative quotations from the interviews with the teacher educators. The main themes presented are: PE teaching as teaching and coaching sport; PE teacher education as inducting student-teachers into teaching and coaching sport; research time as a contingency for teaching; the teacher educators’ perceptions of the centrality of practical experiences; the teacher educators’ sporting and teaching experiences; the teacher educators’ perceptions of their students; a dearth of reflexivity; the teacher educators’ perceptions of independence; and, the teacher educators’ perceptions of the place of sport in Norway.

PE teaching as teaching and coaching sport

Without exception, the teacher educators at Nord UC viewed PE as an essentially practical process revolving around the learning and acquisition of sporting skills by pupils: ‘*Through the offers provided by the schools, it is the aim of PE, first and foremost, to secure a minimum of physical development and motor skills*’ (Fredrik) in order ‘*to make young people enjoy being physically active*’ (Elizabeth). Thus, the teacher educators expected PE teachers ‘*to present various activities*’ (Ida) in order ‘*to introduce [young people] to different sports and ball games so that they get to know different activities*’ (Elizabeth) thereby enabling them ‘*to be active in physical activity for the rest of their lives*’ (Tom).

PE teacher education as inducting student-teachers into teaching and coaching sport

It was noticeable that the teacher educators viewed learning to teach PE in much the same way as they viewed PE itself – as an essentially *practical* process revolving around the *teaching* and *coaching* of sports skills. The teacher educators viewed PETE, in other words, as primarily concerned with the learning and acquisition of sports skills – albeit on the part of student teachers rather than school pupils. All-in-all, the teacher educators took the view that paramount to the PETE process was student teachers acquiring ‘*the right amount of subject competency ... to teach the different activities that PE is supposed to teach pupils*’ (Heidi).

In this vein, when asked what they thought the aims and purposes of PETE were, the first thing the majority of the teacher educators, unsurprisingly, said was ‘*to educate good PE teachers*’ (Knut). In response to questions regarding what they viewed as the qualities of a good PE teacher, the teacher educators referred to several types of skills or expertise; in particular, possession of a minimum of different sporting skills such as ‘*being able to light a fire in friluftsliv*’ (John), and ‘*learn about skiing*’ (Knut). In this regard, it was noteworthy that although very few of the teacher educators explicitly mentioned by name the five competencies referred to in the Norwegian national curricula for teacher education (see below), virtually all of them highlighted the perceived need for student teachers to acquire sporting and teaching skills and competencies; thereby implicitly referring to only two (those practically-oriented) of the five competencies: ‘*Subject competency [how to do different activities] is, if not the most central purpose, it is very important*’ (Tom). In this manner, many of the teacher educators spoke of the importance of having a minimum of different sport skills in order to show – in the sense of demonstrating to pupils – ‘*how to do different activities*’ (Thomas): ‘*By “good PE teacher” I think of teachers who are solid [in the sense of sporting and teaching skills] when it comes to the subject of PE; teachers who have didactics or PE didactics as a basis for what they do, that they interpret the curriculum and have various teaching [styles]. I think it is important to have a certain amount of sport skills when you are a PE teacher besides having didactical knowledge*’ (Martin). It became apparent that what the teacher educators referred to as didactical competency was viewed as consisting of two core abilities – the ability to *facilitate activities* in PE and to provide a *variety of activities and teaching styles*: ‘*I focus on how to develop different ball games and techniques, but also how to teach others, so this is where the didactic part comes in*’ (Kari).

Research time as a contingency for teaching

The primacy afforded by the teacher educators to teaching their student teachers how to *do* and *teach* (sporting and physical recreation) skills was further illustrated by the widespread tendency among them to treat the 20 percent allocated to each tutor for research purposes (by their institution) as a de facto supplement to their teaching roles: *‘I have 20 percent for research which becomes a balancing item because I prioritize teaching and working with the students ... I am always behind, and if it collides with student related work, the student related work comes first ... I think this is quite common among those who have a small research part in their post’* (Alexander). In effect, the teacher educators’ commentaries on their use of research time – as a contingency for what appeared to them as the more pressing and more important demands of teaching – appeared a convenient justification for, or rationalization of, their preferred practices. Thus, the one dimension of their roles that appeared to provide an avenue for the teacher educators to directly or indirectly reflect on PE and PE teacher (and, perhaps, engage with the stronger sense of reflexivity) was pretty-much eschewed. Indeed, even the two teacher educators possessing a PhD did not seem to view research as being of similar importance to teaching. Harald, for example, responded to a question about the 50/50 allocation of time scheduled for teaching and research in his post thus: *‘The teaching part is the most devoting one, but also the most exciting part of my job’*.

