PEER REVIEW TEAM

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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the fourth volume of the Birmingham City University (BCU) Education Journal Magazine (EJM) and the second edition of this academic year. This edition contains articles from a number of sources; however you will find that there are two patterns running through this edition.

The first pattern you will see arising in this edition is that we are very fortunate to have five articles based around physical education (PE). Two of these articles are wonderfully written by PE students on the BA hons Secondary Physical Education with QTS degree, and another article written by the course leader of that very course, Gemma Taylor. We then have two further PE-related articles from guest writers Simon Chapman, and Tarandeep Malhi.

The second pattern, but not as easily seen, is that we have six articles from our a mixture of our MA and Doctoral students (that is some cases, are also teachers that work within our localised area). Jessica Whetton, Stacey Johnson, and Emma Dempsey have all contributed fascinating articles that are based around the concept of positionality. For anybody reading who is contemplating their own positionality with respect to education, or are looking to begin doctoral studies, these are three articles well worth a read. Francesca Clark adds to the student input, with an interesting article around the application of Engestrom's Activity Theory.

In addition to our two patterns of inputs in this addition, we also have an article from one of our Primary Senior Lecturers, Mark Stares, who writes about oracy in the primary classroom, and finally, an article from Sonali Malhotra, who looks to define teacher effectiveness from traditional to modern day India.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

Best wishes

Grant Huddleston

Our Aim

Our aim is to help support practice across our partnership schools and promote enquiry and research. We welcome contributions from students, teachers and academics who wish to make a positive difference to teaching and learning and believe they could help develop and support other's practice. We aim to support new and experienced writers to submit their work so that we share a variety of perspectives.

Our Goals

• Showcase the excellent work our BCU Students produce
• Allow an opportunity for those interested to publish their work to promote positive development and reflection across our partnership schools
• Promote confidence and competence to write for an education publication
• Promote interest towards research and enquiry

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How to contribute

Anybody wishing to contribute an article for consideration should email their draft to BCUEJM@bcu.ac.uk

You do not need to decide which chapter you wish your article to appear, but you can indicate this if you wish. Please ensure you follow the house style. Final decisions on publication are made by the editorial board. You can submit as many articles as you wish. If the editorial team have received a large number of contributions, your article may be held for later editions.

House style

When submitting an article for consideration, please aim to follow the subsequent house style:

- Documents must be submitted in Word in font Calibri, size 11, with 1.5 line spacing.
- Include your full name and role/school – this will appear under the title.
- Any web links given should be accessible by the reader and not sit behind passwords or paywalls.
- Word count is expected to be 500 to 3000 words "all in" (including references lists).
- Acronyms and abbreviations must be written in full the first time they are used in each article; thereafter the abbreviation may be used, e.g. "The special educational needs and disability co-ordinator (SENDCO) is … "
- UK English should be used, e.g. "…ise" endings instead of "…ize"
- Numbers one to ten written in full; thereafter numerical (e.g. 28 pupils aged nine completed… etc.)
- Double speech marks for direct speech or quotes; otherwise single speech marks
- Please use the Harvard referencing system (where applicable – we can support with this if necessary).

Please note that the editorial team will amend the final copy to suit our house style. You will receive a copy back if any major changes have been made for you to proofread.

RESEARCH PAPERS

ENQUIRY AND SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTNERSHIP

Applying Pedagogy and Inclusion Strategies to a Physical Education Rugby Tackling Lesson
Trudi Lewis – Year One BA (Hons). Secondary Physical Education QTS, Birmingham City University

This article will explore how I would teach rugby, specifically looking at how to introduce and develop tackling from an inclusive approach by implementing the STTEP model (Youth Sports Trust, 1996). From experience, I have noticed that in practice, rugby can often be avoided, as teachers do not feel confident in delivering adaptive lessons due to the risk of injury and/or the physicality of the sport. One of the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013) aims in England is that 'all students will lead active, healthy lives'. Therefore, it is my belief that by having teachers who feel confident and empowered to deliver a variety of sports to students with a range of needs, then this can be achieved, making sure students are both physically and mentally healthy through having the opportunity to engage in sports they may not have had the chance to previously try.

To teach rugby tackling, I begin by teaching the key principles. This would be learnt at the point of the unit where students are able to play 'tag' or 'touch' rugby and understand basic principles of the game before any contact would be used within a physical education (PE) lesson. By introducing the three main principles of:

1 **'Eyes to thighs'**, this principle allows the student to focus on the opponent that they will tackle and ensure students are aiming to tackle below the waist, which is now mandatory within rugby to help reduce risk of injury.
2 **'Cheek to Cheek'** ensuring that the defender is close to the attacking player and using their shoulder as the main point of contact for the power of the tackle to go through. The player who is tackling should have their cheek on the other players thigh.
3 **'Band of Steel'** this means the arms of the player tackling are tightly wrapped around their opponents to ensure the player is being safely placed onto the floor and not dropped, as well as stopping the player from being able to run, this makes for an effective tackle (Cottrell, 2023).

Once students have observed the teacher modelling and demonstrating the model to these principles and students memorize them, the students can than begin to demonstrate these principles by practicing all three whilst on their knees – this is a safer and more effective way for you to ensure that students have understood and give feedback on areas to improve whilst keeping the risk low.

Once this has been established, I move into a game like scenario (see figure one). Players would have bibs to wear, with 'red' attacking players who will carry and pass the ball as in a game (running forward and passing backward) in order to score a try. Meanwhile the players wearing 'blue' bibs will be the defenders who will be practicing their tackling using the technique they have practiced and now understand.

At the start of the game, I would implement the rule that students need to first 'tag' the player they are going to tackle.

Both players then need to turn and face each other, and only then can the tackle take place at a controlled pace using the correct technique. Once the tackle has been completed, the player with the red bib is removed from the game until a try has been scored and the game restarts. To ensure the player is engaged in the learning, this player will now take on a coaching role. Once this has been mastered, the element of stopping and facing the player before the tackle commences, will be removed from the conditioned game.
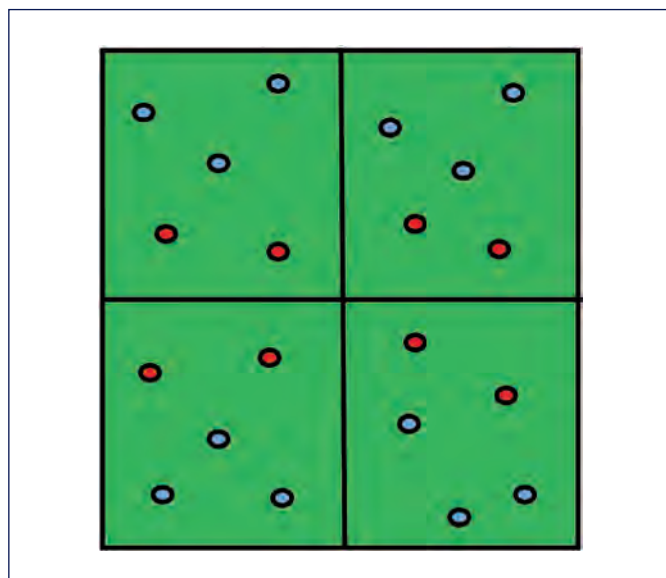
Figure 1: Game-like scenario for applying tackling learning

I believe that using the correct pedagogy when teaching an invasion game with risk such as rugby tackling is key to empowering teachers to feel in control and more confident in delivering these lessons. As we know there are multiple pedagogies available to a PE teacher, but in this instance, I often refer to Mosston and Ashworth's (2002) spectrum of pedagogies, with teacher centred approaches at one end of the spectrum and more student centred approaches at the other. Activities delivered within PE will best be taught using different approaches suited to the activity based on specific factors. Due to the risk involved in teaching students to tackle safely and effectively, I believe that this activity should be taught within a teacher centred approach. While some teachers may automatically choose to teach this using a command style approach, whereby the teacher makes all the decisions, I prefer to implement a practice style approach. This provides students a prescribed task which has been broken down and is demonstrated by the teacher, providing practiced small segments. This therefore allows students some autonomy to practice this. This approach supports feedback to be given in order to help students develop their understanding of how to tackle safely using the correct technique. Even students who

are deemed to be high achievers within PE will not be able to develop complex skills, such as perfecting a rugby tackle, without adequate feedback (Geary, 1995). This practice style approach uses the observational learning theory of Bandura and Jeffery (1973), who position that people best learn by watching the behaviours of other, memorizing that behaviour, and then mimicking that behaviour. This theory is often used when children mimic behaviours of adults but in this case would involve students mimicking the actions of the teacher.

In order to be inclusive and support all students in mastering this, I would use the STTEP model (Youth Sports Trust, 1996). This model also sits within the better-known Inclusion Spectrum by Black and Stevenson (2012) and would often be implemented through the modification element of the spectrum. Firstly, it is important to understand the STTEP model and how it can be implemented in PE lessons. The STTEP model is an acronym, with each letter representing something that can be changed to make the activity accessible for all students: S – Space, T – Task, T – Time, E – Equipment, P – People.

The way I would implement this into my rugby tackling activity can be seen in figure two below. It is important to note that with Inclusion strategies, it is important to plan your lesson to what you want your students to achieve, and then scaffold support to those who require it in order for all to achieve the learning aims of that lesson. A common misunderstanding when using STTEP is for coaches or teachers to plan to 'the middle' ability and then use STTEP to make the activity easier or harder. However this creates a wider variety of outcomes by the end of a lesson or unit work, therefore making your lessons less inclusive, and more challenging to adapt in the future.

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Space

Space can be altered to suit the needs of the students who are playing. For example, if students where finding it difficult to tackle their opponent as their opponent was quicker and able to use the space well to avoid being tackled, I would make the area smaller, this would make 'catching' the player to tackle them more accessible.

Task

For those students that are struggling to understand the concept of tackling their opponent, I would change the task to get the students to tag their opponent to stand them still and then adopt the 'tower of power' position instead of tackling, this gets the students into the correct position (bend at the knee with a hip-hinge) to tackle without the students making full contact. If some students where still unable to complete this due to mobility issues, then students could practice tag rugby as this still allows for students to practice defending in a game like scenario.

Time

There could be a time limit for how long someone could run with the ball for without offloading to another player for example, within 10 seconds they need to pass the ball, this can make it easier for the students tackling, particularly if the player they are trying to tackle is quick, as it prevents one of the players from getting the ball and running to the try line.

Equipment

When delivering this lesson, I would make sure to have a range of different size rugby balls to pick from and include foam rugby balls, this could give the students some autonomy over their learning and give them an opportunity to use a ball they feel most comfortable with, this may work well for SEND or lower ability students.