The teacher educators’ perceptions of the centrality of practical experiences

Because they perceived PE teaching and PETE as essentially practical processes revolving around the acquisition of (sporting and teaching) skills, the teacher educators at Nord UC viewed both as requiring a far stronger element of (sporting and teaching) practice on the part of the students, as prospective PE teachers, than classroom-based academic study of (PE) teaching. Thus, as well as viewing PE teaching and PETE as essentially practical processes, the teacher educators at Nord UC appeared keen to present themselves and, for that matter, PETE itself as nothing if not pragmatic and practical rather than abstract and academic. Consistent with their emphasis on the value of practice, some of the teacher educators observed that *‘As a PE teacher educator I think it is important to have school experience. One thing is “to think”, “to do” is something completely else. I had hoped that we were forced to teach in school every fifth year’* (Martin). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the teacher educators’ overarching concern that the student-teachers learn the practicalities of teaching PE, the teaching practice placement assumed in the minds of the teacher educators far greater significance than either the rest of the various PETE programmes of study in which it was embedded or, for that matter, the diktat of

Government, as expressed in the *National Curriculum for Teacher Education*. Knut was one among several who justified the apparent preoccupation with teaching practice on the basis that ‘*They are going to be PE teachers so it is important that they get the exercise*’.

The teacher educators’ sporting and teaching experiences

The teacher educators were evidently inclined towards replicating ‘traditional’ approaches to ‘traditional’ PETE (and, for that matter, PE) curricula. The direct impact not only of playing sport themselves but also of having taught PE on their approaches to PETE as teacher educators was reflected in very many of their comments. Thomas, for example, observed ‘*I have been working in school for many years and that has been of great value in this job*’, while Alexander commented ‘*I have experiences from being a [PE] teacher in school and hence knowledge of how to be a professional PE teacher [educator]*’. In this vein, many of the teacher educators implicitly and explicitly, as well as repeatedly, referred to what they saw as the centrality of experience of the practice of sport and teaching to being a PETE.

The teacher educators’ perceptions of their students

It was not just the teacher educators who focused on the centrality of practical experiences. Those for whom the teacher educators were responsible – the student teachers – were viewed as being preoccupied with the prospect (not very far away on their personal horizons) of having to manage and teach groups of children; in the first instance, during the practicum and, eventually, as PE teachers proper: ‘*My teaching ... is very teacher-centred, because I have some tips to give them [the students]*’ (Alexander). In this regard, the teacher educators’ at Nord UC described themselves as especially dependent upon the student teachers not simply because the latter were preoccupied with the prospect of teaching – nor, for that matter, because the students were viewed by the teacher educators (and sometimes themselves) as deficient in some of the sporting practices perceived as central to the PE curriculum – but also because they saw their own main responsibility as bringing the student teachers ‘up to scratch’ in order that they could be effective during teaching practice – something which appeared to loom as large in the minds of the teacher educators.

A dearth of reflexivity

In response to several questions related to reflection and reflexivity – in the form of discussions about the nature and purposes of education and pedagogy – very many of the teacher educators observed that there were no formal discussions as such: ‘*We do not have discussions at an*

abstract level related to pedagogy' (Fredrik). *'I guess it [pedagogy] is discussed in ad hoc groups. But I can't recall that we have ever sat down and discussed pedagogy in a meeting or in a large group ... I guess it happens but not in an organized form'* (Knut). By contrast, however, *'We have many discussions on how to solve the lessons in the best way, but not about the underlying fundamentals'* (Fredrik). The apparent lack of reflexivity on matters other than the practicalities of teaching the student-teachers how to teach sport was unsurprising given the widespread and taken-for-granted nature of views perhaps best expressed by Linda: *'The main part of my job is to plan teaching, to teach, and then to evaluate the teaching I do'*.