People

I would consider making the group sizes smaller to adapt to the students needs, changing to 2 attacking players v 1 defending player meaning that the student practising tackling has less players opposing them to focus on when trying to tackle, this may work for students who find working in bigger groups overwhelming. A teaching assistant or the teacher could also give additional support or assistance through instruction to specific students if they required it.

Figure Two: Adopting the STTEP model to my Rugby tackling lesson

An Analysis for the Creation and Planning of a Thematic Physical Education Curriculum in the Secondary School

Eva Johnston – Year Three BA (Hons). Secondary Physical Education QTS, Birmingham City University

For this piece I have created a fictional school which I refer to as School 'X' and designed a thematic based curriculum that I believe would best suit the school and its students. School 'X' is based within a deprived area of inner-city Birmingham. The students are predominantly Muslim and from low socio-economic backgrounds meaning many don't participate in sports clubs or exercise outside of school due to having less disposable income. Therefore, this curriculum allows them to discover a range of themes and sports, providing them with new and exciting opportunities, which will hopefully increase the likelihood of embedding physical activity habits into their adult lives.

Implementing a Thematic Approach in PE Curriculum Design

In my curriculum (see Appendix A), I used a thematic approach. Every half term each class will have a new theme to follow which indicates what they will learn within that unit of work. The themes that run through are in relation to behaviours, skills, physical activity, and fitness (Ennis, 2015). It also teaches self-management skills such as fitness testing, setting goals and creating improvement plans. All these concepts put together help to promote a healthy active lifestyle to last a lifetime which is the intended outcome of concept-based PE (Kulinna, 2018).

This makes the curriculum more 'relevant' as it provides a transfer of different skills (Stidder, 2016). The national curriculum for PE (NCPE) requires the curriculum to provide opportunities for students to gain transferable skills for general life and characteristics such as fairness and respect (Department for Education, 2013). By using the different themes this enables students to learn these transferable skills, which can be used in real life situations (Wiggins and McTighe, 20015). It does also help pupils gain skills needed later in life and everyday living, such as further education or employment, as it provides a basis of knowledge and critical thinking skills (Little, 2023).

I also chose to use a thematic approach as it allows teachers to be flexible when designing their lessons and best fit this to the pupils' needs, which promotes a more student-centred approach (Erickson, 2002). It also increases learner engagement and promotes problem solving and critical thinking in comparison to other curriculum designs (Erickson, 2002), which highlights that the curriculum has the best interest for the pupils. It increases the inclusivity of the curriculum and makes it accessible to all students as they can relate to the learning in their own way in line with their experiences (Little, 2023). This is best suited to the students at School 'X' as the pupils are very diverse with a range of backgrounds, so by using this approach it makes the learning individualised. The students at the school face many barriers to PE and thematic-based PE helps to improve motivations, confidence and autonomy which can support overcoming them and creating changes in behaviour (Corbin, 2021). It also supports engagement by allowing students to take ownership of their learning by making choices with themes such as choosing an alternative sport and being imaginative, which

are two of the themes in the curriculum. This gives challenge, therefore gaining interest which will continue after education (Penney, 2000).

The thematic-based curriculum creates meaningful learning as it allows students to see the rationale behind their learning. Without losing the physical element of PE, this approach enables students to gain health-related knowledge (Sun, 2012). This supports the students in understanding the relevance and importance of their learning as they can link previous information to their current learning. This is important for the students at this school as majority do not participate in physical activity outside of school and this will increase their motivation.

One of the limitations of this curriculum approach is that there are many overlaps within the themes. Each of these need to be carefully considered in terms of at what point (year group) they are studied, as this should be in line with the age group and what is most fitting (Penney, 2000). When planning this curriculum approach its important to use the student's situational interest as a basis for learning as this will ensure there is a motivation and engagement increase (Chen, 2018).

Importance of Health-based PE (HBPE) as a Key Theme in a Thematic Curriculum Design

The second strategy I used in my curriculum design was implementing HBPE in Year 11. The big idea for that year group is 'lifelong participation in sport' which is in line with Siedentop's (1996) 'valuing a physically active life' concept. This enables students to learn suitable exercises and activities and understand the importance of participating in them. It also helps to get students to develop a positive outlook on exercise and health (Fox & Whitehead, 1987) which is specifically important in Year 11 as this is the last opportunity that teachers must nurture lifelong habits for a healthy and active lifestyle. Harris (2000) also suggests that it promotes exercise for everyone, physical activity being enjoyable, and the benefits exercise brings. It also helps to create self-management strategies, for example goal setting and self-reflection, which similar to the thematic curriculum approach helps develop transferable skills (Verstraete, 2007). This is not only related to undertaking exercise and making healthy life choices independently, but also in future education and employment. The teachers will pass on their knowledge and ideas to the students to allow them to become independent so they can understand the importance of exercise and how to do it effectively and safely (Lund, 2014). This model is linked with the self-determination theory as it implies that if the pupils enjoy the activities and believe they are relevant and meaningful, the likelihood increases of them continue this outside of education (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

HBPE supports learning in the 4 domains: cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor (Harris, 2000 p.18). For the cognitive domain it would develop the pupil's mindset to ensure they know the value of exercise and health (McKenzie, 2009). HBPE supports the affective domain by creating a more optimistic outlook on PE and a study has shown that pupils partaking in HPBE felt more motivated intrinsically which made them more likely to continue these habits (Standage, 2006). It also

promotes pupils to interact and work together in a team as most activities will be completed in groups or teams. This will support the social domain as it helps students work on their social skills, for example in the use of collaboration (Metzler, 2017). Finally, HBPE helps pupils improve their fitness and motor skills and participating in these activities will build on their fundamental movements, which will improve their motor skills, therefore supporting the psychomotor domain for everyday life (Gallahue, 2012).

Overall, these two strategies, using HBPE and a thematic curriculum design have been used to meet the key aim of PE which is to promote lifelong physical education. These two approaches have shown to be used successfully hand in hand as the intended outcome in ensuring all pupils live a healthy active lifestyle instead of the main aim being ability and fitness testing results (McConnell, 2005).

PE, School Sport, and Physical Activity as an Overall Concept to Whole School Engagement

Within School 'X' there has been a huge development in Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity (PESS-PA). The main aim is that the school promote PESSPA to every pupil in the school and the local community. This can be promoted to the students by extracurricular activities, which School 'X' offer a wide range of, to ensure the students receive lots of opportunities to participate in sports and compete whilst representing the school. The school also offer a Sports Leaders programme for pupils that want to take on more responsibility within sports, which has many benefits that shall be discussed. To ensure the school are promoting PESSPA to the local community, the school hire out their wide range of facilities, enabling the community to have a safe, convenient and accessible environment to participate in their physical activities.

Sports Leaders

As School 'X' is in the 10% most deprived areas of Birmingham, the socio-economic status of the students and families is low (Birmingham City Council, 2019). Families having a low economic status can hugely affect the number of opportunities for the children (Vealey and Chase, 2016). This is why at School 'X', there is a range of extra-curricular clubs on offer before, during and after school. Being at school often represents the final opportunity that children get to access free physical activity sessions, which highlights the importance of schools creating lifelong relationships with physical activity (Fox, 1996). It creates easily accessible opportunities with convenient timings, no fees, and local locations, which particularly benefits students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Edwards, 2013). Although School 'X' place great emphasis on their extracurricular clubs, some students do not attend these as they can be deemed by some to be of little value, as well as an interference with studies by parents and the students themselves (Wilson, 2009).

One of the aims of extra-curricular activities is to give the student a sense of belonging at the school, as this helps to create a positive school environment (Gilman, 2004). As PE teachers are only allocated 2 hours per week with their students, this creates a challenge in promoting physical activity and motivating learners to engage in lifelong participation (De Meester, 2017). Extra-curricular therefore offers teachers the opportunity for extra time to really work closer with the students and try and embed this ethos. Extra-curricular activities have been shown to improve teacher-student

relationships which will make the value of their learning increase in and out of the classroom, therefore making more of an impact on their future life choices involving physical activity (Francis, 2018). It has also been found that students attending extra-curricular clubs and participating in fun activities supports the dynamic of the classroom within school time, which adds to creating a positive learning environment for the school (Fan, 2012).

Some of the extra-curricular club's lead to competing in inter-school competitions, where the students will represent the school in a league or tournament. Studies have shown that participation in competitive school sports is the highest predictor of lifelong participation into adulthood, which is the main aim (Curtis, 1999).

Also, many students participate in the Sports Leader's Programme which promotes the development and enhancement of skills when reaching out to the wider community to plan, organise and arrange events, as well as communicating with other schools during those events (Buckley, 2021). They deliver sports activities in a range of different environments such as their school, primary schools in surrounding areas, or often can be at Special Needs schools. They can also participate in events outside of school, such as community events, leisure centre classes, summer camps or volunteering at coaching sessions at sports clubs (Eley, 2002). The Leadership Skills Foundation (2023) believe that the skills learnt create a basis of knowledge for the pupils, giving them the confidence to go out and pass this on to the community, therefore supporting their society.

A study by Mawson (2013) found that Sports Leaders feel that they support their local community by providing opportunities to participate in fun, physical activities which allowed them to create bonds with people in the wider community. The sports leaders can also help to address community safety as by provision of these opportunities will engage young people in purposeful activity and make it less likely that they will fall into antisocial behaviours (Eley, 2002). It also helps to benefit the community by adopting a 'physical activity for all' ethos, and being inclusive to everyone regardless of age, religion, or ability. This is aimed to engage pupils from a range of different backgrounds in physical activity which helps break down social barriers and supports social integration (Theeboom, 2021).

Renting Out Facilities

School 'X' has a sports hall, large field and swimming pool which they hire out before and after school but allowing time for the extra-curricular activities to take place first. The sports hall has space for 4 badminton courts (with access to the posts) and has insertions for volleyball posts for 2 courts. The school hire out their school field on weekends for football fixtures.

The school has a local badminton club training in the sports hall twice a week, which has encouraged many of the students to attend as it is local and convenient for parents to take them. Every student in School 'X' received a '20% off' voucher, to subsidise the cost of the club making it only £2 a session. They are also allowed to borrow the schools badminton rackets and shuttles. This makes the club much more accessible to all the students at the school. Participating in organised physical activity outside of school is related to higher intensity exercise (Silva, 2013). It also provides opportunity to improve a range of social skills that students not participating may not develop. For example, responsibility, communicating with the wider community and self-motivation and resilience (Carreres-Ponsoda, 2012).