The general dearth of a desire for reflexivity – on anything other than the weaker (occasionally mid-way), more pragmatic and practice-oriented forms of reflection – among the teacher educators at Nord notwithstanding, there were several dissenting voices. Kari, for example, commented that *'I don't think we are supposed to educate teachers who can just do instruction and organize activities. They ought to be able to see themselves in relation to others and to reflect upon the possibility of developing the subject'*.

The teacher educators' perceptions of independence

Many of the teacher educators described how they tended to work independently, almost in isolation, seldom teaching alongside colleagues or discussing (informally or formally) the work of PETE at Nord. Heidi, for example, commented thus: *'It's maybe the way it is supposed to be at the University, that you are a bit lonely'* while Ida observed *'You get kind of lonely when teaching your subjects'*.

The teacher educators' perceptions of the place of sport in Norway

Alongside a tendency to be relatively non-reflexive (in the stronger sense of the term reflexivity), it was noticeable that the teacher educators' had clear views on the place of sport and physical recreation in Norwegian culture. As well as being central to their own lives, it was apparent that the teacher educators as a whole viewed sport and physical recreation as a key component of Norwegian culture and simply being Norwegian: *'I think of PE as a way to learn how to be part of the culture we have, that we live in a movement culture. It is important to be able to participate in games and physical play in leisure time and in school. To be active in sports means a lot in our culture'* (Linda). Almost without exception, the teacher educators tended to highlight the importance of sport in Norwegian society and, as a corollary, among the students and their colleagues at Nord, as a justification for their own preoccupations with sport

and sporting skills. Seemingly as a corollary, they perceived themselves to be quite dependent on various national sporting associations, and one in particular – the Norwegian Ski Federation. Fredrik, for example, commented thus: *‘In alpine it [the teaching methods] is quite strict. In alpine we have to relate to a coaching standard from the Norwegian Ski Association, because then you get the formal competence as a ski instructor’*.

Having provided a brief outline of the main findings of the study pertaining to the issue of reflexivity, the next section attempts to explain not only the perceptions of the teacher educators at Nord UC but also the circumstances in which their PETE-related philosophies and practices displayed a tendency towards a conservative view of the function of PETE, including the propagation of a weaker sense of reflection.

DISCUSSION

Student teachers’ disinclination to reflect on their practices and experiences is said, by those engaged with initial teacher education in PE, to be one of the reasons why they tend – during their training – to be fundamentally unresponsive to attempts to encourage them to reflect critically upon various aspects of the subject: from teaching styles through to the nature and purposes of the subject (Capel, 2007). The findings from this study suggest, however, that the students’ unresponsiveness needs contextualizing. In order to fully appreciate why PETE appears neither to ‘shake nor stir’ the ideologies and practices of future PE teachers we need to go beyond the student teachers themselves and, for that matter, PETE. Behets and Vergauwen (2006: 407) explain ‘The historical ineffectiveness of teacher education’ in terms of ‘the disjointedness of programme goals and curricula’. Our findings suggest, however, that the apparent ‘ineffectiveness’ of teacher education – to develop a reflexive disposition among nascent PE teachers, at least – may have as much to do with the disinclination of teacher educators to problematize PE themselves, let alone challenge the deep-seated character of prospective PE teachers’ (aforementioned) sporting habituses – reinforced, as they tend to be, by the immediacy and significance of their experiences ‘in the field’, that is to say, in schools.

Socialization into PE teacher education

The fact that the teacher educators at Nord UC viewed PE itself as well as PETE as essentially and primarily practical processes, concerned with the teaching and learning of (largely sporting) skills, is entirely consistent with earlier studies of PE teachers themselves (see, for example,

Green, 2000). In this regard, the findings suggest that at least part of the explanation for the conservative and relatively unreflexive character of PETE at Nord UC – and, by extension, the apparent failure of PETE to ‘shake or stir’ student teachers’ predispositions and practices – was, in fact, the predispositions and preferred practices of the deliverers of PETE: the teacher educators themselves.

The observation that valuing sport is a pervasive and enduring influence on all those involved in PE, from students through to teacher educators (Dewar and Lawson, 1984; O’Bryant, O’Sullivan and Raudensky, 2000) is well-established. Their biographies and, in particular, their early and profound emotional attachments to and identification with sport, tends to lead prospective PE teachers to develop particular orientations towards sport generally and PE in particular (Green, 2003); and, it was from the ranks of PE teachers that almost all of the teacher educators at Nord were drawn.