The school also hire out their swimming pool to a local swimming club for training before school, after school, and at weekends. At weekends there are often swimming galas which attracts visitors outside of the locality, who will spend money at the event, raising money for the local club, and potentially outside of the event in the local area too (Crompton, 1995). Hosting such events at School 'X' could increase uptake by students at the school as the development of a known sporting venue within its grounds will also, in time, lead to the school creating a reputation of being synonymous with sport.

Also, the fact that the venue will host non-school based events may mean that those in the local community, who aren't linked directly to the school, might use the school for sporting purposes. This can be hiring out the sports hall for a rage of sports such as futsal, basketball, badminton or volleyball, the field for football or athletics or the swimming pool for general use. This will therefore develop higher participation rates in sports by not only the pupils attending the school but by the wider community.

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Year Group	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
7	Movement and fundamental skills					
	Practice and reciprocal teaching style					
	Confidence	Warm ups	Competence	Competition	Motivation	Problem solving
	Invasion games	Racket sports	Swimming	Striking and fielding	Athletics	OAA
8	Personal development					
	TGFU					
	Team work	Self-reflection	Creativity	Communication	Resilience	Decision making
	Invasion games	Racket sports	Dance	Striking and fielding	Athletics	Alternative sports
9	Character development					
	Cooperative					
	Responsibility	Tactical awareness	Balance	Goal setting	Technology	Imagination
	Invasion games	Racket sports	Gymnastics	Striking and fielding	Athletics	Alternative sports
10	Teamwork and leadership					
	Sports education					
	Leadership	Communication	Planning	Teamwork	Self-reflection	Respect
	Invasion games	Racket sports	Health and fitness	Striking and fielding	Athletics	Alternative sports
11	Lifelong participation in sport					
	Health based PE					
	Independence	Motivation	Creativity			
	Health and fitness	Invasion games	Alternative sports			

Appendix A

The Experience of Physical Education Through the Lens of Transgender and Non-binary Secondary School Students

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Education and opportunity for all has been at the forefront of my teaching philosophy throughout my career as a secondary school Physical Education (PE) teacher and in my current role as a Senior Lecturer in PE within Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Teaching in mixed comprehensive UK secondary schools for over a decade has provided me with moments of great pride in the education system in England, but also made me aware of the inequalities that continue to exist that alienate thousands of students from accessing high quality, meaningful and inclusive education.

Brett and Brassington (2023) refer to inclusion as the embracement of people from all demographics such as gender, disability, and race, whilst removing the barriers that may lead to inequitable practices. Although on a local level, there may have been small success in the improvement of inclusive education within England, the study of Reay (2022) concludes that the education system is failing many children across the country from ranging demographic backgrounds such as gender; disability; ethnicity and low-income families. Within the subject of PE, through my own experiences as a child and a teacher, I have observed how the historical structures that exist within the subject today provide a plethora of barriers to

students from differing demographics, but most notably students within the LGBTQ+ community. In a time where children's physical and mental health is at its lowest, we are seeing a high number of students withdrawing from and being isolated by a subject that is so important not only to their education, but their health and wellbeing. LGBTQ+ and more specifically, the rights of transgender (trans) and non-binary people in the UK is a continuous political discussion, along with high profile media coverage on the concerning rise in discriminatory behaviour that is experienced by members of the community. We have seen an inconsistent approach from the current government in their policies and political stance on LGBTQ+ inclusion and welfare. Following the publication of the Equality Act 2010 and the protective legislation for LGBTQ+ people in the UK, the government appeared to be continuing their support with the release of the LGBT Action Plan in 2018. However, in contradiction to previous policy, the draft guidance released in December 2023 shows a change in attitude in positively supporting trans and non-binary students, suggesting that the school environment for such students in English schools will continue to be difficult to navigate.

As a female PE teacher who identifies with the LGBTQ+ community, I experienced most of my own school education with the Section 28 Act (Department For Education (DfE), 1988) in place, where acknowledgement of homosexuality and same sex relationships was illegal. This Law was in place for fifteen years in England, after finally being revoked in 2003, however, twenty years later, Section 28 is still impacting education and the experience of students (Lee, 2019). Internationally, despite many countries around the world revoking similar, damaging legislation, countries such as Russia, China and selected states in the USA are reintroducing a ban on teaching or acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ existence. Recently, the state of Florida introduced the 'Don't Say Gay' Law which prevents teachers from discussing some LGBTQ+ topic areas (Lee, 2023). Whilst progress has been made in England, I draw similarities with the present-day education environment and acknowledge the difficulty trans and non-binary students are facing, particularly within PE. More recently within my career I have felt bound to the social conformity that exists when teaching PE and have witnessed the impact this has on trans and non-binary students. Education settings in the UK are heteronormative in structure, meaning that there is an assumption that everyone in that environment is heterosexual, and this is drip fed into policies, building structures and curriculum design (Brett and Brassington 2023). These heteronormative structures that exist within education settings, the nature of activities or sports that are participated in and the gender performativity that is carried out by PE teachers and students provide direct barriers to engagement in this subject.

With a rising number of secondary school students questioning their gender, teachers and teacher educators are being forced to rethink the traditional practices that have been embedded for some time. I am going to explore the experience of PE in secondary schools through the lens of transgender and non-binary students. I intend on using the theory of heteronormativity to critically analyse how the existing PE structures can be alienating for trans and non-binary students and explore Butler's theory of gender performativity to understand the social conformity in place. I shall then consider the action points that can be taken forward in my role as a teacher educator to change the way PE is delivered with the next generation of PE teachers.

Research into the experiences of lesbian, gay and bi-sexual students has gathered increased momentum within the PE field, but there is still limited understanding on the challenges and barriers faced by trans and non-binary adolescents in the subject (Landi et al., 2020). Findings within the limited research reports experiences of bullying, barriers to learning and isolation within PE lessons for trans and non-binary students (Berg and Kokkonen 2022; Stonewall 2017). Previously, the way in which PE reinforces gender norms has been widely researched and critiqued but little has been done to challenge the profession for the way it reinforces the heteronormative ideology (Drury et al., 2023). The most recent PE Programme of Study for Key Stage 3 and 4 in England has been in place since 2014 and outlines the content that PE departments should deliver (DfE, 2013). Analysis of the statutory document contains no reference to gender specific activities nor how the curriculum content should be delivered. Whilst this appears flexible and inclusive to pupils, with the absence of gender conforming guidelines, attention turns to the social ideologies and heteronormative structures that may be influencing the teaching of PE across the world. The term heteronormativity originated from the work of Rubin and Feminist Theory in understanding the hierarchy of masculinity and femininity (Rubin, 1975); the term has evolved, and more recent definitions refer to heteronormativity as the belief and social structures that reinforce the idea that we are either male or female (Forestier and Larsson 2023). This powerful, social construct is embedded within our general education system through uniform policies; classroom seating arrangements and 'hidden' curriculum content. Heteronormativity is woven through every aspect of secondary school PE; through same-sex groupings, gender-associated activities and same sex teaching, all of which are troublesome practices for trans and non-binary students in PE (Berg and Kokkonen 2022; Larsson et al., 2011).

The practices above seem to somewhat contradict the Equality Act legislation that was introduced in 2010 replacing existing policies and to protect a wider range of disadvantaged characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment (Equality Act, 2010). Following the publication of the Equality Act, the DFE released guidance on how to implement this in schools, stating that any discrimination against children based on their sexual orientation or undergoing gender reassignment is unlawful (DfE, 2014). The guidance details that the separation of subject content for male and female students is not in line with the Act and is discriminatory, however, we continue to see a PE curriculum delivery based on the sex or gender identity of a male and female ideology (Ahmed, 2020). Furthermore, the policy states that students who are in the process of transitioning, should be allowed to attend the single sex group that they now identify with. However, this is not the case and there appears to be confusion in the policy regarding trans students and participation within PE and sport specifically. The guidance permits single sex sport, based on physical differences and the risk of harm, but does not outline the stance on trans students participating in single sex groups and is absent within the most recent draft guidance (DfE, 2014; 2023). What is also evident, is the absence of any reference to non-binary students and how schools should be inclusive to those who do not identify with neither male or female genders.

The lack of clarity around the inclusion of trans and non-binary students in PE results in decisions being made by the PE curriculum leaders and teachers of whom are often unclear on how to enact this effectively. Recent developments within the

world of sport appear to have added to this confusion, with many sporting governing bodies refusing the representation of trans people within the gender they associate with (Barras, 2021). Therefore, it is no surprise that there are inconsistent practices within PE departments across the country. A recent study undertaken by Drury et al. (2023) explored the experiences of secondary school PE teachers in providing a trans inclusive environment. The study reported large inconsistencies in the knowledge and understanding of the needs of trans students; confusion on terminology and significantly, the constraints felt of the gender performativity that exists within PE. It is here we turn to Queer Theory to gain an understanding of why this constant cycle exists. Butler, a significant scholar in the field of queer theory and gender, argues that sex and gender are two separate entities, that gender is socially and culturally constructed, and reinforced through actions and behaviours, referred to as gender performativity (Butler, 1990). Such actions are evident through the daily practices of PE delivery, it is embedded through curriculum design and the activities students participate in based on their perceived gender, reinforcing that males should be participating in competitive, 'masculine' activities, and girls performing in less aggressive activities such as gymnastics and dance (Stride et al., 2020). Furthermore, the segregation of male and female changing spaces, single-sex groupings and typically, same-sex teaching aligns with the gender performativity that reinforces heteronormativity as the 'norm'.

The barriers viewed thus far are external to the student, and it is important to consider the individual issues students may be fighting such as the physical aspect of PE and insecurities regarding their body and physical performance. PE is considered the only subject where students' bodies are fundamental to engagement and attainment, with expectations on the typical movement of a male or female body in sporting environments (Larsson et al., 2011). Embodiment and identity in sport is a well-researched area, most notably through Kleinman's early work around the importance of the body in PE (Block, 2014). For trans and non-binary students, participation in physical activity acts as a reinforcement of two troublesome issues; gender conformity and the difficulties of being uncomfortable in their own body (Drury et al., (2023). This comes at a critical time where adolescent students are experiencing puberty, and their bodies are changing rapidly. Rubin (2003) argues that the body plays a significant role in one's personal identity. For transgender and non-binary students, the combination of puberty and the physicality demands of PE can increase the distress and dissatisfaction with their appearance or bodily characteristics (Maguire et al., 2016). A trans female student participating in dance may experience embarrassment as they do not appear to fit the 'feminine' movements and stereotype that reinforced by society, leading to withdrawal from that activity. Furthermore, language used by teachers can be demotivating, with reference to students by their assumed gender. During lessons, standard practise includes asking students to line up according to their gender or creating teams by gender separation (Devis-Devis et al., 2017). On reflection of the factors discussed above, it is no surprise that students are withdrawing from PE at alarming rates and is imperative for PE teachers, school leaders and teacher educators to reflect critically on the experiences of young trans and non-binary students and how to deconstruct the alienating practices in place.

The rise in the number of trans and non-binary students within secondary schools has forced PE teachers to rethink their practice and promote a more inclusive learning space for students within their groups. Recent studies show that teachers are showing willingness to change their practice and are exploring a range of approaches to ensure trans and non-binary students feel included and respected within PE (Bushell-Thornalley et al., 2023). Common practice amongst PE departments has seen the rise of mixed-sex groupings, alternative changing facilities, and gender-neutral PE kit policies, which can provide trans and non-binary students with a more gender-neutral experience, however, Drury et al. (2023) argue that although this can be seen as a positive step, some practices can make students feel isolated, especially when changing separately to their peers. To explore what can be done to tackle the issues discussed here, it is important to acknowledge the political narrative that is influencing school leaders, PE teachers and teacher educators. As mentioned previously, the changing landscape with government policy and the hostile climate towards trans and non-binary people within both local and national contexts creates confusion and tension amongst educators in England. Lynch et al. (2021) recognise the difficulty educators have in implementing an inclusive learning environment as they are regularly battling against legislation and policy makers with differing agendas and ideologies. Teachers and teacher educators are under increased pressure and influence from the government to meet policy outcomes (Kirk, 2020). The latest draft guidance from the DFE on gender questioning students shows a tightening of measures around changing spaces and toilets, surely heightening tensions in this area.

Despite this, a greater understanding of the experiences of trans and non-binary students within PE is crucial (Bower-Brown et al., 2023). Focus must be placed upon the PE Initial Teacher Educator (ITE) programmes and the content that trainee teachers are being taught. Many of the studies taken place in this area note the lack of education surrounding LGBTQ+ inclusion within PE within their ITE courses and placement schools (Drury et al., 2023; Williamson and Sandford 2018). Higher education establishments should evaluate their PE ITE programmes and identify how and where they educate their trainees on all aspects of social justice and inclusive education (Scanlon et al., 2023). In the field of trans and non-binary inclusion, PE teacher educators should be engaging with the current research within their profession and ensure they are embedding this into their curriculum content. Addressing the concept of a 'hidden curriculum' and the het-eronormativity structures that exist within the subject of PE is essential. This is crucial as research suggests trainee teachers often replicate the experiences they had within their own PE lessons, with the same outdated traditions and associated cultures repeated over generations (Stidder, 2022).

A contemporary pedagogy that is growing in interest in the PE world is the concept of 'meaningful PE' by which PE teachers place their student demographic at the heart of planning, teaching and assessment (Fletcher, 2021). Whilst discussion around meaningful PE often focuses on cultural and ability, there is an opportunity here to apply the same pedagogical approach for the inclusion of trans and non-binary students. A recent project conducted by a PE ITE course in Ireland labelled 'One Good Idea' challenged their trainee PE teachers to identify a particular social justice issue, in this case LGBTQ+ inclusion within PE and plan a range of inclusive actions and strategies to implement within their placement school (Scanlon et al., 2023). From 'how to be allies' weeks and education around inclusive terminology, to the organising of mixed-sex non-

traditional games where students are educated on privilege, disadvantage, and the life experiences of LGBTQ+ people in sport and physical activity. By applying a meaningful PE approach, we can move away from the traditional competitive sport curriculum that has continued to dominate. Lund and Tannehill (2014) argue the importance of student voice in curriculum design, which is a fundamental concept to meaningful PE; through projects such as the one discussed, teachers and school leaders can provide trans and non-binary students with a platform to improve their experience within PE. However, we must ensure that actions are not 'tokenistic'; small and consistent changes over time are more impactful in providing change for trans and non-binary students within PE (Fitzpatrick and McGlashan, 2016).

Within my recently appointed role as Course Leader for the PE teacher training course, I am in a fortunate position to action the changes made above and to improve the quality of PE teacher education in relation to trans and non-binary inclusion. Last year, I introduced module sessions focusing on LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools and PE, however a more consistent approach is needed and at greater depth. Education around the term 'heteronormativity', which in my experience is an unknown concept to many trainees and how this may impact trans and non-binary students experiences within PE needs further implementation. Using the concept of meaningful PE, I could encourage trainees to place inclusion at the heart of their practice and to explore the world of PE through a socially critical perspective. It is crucial that trainees can embed this learning within their teaching practice in school, therefore I must work with my course team and school mentors to ensure that trainees have the space and opportunity to observe, plan and integrate inclusive strategies for their trans and non-binary students in PE. From here, like the project mentioned above, trainees can come together to share their ideas not only for trans and non-binary inclusion, but inclusive pedagogies in the 'teach-meet' format to promote collaboration and the sharing of good practice amongst trainees and tutors.

For this to be successful, I will need to ensure that as Course Leader, I am on the forefront of the research within this field, engaging with other PE professionals both in ITE and within schools to ensure that the course is preparing the next generation of PE teachers in the most effective way. To do this, I must ensure that the members of staff on the Secondary Education course are educated and confident in discussing trans and non-binary inclusion within their module delivery to ensure a whole course approach is seen. Drury et al. (2023) discusses the impact of a 'whole school' approach when trying to change the tide in education, and I believe this is fitting to the higher education environment too. I am fortunate to work for an institution that already puts EDI at the forefront of its agenda, with community groups, support networks and CPD available to staff and students on a wide range of EDI areas. I will continue to sign post staff to the relevant training to ensure they are upskilled in this area, along with delivery and training from myself as and when is appropriate.

Another opportunity I have through my role is the close working relationship with our partnership schools, with connections to over one hundred professional and PE subject mentors. A key role my colleagues and I have when working with our external education partners is to ensure that we are upskilling and educating teachers in schools on the developments in teaching and learning as they too will be supporting our trainees to embed the most effective pedagogy into their teaching and

learning. Through the scheduled mentoring sessions and monthly communications, I intend on raising the issue of trans and non-binary inclusion in PE to start a professional discussion around this area. This will allow me to educate and draw attention to the latest research and developments in this area whilst providing other PE educators a platform to share good practice amongst schools in the region. My approach to this will need careful consideration to ensure a balanced view is taken particularly with faith schools and students with from certain cultural and religious backgrounds.

Finally, personally I feel privileged to have a supportive family, both myself and my eldest brother, who has carried out extensive work with trans and non-binary adults within his occupation field identify with the LGBTQ+ community and have therefore met little resistance for the lives we lead. I have however experiences where the discussion around trans and non-binary people has been one of a negative nature due to a lack of understanding. It is therefore imperative that I challenge and educate those around me, to ensure that trans and non-binary people are understood, valued and included by all those of whom I live, socialise and work with.

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CURRENT ENQUIRY AND PRACTICE

Oracy in the Primary Classroom: The Poor Relation in English Policy- Snubbed, Misjudged and Ignored.

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In the following I want to discuss government policy in relation to the teaching of oracy in the primary setting. I will review historical and current government policy and consider research evidence for the effectiveness of oracy. I will then reflect as to why the teaching of oracy appears to have been rebuffed by recent policy makers. Lastly, I will consider the consequences of such policy decisions on pedagogy in the classroom and how this might impact on the abilities, dispositions, and attitudes of children in primary schools.

Throughout this discussion I will be attempting to view government policy regarding oracy through what Metcalf (2017) describes as the 'eyeglasses' of neo-liberalism. This will enable me to critically analyse policy and make links with wider political, cultural, and social aspects of government and society and their interactions. As a starting point, I will be grounding my thinking in the drivers of neo-liberalism as outlined by Ball (2017). The first of these, 'Market Form', 'rests on the introduction of the dynamics of competition between providers- schools, colleges and universities' (Ball, 2017:54). The second, 'Management', 'plays a key role in the wearing away of professional-ethical regimes in schools and their replacement by entrepreneurial-competitive regimes' (Ball, 2017:56). Lastly, the third driver, 'Performativity', describes the increasing level of scrutiny of teacher's performance (Ball, 2017). Additionally, the focus on 'Management' and 'Performativity' creates 'a culture or a system of terror' (Ball, 2017:57) where constant surveillance, measurement and judgment of performance must be both managed and endured.

I will also be taking a liberty with Metcalf's (2017) eyeglasses and using the second lens to look at policy through the ideas of neo-liberalism's close ally, neo-conservatism, or what I will term here, restorative conservatism (Apple, 2019). A restorative conservatist agenda advocates a state that is, 'strong in teaching a correct knowledge' (Apple, 1996:6) and in this country one that looks back at a mythical past, where Britain was powerful, paternal, benign and a bastion of civilisation, for that 'correct' knowledge (Ball, 2017 and Yandell, 2017). Of course, this is just a fantasy, but one that is used as a distorted mirror to reflect back a false narrative of society's supposedly falling standards in morals, resilience and abilities thereby enabling policy makers to certify their decision making. Neo-liberalism and restorative conservatism can at first appear odd bed-fellows – the Cannon and Ball of political and ideological partnerships; incongruous, yet strangely complimentary; both forward facing yet backward looking. However, this hasn't prevented them from cementing, as some would see, a successful marriage over the last 40 years.

I want now to discuss the definition of 'oracy' and the range of other terms that have been used to describe talk in policy documentation. Many (Coultas, 2015; Knight, 2020; Millard and Menzies, 2016; Jones, 2017) attribute Wilkinson (1965) as the first to coin the term 'oracy' when he suggested that 'the educated person needs to be numerate, literate and orate' (Corden cited in Coultas, 2017:73). However, as popular as this term may be withteachers and educators it has never been one used in government policy. 'Speaking and Listening' has been the term preferred in previous iterations of the National Curriculum. However, this has been criticised as creating a false tension between what are meant to be complementary and tightly bound twin functions (Jones, 2017). Indeed, the training materials, 'Speaking, Listening and Learning: working with children in key stage 1 and 2' (QCA/DfES, 2003) split speaking and listening into two areas to be addressed separately. The current National Curriculum (DFE, 2014) uses the phrase 'Spoken English'. However, this again had been questioned as not indicating a skill to be acquired, so assuming something that does need to be taught, as does the term 'oracy' when compared with other terms used in policy, such as 'literacy' (Alexander, 2012). I will be using the term 'oracy' to mean the purposeful and conscious use of oracy both as something to be learnt and developed as a skill and also as a tool which can be used to construct and critique knowledge in the primary classroom.