Subsequently, many of the teacher educators’ early experiences of PE as teachers served, in effect, to further socialize them into particular values and beliefs (Chen and Ennis, 1996) regarding the nature and purposes of PE (Behets and Vergauwen, 2006; Placek et al, 1995) and, ultimately, PETE; in other words, into particular philosophies or ideologies (Green, 2003). This is, in no small measure, why PETE tends to have an element of self-replication built in to it and why teacher educators tend not to value, let alone promote, reflexivity beyond the weaker sense of the term related to improving the day-to-day practice of nascent PE teachers.

Thus, in response to the question ‘How, then, do we explain the relatively conservative character of teacher educators philosophies and practices?’ the answer, in short, seems to be pretty-much exactly the same as for PE teachers themselves. More specifically, the findings from the study suggest that what has been referred to as the acculturation and occupational socialization phases of PE teachers’ and teacher educators’ careers – and, more specifically, the emergence and development of their sporting habituses and teaching orientations – had heavily influenced the Nord UC teacher educators’ personal and occupational identities.

The deep-seated nature of habitus notwithstanding, teacher educators’ habituses inevitably develop (by degrees) throughout their careers as the significance and/or duration of their experiences in PETE serves to confirm or challenge their existing predispositions and practices. In the case of PETE at Nord UC, however, there seemed to be little that served to challenge the

teacher educators' existing views and practices. In this regard, PETE at Nord appeared to exemplify processes of occupational socialization in general: newcomers to any occupational group are typically obliged to adapt their behaviours – and subsequently their views – upon joining their new colleagues and institutions, since all the surrounding positions are still occupied by the same personnel (teacher educators, in this case) as before and they generally want things to carry on as before. The workplace, especially early-on in the careers of teacher educators, as with PE teachers themselves (Capel, 2005; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b), is important in supporting or restricting their practices as they find themselves constrained by, among other things, the dominant values and beliefs of their colleagues and institutions. This helps explain why, in the case of the two teacher educators who held doctorates (and who, incidentally, were not selected from the ranks of PE teachers), any latent impact of their PhD studies (on their beliefs and practices as teacher educators) appeared to be 'washed out' (Stroot and Ko, 2006) relatively soon after they became involved in PE teacher education. Whatever the backgrounds of new appointees, the most common response upon entering the workplace is a 'custodial stance' (Tsangaridou, 2006) in which the newcomers (in this case, to PETE) tend to accept, and seldom question, the ways things *are*, thereby reinforcing the status quo – learning, accepting and implementing the customary strategies (Stroot and Ko, 2006). As newcomers, they are once again junior members of staff keen to fit-in with, and become established among, their colleagues. All-in-all, because 'consecutive generations are absorbed into roughly the same networks' (de Swaan, 2001: 14), PETE has an in-built tendency towards reproducing itself and its modus operandi. Where newcomers are faced with incompatible expectations they tend to experience role conflict and this tends to be resolved in favour of the hegemonic customs and practices – in effect, the norms and group habitus – of the established groups.

In the following section of the discussion we focus on the contextual constraints – in the form of a variety of local and national cultural processes – that, in effect, further encouraged the teacher educators at Nord UC in the direction of philosophies and practices that they were already habitually predisposed towards.

Constraints towards a weaker form of reflexivity: The rise and rise of 'competencies'

Rivalling the calls for imbuing each new generation of newly-qualified PE teachers with the ability and disposition towards reflexivity has, since the early 1990s, been an increasing focus on so-called 'effective' teaching – as measured through a handful of general teacher 'competencies' – in North America, Australasia, northern Europe and the UK. Kovač, Sloan and Starc (2008)

have summarized these competencies as subject knowledge, subject application (in terms of planning and teaching skills), class management, assessment and recording of pupils' progress and continuing professional development (CPD). Such a focus is also to be found in the various Norwegian national curricula for PETE, which list five competencies: subject, didactic, social, adaptive and development and professional ethics. In both of the above examples, the competencies said to be required for successful teaching include those (such as CPD and social, adaptive and development and professional ethics competencies) that, on the face of it, might constrain both teacher educators as well as student-teachers and PE teachers themselves towards varying degrees of reflexivity. It was noticeable, nevertheless, that the Nord UC teacher educators' views of the necessary competencies for PE teaching were a good deal more restricted and focused than those listed above. In short, the teacher educators at Nord UC were only really concerned with sporting and teaching competencies – with the utility and performativity of the knowledge the students acquired during PETE.