The 1870 Elementary Education Act meant that attendance at school was compulsory up until the age of 10 and at this point any deliberate use of talk only involved learning and reciting from texts, such as The Common Book of Prayer (Wyse, Jones et al, 2018). The Newbolt Report (DCBE, 1921) recognised the importance of oral work, but only in relation to supporting writing composition (Wyse, Jones et al, 2018; Jones, 2017). The Hadow Reports (Board of Education, 1933) have been seen as progressive for their time (Wyse, Jones et al, 2017; Gillard, 2007) stating that, 'school is not a place of compulsory instruction, but a community of old and young, engaged in learning by co-operative experiment' and goes on to argue that the primary curriculum should be, 'thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored' (cited in Gillard, 2007:9) – statements completely at odds with current government neo-liberalist and restorative thinking in education policy. Similarly, in regard to oracy the reports stated, 'oral work should be closely related to the child's practical interests' (cited in Wyse, Jones et al, 2018) and drama was encouraged as a means to developing children's language (Wyse, Jones et al, 2018). The Plowden Report (DES, 1967) has been seen as a continuation of the Hadow Reports' (Board of Education, 1933) underlying progressive themes. For example, the report criticised the banking model of education (Freire, 1996): 'The image of the teacher as a fount of knowledge and transmitter of information into the empty vessel learners, to inscribe this information on their brains as tabula rosa was being severely challenged' (Sugrue, 2010:108). As to oracy, Plowden (DES, 1967) begins the section on speech with the following:

> 'Much has changed in the schools since children sang
> 'What is infant education?
> Universal information.
> While the children round are walking,
> None should ever be found talking.'
> (DES, 1967: Paragraph 580)

The report goes on to emphasise the importance of talk, but cautions, 'we are less confident about the elements of speech indicated by such terms as 'correctness' and 'accent' (DES, 1967: Paragraph 582), presaging some of the current criticisms of the emphasis on 'Standard English' in the current primary curriculum (DfE, 2014). Before I move onto the radical changes of the late 1980's there is one last significant report to discuss. The Bullock Report, entitled 'A Language for Life' (DES, 1975) states that children should not be expected to abandon their culture of language or of the home at school and that oral language was key to progress across all learning (Jones, 2017). It is clear then that there was much at this time in terms of guidance that might be classed as child-centred- an increasing emphasis on the central importance of talk in all learning and a desire to see constructivist approaches that involved partnership and co-operation between children and adults. However, changes lay ahead both for oracy and primary education as a whole.

Prime Minister James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College (Callaghan. 1976) and a series of articles referred to as the 'Black Papers' (Cox and Byson 1971) can be seen as the first turning points towards a neo-liberalist and restorative agenda. Callaghan's speech (Callaghan, 1976) made direct links between industry and education and spoke of the need to ensure children were being prepared for employment (Ball, 2017). The Black Papers (Cox and Byson 1971) foreshadowed much of what was later to be enacted by the Conservative government: testing, published results, a curriculum containing a core body of knowledge and the beginnings of parental choice (Jones, 1988 cited in Coultas, 2015). The path had been laid for the Education Reform Act (DES, 1988) which brought along with it the first national curriculum. Here speaking and listening were placed alongside reading and writing in terms of status, but it did receive criticism by those who found it too liberal and not as prescriptive as they had hoped (Jones, 2017). Moreover, Margaret Thatcher reportedly deleted the words 'where appropriate' at the end of a statement where children were required to use Standard English (Cox, 1992 cited in Coultas, 2015). The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998), introduced by the new Labour Government, contained no strands or guidance about the teaching of speaking and listening (Coultas, 2015). It was driven by a standards and target setting agenda (Wyse, Jones et al, 2018) adding another layer to the growing toolkit of neo-liberalist education policy. The Conservative-Liberal coalition came to power in 2010 and were quick to archive a new national curriculum that was in the process of being implemented by the previous administration (Wyse, Jones et al, 2018). This brings us to the current incarnation of the national curriculum. The National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) downgraded the importance of oracy. Whereas reading and writing were given a list of expected outcomes for key points in the primary years 'Spoken Language' received barely more than a page of statutory requirements and non-statutory guidance spreading through from Year 1 to Year 6. Furthermore, one of the only twelve statutory requirements states, 'speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English' (DfE, 2014: 17). I will return to Standard English later in my discussion.

A narrative can be discerned when reviewing education policy as above; a narrative that aligns with the fluctuating attitudes and beliefs of the status of oracy in primary school learning: an education system coming out of the birth pangs of the Victorian era into an era of hope that was to be curtailed by Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments who gradually built an education sector centred on targets, performance measures and mythical 'traditional' teaching methods.
I will now briefly consider the research evidence for the effectiveness of oracy, which is strong, and then ask if this is the case why does oracy have such a low standing in current educational policy? There has been extensive research around oracy and its impact on learning over the last fifty years with current research and thinking nearly wholly focused on social constructivist approaches (Bearne and Reedy, 2018). The work of Barnes (1969, 1976) and the translations of Vygotsky's (1978) work into English both led the way to further research on oracy and interaction in the classroom and are still influential. As Mercer and Dawes (2014: 439) state, 'the results of many years of research strongly suggest that when teachers make regular use of certain dialogic strategies, student's participation in class and their educational outcomes are likely to benefit'. To take one example, from 2014-2017 Alexander and Hardman (Alexander, 2018) ran a randomised control trial, based on the use of dialogic teaching funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) with 5000 students across major cities in England. As Alexander states (2018: 6) after 20 weeks of input, 'students in the intervention group were up to two months ahead of their control group peers in the standardised tests of English, maths and science'. Furthermore, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, n.d) list 'develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language' as their first recommendation for improving literacy at key stage 1 and 'develop pupils' language capabilities' also as their first recommendation for improving literacy at key stage 2.

So, what is hindering or troubling policy makers in prioritizing oracy in the primary curriculum or other guidance if research, including that accepted like organisations such as the Education Endowment Foundation, so beloved of the government's 'magic bullet' variety of recommendations, provides such a convincing case? My first proposal is that talk by its very nature inhabits the process of the co-construction of knowledge and that this sits uncomfortably with neo-liberal and particularly restorative ideas about how children should learn. This stance favours the teacher as a central figure of authority who is to be listened to and agreed with; they have the knowledge, and they are going to give it to you. Freire (1996) calls this the banking model of education and similarly Shor (1992) calls this the zero paradigm. A deficit model where the child has nothing to bring into the classroom and nothing to offer whilst they are there. As an example, Jones (2017:505) quotes Michael Gove who criticises educational theorists who, 'have consistently argued for ways of organising classrooms and classroom activity which reduce the teacher's central role in education. All too often we have seen an over-emphasis on group work- in practice, children chatting to each other- in the belief that it is more productive way to acquire knowledge than attending to the expert'. Similarly, Alexander (2018) recounts his conversation with Nick Gibb whilst trying to convince him to retain speaking and listening as strands in the proposed new national curriculum who was concerned that 'idle chatter' would divert teachers' and children's attention away from the drive to increase 'standards'. Lastly, I want to highlight the influence of Hirsch, an early proponent of 'core-knowledge', whose influence on the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) and government minsters thinking has been significant (Yandell, 2017). Yandell (2017: 249) quotes Gibb from an essay published by the Policy Exchange stating, 'Hirsch's work provides an unrivalled armoury with which reformers can equip themselves

prior to engaging with the education establishment'. This reflects recent neo liberalist and restorative thinking as a crusade against those who want to deny children access to a 'body of academic knowledge that belongs to everyone' (Gibb cited in Yandell, 2017: 249). Of course, this ignores the fact knowledge is contested and contestable through dialogue and that children working and talking together may challenge that knowledge and then create their own.

Next, I want to consider how a system of tightly and minutely measured performance, be that of children or their teachers, might influence policy makers in regard to highlighting oracy in policy. Apple (1996: 32) has commented that, 'the major role of a national curriculum is in providing a framework within which national testing can function. It enables the establishment of a procedure that can supposedly give consumers 'quality tags' on schools so that 'free market forces can operate to the fullest extent possible'. It is here that restorative conservatism's desire to control curricula and knowledge as well as to control what is tested, measured and judged combines with neo-liberalist belief in the market to improve 'standards'. Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2018:70) also remind us that this ever-growing testing regime, with recent additions such as The Phonics Screening Check and Reception Baseline Assessments, reduce 'the multifaceted nature of learning and interaction to simplified figures, labels such as 'below expected levels' or 'above', or onto colour codes on a spreadsheet'. Children's learning is measured through a number or binary judgement that is then visible to all stakeholders and used to wield power; as Foucault (2020: 201) says, to induce, 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility'. Nevertheless, oracy is not subjected to this regime. I would suggest it is ignored because it cannot be measured through testing in the sense that recent successive governments mean by that term. As there is no visible outcome such as a test paper or portfolio of work there is nothing to be measured or graded – there is nothing to substantiate a teacher's judgement – and so it is an anomaly in the neo-liberalist and restorative framework and therefore best ignored. As Daliri-Ngametua, Hardy and Creagh (2021:14) comment, 'the constant collection of data pertaining to students' learning, and the subsequent disregard of teachers' professional judgment in evaluating students' learning, reflects broader socio-political and cultural-discursive conditions that increasingly validate more material-economic forms of data that can be readily presented in a physical form to justify claims of learning to colleagues, school administrators and parents'.

Lastly, I want to extend on my first point about talk and dialogue being an anathema to concepts of 'core knowledge'. As Freire (1996), Hooks (1994) and Shor (1992) have all shown, dialogue is a powerful critical tool. As Freire (1996: 73) states, 'true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking'. Oracy leads to critical thinking, and I don't mean critical thinking in its 'soft and cuddly' sense. As McLaren (1989, pp 161) points out, the term 'critical thinking' has been hijacked by neoconservatives and liberals and has been 'neutralised...removing its political and cultural dimensions and laundering its analytic potency to mean 'thinking skills.' I mean critical thinking that challenges and questions and has the potential to bring about social action and change. Neo-liberalist and restorative policy have inherently obstructed and inhibited challenges to its frameworks. One example would be the statutory requirement for children to use Standard English as mentioned previously and outlined in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014). Cushing (2020; 2021) has

highlighted how this marginalises many working-class children as well as those from black or ethnic minority backgrounds. As Williams (cited in Shor, 1992: 49) has stated, 'imagine the impact on one's self esteem and self-concept to discover that the language that is spoken in your community and which you embrace as part of your identity is nothing more than an inferior copy of someone else's language...no matter how hard you try to master the 'superior' language, elements of your own language keep creeping in'. Such policies essentially erase children's voices from the classroom, therefore also from critical dialogue and any opportunity to challenge prevailing norms.

Furthermore, government policy and guidance are keen to politically neutralise dialogue, discussion and learning. Recent government guidance, 'Political Impartiality in Schools' (DfE, 2022) states, 'Schools should...continue to reinforce important shared principles that underpin our society'. Of course, it is unclear what these 'shared values' may be, or indeed if what-ever they are we all share them. The guidance goes onto explain, 'not all areas of ethical debate are political issues. There are some concepts and views that can be considered as shared principles that underpin our society and not political issues in this context. Examples include a belief in upholding certain rights, such as freedom of speech and protection from violence and criminal activity - or challenging discrimination and prejudice, including racism'. Quite how these issues are not political or can be addressed non-politically might surprise some. The guidance also advises, teachers 'should avoid expressing their own personal political views to pupils unless they are confident this will not amount to promoting that view to pupils' (DfE, 2022). So, we have an educational space where it is assumed we all hold the same vague key core values; where some issues are political and others not and where the teacher is discouraged from expressing their political beliefs. Policy makers conveniently ignore the fact the schools are inherently political spaces and teaching inherently a political act. If this is ignored or made 'murky' children are hindered in using dialogue that critically engages with and constructs knowledge that again may question given norms.

All of the above leads to an educational landscape where oracy cannot help but exist but is not validated by or through government policy. If this is the case, it holds little value in neo-liberal and restorative space and so won't be recognised or measured. Therefore, if a school invests in oracy they are at risk, at least in the short term, of giving worth to the 'wrong things' and so suffering from performative measures such as Ofsted and so losing competitive power in the quasi market of parental choice. Of more relevance, is the suppression of oracy as a tool to critically engage with society and so, unless we are wary, there is a danger of creating a generation of children who accept the very apparent inequalities in which they live and see around them and feel no drive to act against them.

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Positionality Unmasked: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Identity Formation, Educational Paradoxes, and Socioeconomic Shifts

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Introduction

Throughout my life, significant experiences have coloured my perception of the world. The journey undertaken in this autoethnographic paper will critically examine my positionality on several educational paradigms. There will be an examination of personal incidents and reflections serving as the focal points of each section, to which I can critically examine from a theoretical perspective. The purpose is to examine these experiences and piece together reflections and experiences to enable a broader understanding of the formation of my

identity and how these impact upon my doctoral journey and the theoretical perspectives that I encounter, as well as my emergence as an early career researcher.

I can partially attribute the lens through which I perceive the world today to the primary school I attended and the dynamics of my working-class family. This foundational part of my life, interpreted by Bourdieu's (1977) concept of Habitus, showcases the intricate ways in which my early life experiences left an indelible mark on my understanding of social hierarchies, diversity, and class, which has then been challenged throughout the rest of my personal and academic life. These reflections provide instances of challenges and reaffirmation to this habitus, from my journey through formal and higher education, to the beginning of my career as an educator. The piece follows my life through education, my family's move to a middle-class environment and the beginning of my teaching career. Through this, there will be the underpinning of theory from the works of Bourdieu, Butler, hooks, Freire, amongst a plethora of others. Their work provides a springboard to interpret these life events and the impacts they have in relation to my own theoretical understanding and practise. This paper will include commentary on policy and the impact educational legislation has had on my experiences and the impact governmental mentality has had on, not only the education I received, but the formation of my teaching practice. I will also delve into the impact policy has had in conjunction with my personal teaching philosophy and ethos.

Early Life and Formation of Habitus

The beginning of my identity formation began on a council estate in Wolverhampton. My mother and father are both proud working class, as were their parents and their parents before them. Lareau's (2018) sociological study of the relationship between social class and education examines how parenting styles can continue to reinforce social and class inequalities, whilst leaving children vulnerable in academic institutions. Her work centres around two main parenting styles; Concerted Cultivation and Natural Growth. My own experience closely mirroring the Natural Growth approach to child-rearing. This is perceived as a laissez-faire and naturalistic method and in some cases leads to a lack of entitlement, and incompatibility, within the structure of institutional learning. Kohn's (1969) research provides an explanation of institutional insecurity, detailing how middle-class parents push students toward leadership roles within the classroom, and have less hesitation engaging in confrontations with school authority figures. During my primary school years, there was a lack of emphasis toward academic achievement from my parents, with more emphasis placed on attendance.

During my early life, school was seen as a place of solace. As one of only 7 white British children in my class, I was surrounded by culture and diversity. My peers mirrored me, they struggled financially, and the majority did not have a typical nuclear family. There was a deep sense of belonging in primary school, serving as the starting point of my self-identity exploration and discovery of who I was within the wider world. I received praised for my intelligence, work ethic, and empathy from my teachers, shaping my emerging self-perception. Erikson's (1968) work details the intricacy of identity formation in adolescence, a crucial period where core beliefs and values are founded, often leading to crises when challenged later in life. The diversity of my primary school imprinted in me a sense of connection with a variety of ethnicities and cultures. Languages were traded, and lunches swapped – exchanging

tabbouleh, samosas and shawarma for ham sandwiches, yoghurts, and cheese blocks. Although I did not realise, I was disadvantaged and later, when challenged, led to a crisis of identity, as explained by Erikson. However, Hall (1990), challenges the idea of a fixed identity, instead describing the evolution and changing of identity. He argues 'Identity, in the second sense, is a matter of ''becoming'' as well as of ''being''. It belongs to the future as much as to the past.''. Hall rejects the simplicity of Erikson's argument and details how the fluidity of identity cannot be fixed due to growth and change. I experienced shifts in my emerging identity and how I perceived the world. Adaptability was a quality both parents possessed in their separation, and I had to act quickly to accept my new living circumstances. Who I was changed, along with how I viewed the world.

Navigating New Ground: Change and Intersectionality

The transition to middle school marked a significant chapter in my life, a shift in the educational, social, and cultural dynamics that surrounded me. In this predominantly white, middle-class environment, cultural capital and nuclear families were prevalent. Quickly, I realise I was at an academic disadvantage to peers. Achievements outside of school such as sporting teams, tuition, music lessons, were being rewarded and praised by teachers, emphasising my lack of cultural capital. Teachers were working in juxtaposition to hooks (1994) ideology of teaching to transgress the societal norms, and instead continued to reinforce and reward a white, middle-class norm while othering anything that did not conform to this paradigm. Throughout their work, hook's discusses their discomfort of being taught in a desegregated white school, where white teachers reinforced racial stereotypes. For myself, the reinforcement of a white, middle-class culture came in direct contrast to my previous school and surroundings. My dialect was corrected daily from 'we was' to 'we were' and 'ay I' to 'aren't I'. I found myself held back in maths lessons to finish work independently, unable to meet the standards being set. My previous praise was gone, leaving me feeling unintelligent, unempathetic and unsafe in this new institution. This triggered a personal crisis leading to a dislike for school and refusal to attend. What was once a place of solace became a source of distrust and distress.

It was in this part of my life that I first became aware of a gender imbalance. Opportunities were denied because I was a girl. There were gendered trips in school, sports teams, and games which I was excluded from because of my gender. This is where my intersectionality became present. I was not just poor; I was a girl. Crenshaw (1991) termed the phrase 'inter-sectionality' within her seminal work discussing the struggle of black women within society, however for my own personal experience, it is the intersection of my class and gender. Sport was a large part of my identity in middle school, I had wanted to play football and tag rugby, yet both teams were male only. Through fear of social isolation, I began to perform the traits and expectations that were reinforced by my peers, school leaders and at home. I began wearing feminine clothing, such as dresses and skirts. I captained the netball and rounders teams, both sports I had less interests in, but I could satisfy my love of competition. Butler's (1990) work on gender and performance is highlighted here within my own life as I continued to seek and repeat gendered acts that were deemed socially acceptable. At this point in my life, playing football was often chastised by peers. Anytime I engaged in playing football

it was met with a flurry of comments, questioning my sexuality and whether I was really a boy. With nearly 86% of Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Bisexual (LGBT) students hearing derogatory language aimed at sexuality and gender, in school (Stonewall, 2017), my experiences are not an isolated incident. Yet now with the success and representation of female footballers, such as the Lionesses, football for all genders has become widely socially accepted. Butler discusses this idea of social change over time stating, ''gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.'' (Butler, 1990:179). The need to fit in began to outweigh my need to explore my identity.

High School Moves: Negotiating Educational Powers and Policy Impact

As my county followed a middle-school to high school transition,I chose my options for GCSE in the first six months of arrival. The grades and expectations that followed me to high school were low and, when it came time to choose my options, I was limited in choice. I wanted to take German; a new challenge after learning French throughout middle school. I sat opposite my tutor as he looked over my options, matching them against my levels obtained leaving middle school. The path I had chosen led me toward the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), a combination of GCSE options that can provide wider opportunities when entering higher education, as well as increasing the chance of pupils staying in formal educational institutions (Anders et al, 2017). My tutor explained that I could not take a language and join the EBacc pathway, as the likelihood of obtaining the grades necessary was low. I protested, but to no avail. When speaking later to my mother, she was reluctant to challenge the ruling of my school, consistent with the Natural Growth parenting discussed earlier. Ball's (2003) work, centred on teacher performativity and accountability, provides an insight into the school's decision. My own holistic needs were marginalised to conserve league table standings, my school serving as the micro-lens for the broader educational goals relating to performance and accountability. The introduction of the Education Reform Act (1988) saw the introduction of league tables, comparing school performance and giving power to parents over their choice of school. This act prompted the marketisation of education, leading to a business centred approach to the running of educational institutions (Rikowski, 2003). As a result of the Reform Act, funding had become linked to student retention and attainment, with parents wanting to send their children to schools at the top league tables, schools at the bottom were left with lower funding, creating a perpetual cycle of low pupil numbers and low funding. My tutor was apologetic, upon reflection it seemed he too was struggling with the decision, as Ball postulates that teachers must forgo their own values and principles to align them with the expectations of the institution. I was powerless.