Constraints towards a weaker form of reflexivity: Dependence upon the students

Already predisposed towards focusing on the practical aspects of PE teaching, the teacher educators tended to explain and justify their practical and pragmatic orientations in terms of the context in which PETE was delivered. In particular, in implicit and/or explicit terms, they tended to emphasize their relations with those *for* whom they were responsible (that is, those they taught, the student teachers) more so than those *to* whom they were (ostensibly at least) responsible at both the local and national levels (in particular, the leadership at the institution and the government via the Ministry of Education and Research). Students appeared to exercise significant influence on the nature and purposes of PETE at Nord UC, in large measure because of the teacher educators' dependence upon these groups and the expectations the former had of the latter. That the teacher educators at Nord UC felt the pressure of student expectations very keenly illustrates the observation that networks of dependency are also networks of expectations (de Swaan, 2001). In short, what sociologists would call their dependency-ties (with these people and groups) appeared to reinforce and exacerbate, rather than challenge, their existing predispositions, tendencies and preferred practices as teacher educators.

Constraints towards a weaker sense of reflexivity: The weakness of external constraints

By contrast, those groups that might have been expected to wield more power over teacher educators – and thus influence PETE more (for example, the Ministry and the 'leadership' at Nord), if not the most – appeared to make very few demands of the teacher educators. This

might be seen as somewhat surprising given that the Norwegian national curricula for teacher education are statutory documents. It becomes less surprising when one appreciates that there was no formal mechanism for ‘checking up’ on the implementation of curricula requirements for PETE in Norway. Notwithstanding the existence of a *National Curriculum for PE Teacher Education* (UDF, 2003a,b,c) – and their occasional references to them during their interviews – the Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research did not seem to require the teacher educators to be particularly accountable ‘upwards’, so to speak. There was, for example, no (external) inspection of the PETE programme let alone its delivery in practice.¹ Thus, somewhat counter-intuitively, the government were viewed by the teacher educators as exerting relatively little influence and/or constraint on their practices, let alone their beliefs. Nor, for that matter, was the institutional leadership at Nord UC described as keeping a close watch on the PETE programme per se. As a consequence, the teacher educators did not view themselves as particularly dependent upon, nor constrained by, either their own institutions at the local level or by government at the national level. Nor, for that matter, did they feel especially constrained by their colleagues.

The apparent ease with which the teacher educators could, at one extreme, ignore and, at the other, minimize the influence of central government diktat on their practices, alongside what was perceived among the teacher educators as a non-interventionist style of leadership within the institution, may be explained, at least in part, by shifts in power balances at the societal and individual levels; in other words, the trend towards more equal power relations – in the form of a decentralization and de-regulation of education administration, alongside a concomitant trend towards increased institutional accountability – between the different levels of professional and employment hierarchies in Nordic countries, such as Norway, since the early 1980s (Antikainen, 2010). Thus, it has become the norm in the university sector in Norway for occupational groups (such as teacher educators) to have a relatively high level of autonomy. One manifestation of the teacher educators’ perception of their relative autonomy was their expectation of an entitlement to receive 20 percent allocation for research, whether or not they used it as such. The upshot is that the prevailing norms regarding what might be termed the ‘rights’ of professionals in Norway

¹ NOKUT (Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen: The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) only evaluates the quality systems in education. In other words, the inspection does not check if particular PETE programmes actually provide the content of the National Curriculum in PETE (NOKUT, 2010).

(and especially in the university sector) weakens the position of managers and shifts the balance of power towards the employees in some crucial ways.

Alongside the trend towards more equal power relations at the institutional level has been a similar process at the level of individual relations. Scandinavian countries, such as Norway, have been in the vanguard of wider social processes of informalization that have been underway in the developed world since the second half of the twentieth century. Informalization is associated with a narrowing of power differentials and a process of social equalization (or levelling) as hierarchies of rank gradually diminish as a consequence of shifts in the balance of power between, and integration among the social classes, sexes and generations (Kilminster, 1998). The democratization of relations between adults and young people (van Krieken, 1998) has resulted in less authoritarian social relations (for example, between teachers and taught) and led to youngsters breaking out from an ‘imposed sense of inferiority’ (Mennell, 1998: 123). The consequence has been that students are more ready and willing to challenge the ‘say so’ of their teachers and unabashed in their attempts to influence the content and delivery of their (higher) education and training. All-in-all, the interactions between teacher educators and their students appeared more immediate and demanding than those with other groups in the network of PETE.

Constraints towards a weaker form of reflexivity: The significance of sport and physical recreation in Norway

The significance in the teacher educators’ minds of the various national sports associations was explained not merely in terms of the prevailing sporting and teaching cultures in PETE at Nord UC but also the social significance of sport and physical recreation in Norway at large. Thus, the centrality of sport to the ‘philosophies’ and practices of the teacher educators at Nord UC appeared exacerbated by the centrality of national sports association awards and qualifications to the various PETE programmes. The focus on teaching sporting skills among the teacher educators (and, of course, the student teachers) at Nord UC was only to be expected given not only the prevalence of sporting ideologies among physical educationalists at all levels worldwide but, in particular, the prominence of sport in Norwegian culture. Among young and old alike, sport in Scandinavia is characterized by ‘high levels of participation in sports in particular as well as physical activity in general’ (Seippel, Ibsen and Norberg, 2010: 563). Indeed, sport is a core element of not only the personal identity of many individuals but also the national identity in Nordic countries such as Norway. Hence, the historical involvement of national sports associations in school sport has created a legacy for PE and PETE: all parties in the PETE

configuration (from students through schools and teacher educators to government) expect (even welcome) the various sports associations and bodies to exert an influence not only on PE itself but in the preparation of PE teachers via PETE.

Each of the aforementioned processes has, we suggest, helped create a context in which an ideology of performativity (which elsewhere has been referred to as technocratic rationality [Fernández-Balboa, 1995, 1997; Fernández-Balboa and Muros, 2006; Kirk, 1992, 2010; Lawson 1993; Tinning, 1997, 2002]) – that is to say, a ‘philosophy’ among teacher educators that the fundamental measure of PETE was its ability to deliver results, in terms of producing ‘practical’ teachers with the necessary *competences* – has become hegemonic.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to Kirk’s (2009: 207) claim that, over the last generation or so, teacher educators have been influenced by attempts ‘to politicize the notions of knowledge and schooling’, the philosophies and practices of teacher educators at Nord UC remained steadfastly conservative. The same appears true for Tinning’s (2006: 373; emphasis in the original) observation that ‘one of the major trends in teacher education and PETE’ has been ‘the rise of reflection as a dominant concept’ and reflexivity as ‘a generic professional disposition’ (Feiman-Nemser, 1990: 221; cited in Tinning, 2006: 373). In short, this study adds weight to the increasingly abundant research demonstrating that teacher education tends to confirm rather than challenge student teachers’ beliefs about PE, as well as their anticipated practices (Capel, 2005; Curtner-Smith, 2001).

One thing, in particular, that the present study has underlined is the tendency for academics to over-emphasize the impact of professional training on prospective teachers, let alone its potential to transform their ideological predispositions. PETE appears to have little impact – other than reinforcement – on the largely established beliefs and practices of would-be PE teachers (Capel, 2005; Evans et al, 1996; Placek et al, 1995). All-in-all, in the same way that the significance of academic debate about the nature and purposes of PE is frequently exaggerated so too is the (seemingly negligible) impact of professional socialization in the form of PETE. Recruits to PETE (as well as PE teaching) who share a common background – typically consisting of sport and games – appear not only to have great difficulty envisaging alternative curriculum models for the subject, they seem quite disinclined to countenance alternative views.