Freire (1970) would categorise this as an oppressive act, where my critical thinking was silenced to reinforce the aims of the school. This banking model of learning, where teachers deposit information to passive students, reinforces a culture of dependency and oppression, not allowing critical engagement and dialogue. By doing this, educational institutions can maintain control and reinforce their aims, which in my case was the refusal of entry for the EBacc for fear of a poor result. However, a turning point occurred in the last year of my sixth form when I made the decision not to apply for university. It was a moment of personal empowerment as I asserted control over my educational future. The school, accustomed to guiding students down the university route, found themselves powerless to alter my choice. Their determination for me to attend university was powered by the banner hung across our school gates, proudly stating that 96% of their students moved to higher education and I was a barrier to this year's higher statistic. This phase of my life accentuates the impact of policy and measurement culture on the aspirations of young students. Biesta (2010) dismisses the notion of education's sole purpose and drive to be toward outcomes, instead advocating for education as means of empowering students with autonomy. Had I been given the chance to pursue original interests, the path of my educational journey may have differed.

Teaching Dichotomies: Professional Identity and Educational Paradigms

Embarking on my journey as an Early Career Teacher (ECT) marked a pivotal phase where I grappled with the dichotomy of professional responsibility and the lingering sense of being a perpetual student. This period navigated the intricate dynamics of acquiring a new skill set, all while feeling the weight of isolation within a system that paradoxically treated me as both a teacher and a learner. The weight of an assessment-focused institution forced me to question my own education ethos.

I found this time of my career stressful. I was working in a year 6 classroom, post covid, and although our results were not officially released, within the federation there was a sense of proving ourselves to be at the top of our own inbuilt hierarchy. Giroux (2008) critically explores the impact of neoliberalism on education. His insights guide my understanding of the evolving educational landscape prompting me to question the implications of policy and educational morality. Giroux argues that the agenda of a neoliberalist government priorities privatisation and centralisation. This style of policy making can lead to a culture of authoritarianism, with neoliberal hegemony using surveillance and repression to maintain control. Within education, this control is enforced by statistical accountability filtering down to senior leaders in school and then teachers within the classroom. Every minute of the day revolved around Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SAT's) preparation. There was one occasion, after a weekend, I engaged with my class as we fed back to each other our weekend activities. My phase leader, who was working in my room 4 days a week, interrupted the class to ask 'are we not going to do any reading this morning?'. It was one of several instances where relationship building was subpar to the expectation of a results driven ethos. I found myself in the throes of Ball's teacher's performativity. I gained a newfound sense of empathy toward my own tutor who had denied my Ebacc route.

Apple's (2013) work details the deskilling of teachers through the controlling forces of policy. Apple described the use of intensification in which ''the work privileges of educational workers are eroded.'' (Apple, 2013:122), where overbearing curriculum management and use of standardised testing becomes the dominant forces driving the motivations of educators. The oppressive neoliberal ideology of government funnels down into local schools, leaving an overwhelming sense of pressure to achieve, but at points I found myself ignoring the needs of my learners. To combat this, Freire suggests acts of cognition to replace the sterile transfer of knowledge. I made the bold move of challenging the practice of my colleagues in school, calling for more criticality from my

students, abandoning pure SAT's based skills to a more investigative focus for learning. I challenged pupils to use their prior knowledge and extend it past the mere banality of assessment. An example of this was a problem-solving lesson on fractions of amounts. Upon advice from our maths lead, the lesson should have been a mix of worded SAT's styles problems taken directly from previous years SAT's papers. Instead, I brought in a recipe card and a host of wide-ranging ingredients, challenging my students to gather the correct amounts through a host of mathematical sums. The instructions read ''4/6 of 120g of sugar'' etc. The engagement, dialogue and criticality in their approach led to one of the most successful math lessons of my career. I was astonished by their participation, as their usual engagement was low, and it became a turning point in my career. The skills I enabled these children to build reached far past the stakes of the SATs and had real world implications and that became the focal point of my practise.

Reflection

Embarking on this autoethnographic journey has been a revelation. It has unravelled the intricate ties between my intrinsic worth and the working-class identity I held. As I reflect on the narratives within this assignment, the impact of my habitus has become evident, shaping not only my personal identity but also influencing my professional journey. The self-reflections depicted within this journey has given insight into the formation of my habitus and allowed an introspective view of my life that I had not yet undertaken.

Whilst reflecting on my academic journey, as both learner and educator, there have been several moments where I have recalled incidents that have formed the lenses that have built my world view and perspective, as well as informing my practise and future endeavours for research in education. From primary school, through to my ECT years, there is no denying the impact these experiences have had in shaping my habitus and identity. From the departure of my working-class multicultural roots to the rich cultural capital gain of my time abroad, as well as the ambivalence and guilt at the cornerstone of many of my academic and personal achievements, which this autoethnographic journey has highlighted.

I was oblivious to the ties of my self-worth to my working-class upbringing. I have realised that a lack of control over my decisions and power leaves me feeling disenfranchised, which is eye-opening. This introspection has prompted a critical review of how I respond to change and the need to make a concerted effort to view these as a necessary experience, as opposed to an attack on my identity. Exploring gender stereotyping in the primary classroom stems from a drive to ensure equality and fair access for all, following experiences from my childhood. Equality has become the foundation for my educational research and is at the forefront of my critical thinking, prompting me to ask 'Does everyone benefit from this? Or only certain groups?'. This inquiry surpasses a simplistic academic pursuit; it is a personal quest to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape. The lens through which I view these issues is certainly coloured by the habitus formed in my early years. However, this realisation prompts a committed approach to research with a critical lens, acknowledging the impact of my identity while remaining open to nuanced perspectives and challenging ideology.

As I contemplate future research directions, this autoethnographic exploration is a stepping stone toward a more comprehensive understanding of the intersections between identity, education,

and societal expectations. This autoethnography has not only provided an opportunity for self-reflection but has also high-lighted a path for future research practise. This explorative practise has also instilled the need to continue to reflect critically on the experiences of my academic and personal life, to improve further my understanding of practise and biases (Schon, 1987). By acknowledging the impact of habitus on identity and aspirations, I aspire to contribute to a broader conversation on the intricate dynamics shaping individuals' journeys through education and societal expectations

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Shaping my Philosophy: Becoming a Mother, Unbecoming a Teacher, Becoming Stacy
Stacy Johnson – Teacher of Performing Arts and EdD Student Birmingham City University

Introduction

This article is the first of a two-part series. In this article, I will engage in a process of self-inquiry, examining the influence of key figures in my career and personal life, using them as a framework to examine specific aspects of my identity, pedagogy and provenance as a teacher and an emerging researcher.

In September 2023 I embarked upon the next stage of my career as a teacher and a professional, with the commencement of a Doctorate in Education with Birmingham City University. The starting point for this momentous journey has been a thorough exploration of my positionality as a researcher. This process has been both illuminating and invaluable, providing a rare opportunity to examine the unique circumstances in which my pedagogy as a teacher and my identity as a woman have emerged. Alcoff (1988) refers to positionality as where one is located in relation to the various social identities they embody, and the way in which the combination of these identities and their intersections determine how we understand and engage with the world. In doing as Alcoff suggests, during this paper I will begin to draw upon key concepts and theories including Bourdieu's concept 'habitus', Foucault's 'the self as subject' and Zizek's theory of 'events' to frame the experiences and contextual factors I believe to be pivotal in developing my stance on relevant education policy and philosophical viewpoints as well as research and teaching practice. Furthermore, as a researcher engaging in what I hope to be rich qualitative data, I aim to explore complex areas of research including, at times, those within the field of sociology. As such it is crucial that I am able to uncover the "most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds that make up the social universe, as well as the `mechanisms' that tend to ensure their reproduction or transformation" (Bourdieu, 1996, p1 cited in Reay 2004 p431). Within this paper I have sought to uncover and examine the foundations of my practice as an educator and researcher, provoking questions about the implications for my future practice and research. For Bourdieu, "one of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied, it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions" (Raey 2004 p432), and for this reason it is important that researchers acknowledge and understand what guides and influences their own perceptions of the world in order to make truly meaningful use of data. "Habitus provides a lens for understanding practice and knowledge" (Costa and Murphy 2015 p7), and it is through an examination of my own experiences and identity formation that I aim to develop an informed perspective to ground future criticality and analysis.

During a process of enquiry into the social identities that I have embodied and the mental attitudes and perceptions I hold, I have been drawn to one recurring thread-being a woman and what it means to be a woman in today's world. Throughout this paper I will use some of the women who have shaped and reshaped my identity and consequently my practice and positionality, as a framework to examine specific aspects of my identity, pedagogy and provenance. In using this structure, I will take a feminist stance on interpreting my positionality. In doing so, I hope to explore the distinctive complexities of being female, as well as a mother, a teacher and researcher. I am interested in the many facets that interplay within these roles both professionally and personally, examining them from the perspective that is most familiar to me, that of a thirty-three-year-old female living in the UK. As Bellwoar (2005) points out, many female theorists have examined and explored "the instability and plurality of their own identities during the processes of research" (Bellwoar 2005 p190) and it seems appropriate that I embark on a similar process.

Section 1: Female Identities and Identity Development

Figure 1: Sandra Brown – My Mother
- Born and raised in Yardley, Birmingham to working class parents
- No education beyond secondary – no professional career
- Survived breast cancer at 36
- Survived blood clot at 40
- Confident, positive, fiercely feminine, and incredibly nurturing

Lovell (2001) in her article 'Thinking Feminism with and against Bourdieu' highlights an important aspect of habitus in the form of "gendered habitus" (Lovell 2001 p28). She reflects on the significance of our gender in how we perceive the world and how the world perceives us. Bourdieu's theories remind us that our perception of the world is shaped and then framed by our contextual experiences and as Lovell, as well as Butler (1988) further demonstrate, our gender is a significant factor within that. Their work also argues that it is difficult to escape the expectations of our gender and we inevitably learn what those expectations are from the representations of gender we see around us. When reflecting on my earliest representation of the female identity it is my mother that is most notable, and it is for that reason that a key aspect of this paper will explore the impact and influences of her influence in shaping my identity as a teacher and a woman.