Explanations for social phenomena, in this case PETE at Nord UC, are seldom mono-causal. It is usually the case that several processes come together to create circumstances propitious for particular developments; that is to say, they make a particular outcome more likely than others. In configuration, their PE teaching experiences, the expectations and anticipated demands of their students and the school mentors, the relative weakness of government and the institution as constraining forces, together with the dearth of a research culture within PETE generally, and at Nord UC in particular, alongside the strength of the sporting culture in Norway, all added up to reinforce and sustain rather than challenge the intuitive, default philosophies of Nord UC teacher educators regarding the 'real' nature and purposes of PE and PETE as well as the role of reflexivity therein.

As far as the policy implications of this study are concerned, student-teachers' deep-seated orientations towards the practise of sport and, for that matter, teaching and coaching, alongside their pre-occupation with the imminent prospect of teaching, makes them infertile ground for the planting of ideas regarding reflexivity – especially when they have yet to experience teaching on a sustained basis. This paper has argued that what Evans et al (1996: 165) described almost two decades ago as 'the noise of education reform and the weight of education legislation' constraining teacher educators to engage in curriculum change may have done little to alter the process of PETE, at least as far as PETE at Nord UC is concerned. Thus, one of the reasons that PE teachers' views are 'neither shaken nor stirred' by PETE is that the views and practices of the trainers are unlikely to shake or stir them. PETE does not shake or stir teacher trainees because teacher educators are not inclined to shake and stir them and the teacher educators are not inclined to do so because they themselves were never shaken or stirred in turn – and nothing is constraining them to do so now. Indeed, it may be that constraint is the only way to bring about the kinds of change towards reflexivity in PE generally if, as Tsangaridou (2006: 492) observes, most of those who choose PE as a career 'are academically average students who are mostly successful in physical education and sports rather than academic achievement' and, therefore, always likely to favour sporting and teaching practice over theory and reflection.

In short, if PE teacher education at Nord UC is anything to go by, it is not simply the case that 'teacher education programmes lead to students developing utilitarian perspectives' (Kirk, 2009: 208): the students and the teacher educators already possessed such perspectives and the significance, as well as the immediacy, of the prospect of teaching simply served to sharpen their

orientations to the day-to-day realities of PE teaching. Undoubtedly, PETE programmes ‘that focus on survival and craft- or skill-based courses’ (p.208) exacerbate these tendencies.

We want to conclude by observing that, in identifying a practical orientation among PE teacher educators in our study, we are not trying to suggest that a concern for the practical *necessarily* nor *automatically* results in non-reflexive dispositions among them. As a reviewer of this paper observed, the fact that they are mostly non-reflexive is not the same as saying that they *must* be. We are bound to acknowledge this point, of course. We would merely add that our point is that the two simply *tend* to go hand-in-hand and that while we cannot show causality it seems plausible to suggest that the immediacy of the practicalities of PE teacher education (like those of PE teaching itself for teachers) and a deep-seated commitment to the supposed intrinsic and extrinsic worth of sport is likely to work with the grain among those not predisposed towards reflexivity more generally, while significantly constraining those who may be so disposed. Nor is our commentary intended to blame the PE teacher educators, let alone portray them as the ‘bad guys’ in PETE. Rather we seek to recognize that in light of the dominant discourses in PE, their sporting and teaching habituses and the immediacy of the context of teacher education, it is unsurprising that the PE teacher educators were far more inclined towards a weaker form of reflexivity.

Although it is often claimed that reflexivity has increasingly become a mainstream discourse in education, even becoming an attribute of teacher education students in many countries (see, for example, Macdonald & Tinning, 2003), it is our contention that this is more an ideal than a reality, observed more in the breach, so to speak. It is, in other words, something that PE teacher educators and academics would like to believe is a consequence of teacher education but, in practice, seldom occurs, if this study is anything to go by. Based on our findings we feel bound to conclude that undue faith may be placed, not only in PE student-teachers’ dispositions towards reflexivity but also that of teacher educators themselves. While Ovens and Tinning’s (2009) study of five student teachers on a New Zealand PETE programme designed explicitly to stimulate reflective practice in students as a means of developing reflective practitioners, found critical reflection to be possible, they concluded that further attention needed to be paid to considering how it can be sustained in contexts outside of teacher education’ (p.1125). In this study, however, there was not much sign among the teacher educators of reflexivity in the stronger sense of reflecting upon either themselves as educationalists or, for that matter, PE per se.

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