It could be argued that the influence of a mother on a child's identity, in particular a daughter's identity is hugely significant. A mother is a daughter's "primary guide, source of identification, and role model for many issues associated with being female" (Chodorow, 1978; Edelman, 1994; Pill & Zabin, 1997 cited in Rowe and Hareman 2014 p28). When reflecting on my own mother I think of a strong willed yet unfalteringly warm caregiver. My fondest memories as a child are of her dancing around the kitchen and driving with loud music in her soft top 4X4. I also recall how she created a home for us in which all were welcome, I remember birthday parties meticulously planned and sleepovers with sweets and pizza. I also remember long chats by the fire and broken hearts healed with a smile and a listening ear. From my mother I learnt many things, but most significantly I learnt that life is for living and that kindness is an unlimited resource. I also gained from this female role model a source of great strength and resilience; a trait that I have leaned upon within my practice at many times of adversity. However, offering a contrary viewpoint, the field of psychology offer a useful concept in evaluating the influence of our early experiences on our perceptions of the world. Within the area of

Transactional Analysis, exists a notion that as developing children the actions and interactions of our caregivers generate one of five psychological drivers (Kahler and Capers 1974). The relevance of this theory is that in evaluating the drivers that I possess; it becomes apparent that they are a guiding principle in my pedagogy as a teacher and a researcher. Kahler and Capers identify the 'be strong' driver as one whereby we feel the need to withhold our emotions and/or needs to fulfil the needs of those around us (Kahler and Capers 1974). This becomes significant for my position as researcher and a practitioner as it is possible that in evaluating my experiences and those of others, I may feel the need to reject the influence of emotion in the situation, despite its possible value. Furthermore, it would not be inconceivable to assume that within my practice as a teacher I have at times been susceptible to a negation of my own wants and needs in favour of meeting the needs of my pupils.

Building on this and acknowledging a significant shift in my identity development, as well as the formation of psychological drivers, at the age of 13 I lost my mother unexpectedly in a roadside collision. At that moment my world shifted catastrophically and as Rowe and Harman (2014) describe, I had to 'grow up' almost overnight" (Rowe and Harman 2014 p?). At that moment, the trajectory of my life choices, opportunities and development shifted irrevocably. At a time when my identity was rapidly forming, I was suddenly forced to re-evaluate what it meant to be me. As Žižek (2014) alludes to in his work Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept, this moment was an event that interrupted the foundations of my perceptions and identity. Žižek refers "a change or disintegration of the frame through which reality appears" (Žižek 2014 cited in Hamiliton 2016 p212), suggesting that this significant event in my history represents a moment that is pivotal in how my future practice and philosophy has emerged. In addition, considering Žižek's theory alongside those of Butler (1988) and Bourdieu, (1996, cited in Reay 2004) it is conceivable that this event remains an enduring influence not only on how my identity as a woman developed during adolescence but also filtrates into all facets of my current practice as a teacher and a researcher.

Section 2: A Pull to Education

Figure 2: A Level Drama Teacher
- Individual
- Dedicated, organised, calm and collected
- Encouraging

Figure 2 represents what I can remember of my A Level Drama and Theatre Studies teacher and significantly a moment in my life where I decided that I was committed to becoming a Drama teacher myself. I studied my A Levels at what is now referred to as Birmingham Metropolitan College. I completed four A levels: Dance, Drama, Business and Law. To give further context, I opted to leave the school at which I had completed secondary education in favour of a local FE college. The college was a large institution currently offering over 100 courses. It was a large, state of the art building and to me offered an exciting new chapter of my life as a young person. In reflecting on the life choices made around education, I have begun to unpick my own reasons for wanting to stay connected to

education, both as a student, a teacher and now as a researcher. As the first and last member of my family, immediate or otherwise, to stay in education beyond the compulsory age it is interesting to explore what has drawn me to education and what the implications of this are on my current and future practice.

Several key themes arise when exploring this section of my positionality. One possible line of enquiry, which builds on the arguments in the previous section, is explored by Hadar (2023), who suggests that at the time of parental loss many young people find school as source of support _ a constant. This was significantly relevant to my circumstances I believe. At school I received praise, encouragement and challenge – something that was not consistent at home. At school I excelled, and I had control.

Hadar's notion, supported by others such as Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) and Brookfield (1998) supports the idea that perhaps my drive towards education is underpinned by a need to emulate the experiences of the parent-child relationship that I lacked as an adolescent following the death of my mother. Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006) support the idea that children are influenced by the relationships they have with their teachers and that the type of interaction can directly influence both their academic and emotional development. As a young person, experiencing trauma, the significance of the positive relationships with my teachers, particularly female teachers could be seen as a particularly influential factor. As cited in Rucinski and Brown (2018); "warm, communicative teacher – child relationships may increase children's academic performance via increased emotional security and self-confidence, resources of energy and attention devoted to learning, and positive attitudes toward and engagement in school" (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006 cited by Rucinski and Brown 2018 p993) – meaning that the relationships I had with teachers and leaders during my educational experience as a student could have been highly integral to my sense of self and attitude towards learning. Furthermore, there is evidence of this influence in my practice and rationale as a teacher today. It has become clear to me that a key element of my pedagogy is to build positive relationships with pupils and to create a learning environment where all can achieve. It is likely that the combination of my response to trauma and the positive relationships created by the classroom teachers have informed some of the fundamental elements of my approach to young people and learning. For instance, within my rationale to education exists the belief that all young people deserve to have an advocate for their value as individuals and that as a practitioner it is my role to be that advocate.

Furthermore, as suggested by Bourdieu's concept habitus, our previous social experiences often lead us to "`reproduce' the social conditions of our own production" (Bourdieu, 1990c, p87), therefore implying that as a result of my own experiences within education I seek to recreate similar experiences for the students in my classroom. The caution with this however, is that said reproduction happens in an "unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products" (Bourdieu, 1990c, p87). In other words, the possibility that I have been trying to recreate a similar experience for my students to that which I had in my own schooling (as a valuable source of support during trauma) has happened unconsciously for most of my career. Reflecting critically, I recognise that without conscious awareness of the

foundations of this aspect of my pedagogy, there have been occasions where I have found myself as a practitioner at odds with what was being expected of me as a professional and what I felt compelled to do for my pupils. Potentially and unknowingly projecting my trauma onto the young people in front of me, at times has caused a lack of objectivity and an instinctive, yet unnecessary, desire to protect the young people in my care. This protective instinct was magnified during the pregnancy of my first child, which I will further examine later.

Linking to this and another thread worthy of note in this section is the influence of key educational philosophers that I have engaged with throughout my higher and teacher education. One of these philosophers is Paulo Freire and his work on Pedagogy of the Oppressed. It seems unsurprising to me now, at this point in my self-inquiry, that Freire's ideas resonate strongly with me. I can say, from personal experience that as teachers and educators we hold great power and the young people in our care are forever impacted by the way in which we interact with them. For Freire, education is "an ongoing process of empowerment" with the objective of creating "critical agents" (Giroux 2021 p83). As an undergraduate with a view to entering the world of teaching, Freire's values aligned closely with my ideas about the power of education and the power to overcome adversity. Freire advocated for the insistence of building critical consciousness as a fundamental element of education (Giroux 2021). As a practitioner these manifest in my practice in both the content I create and the interactions I have with young people. His ideas encouraged me then and now to ask, "what if it wasn't like this?' 'What if things could be different?'. As a researcher his work has given momentum to my innate curiosity and criticality of the world.

A key theme in Freire's work is the notion that education is either oppressive or empowering (Freire 2000, Giroux 2021). Linking to the ideas discussed earlier in this section it is apparent to me that the roles we play as educators play a significant part in how education is experienced for young people. Reflecting on my experience as a student, taking on, as Brookfield discusses, the lens of myself as a learner (Brookfield 1998) I am drawn to a review of not only how the teachers in my schooling interacted with me, but in how their interaction shaped my perception of myself. Foucault (1982) in his work 'The Subject and Power', proposes that our identity is made up of multiple factors, including but not limited to, how we view ourselves and how we are seen by others. Foucault has spoken about the self as a 'subject' and "the way a human being turns himself into a subject" (Foucault 1982 p778). My interpretation of this is that as human beings we create conscious and unconscious sets of rules and expectations for ourselves, based on how we want to be perceived by the social world and adapt our behaviour accordingly. Contributing to this creation is the way in which we are viewed, as a subject, by those around us. In examining my early experiences of education, applying Foucault's theory as a reflexive lens, it could be argued that the way I, as a student, was perceived by teachers enabled me to see myself as something distinctive. It enabled me to separate my identity as 'bereaved child', and instead create an identity for myself as 'successful learner'. It is plausible therefore to consider that this aspect of my identity has continued to manifest into my professional career.

As a student, I achieved highly with desirable academic outcomes, then went on to succeed at further education and higher education- despite being what now as a teacher I would recognise as a pupil with significant 'barriers to learning'. My personal success journey through adversity has shaped my aspirations for the young people in my classroom and the participants in my research. As a teacher holding Qualified Teacher Status in England, it is an expectation that I will "set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils" (Department for Education n.d), however for me this element of my pedagogy is fundamental and rooted in deeply personal experiences of overcoming adversity. It is also important to note that this aspect of my philosophy is a significant factor in my drive towards further research. The desire to motivate and challenge all within education, especially the teacher within that system is a desire that comes from my own desire to overcome oppression and engage critically with the world.

Continuing to be reflexive in my interpretation I recognise that in being so emotionally entangled with education, and having my personal identity so closely intertwined with my role as a student/teacher that I am susceptible to vulnerability. Furthermore, as a researcher, there is a risk that I may struggle to be at all impartial and instead look for views that confirm what I want and need to hear, a concept that is supported by McSweeney (2021).

Section 3: Artistic expression

Figure 3: Frances Dawson

- Dance teacher
- Absolutely fabulous and fierce
- Running a successful business and charity independently
- Showed unfaltering encouragement to all students

As both a student and as a teacher I have been drawn to the expressive arts. I am a drama teacher and a former competitive dancer. As a teenager, dance was always a place where I could focus my mind and distance myself from the world outside. But rather than escaping the world it felt as though I was entering the world – becoming the authentic me – the real me that wasn't oppressed by the turbulence of my personal life. Frances taught me to have high expectations of pupils, regardless of their ability or their background. I believe that, at a time when my identity was fragile (following the death of my mother) she provided an example of what a woman could do. In building a successful business, whilst projecting a contagious exuberance for life, she defied many social norms. Referring to the work of Lovell (2001) I believe Frances contributed significantly to my understanding of what a woman could achieve. In addition, as has become apparent in multiple sections of this paper, I believe it is significant to recognise that I am a drama teacher. For many years I have referred to myself as 'teacher of students', not a 'teacher of drama' but I have begun to recognise that being a drama teacher is at the core of my pedagogy and the intersectionality of this aspect of my positionality is apparent. The significance of being a drama teacher as a key element of my rationale for teaching is something I will unpick further in the next section of this paper.

References

For the full references list, please see the second article to this series: **My Philosophy: Becoming a Mother, Unbecoming a Teacher, Becoming Stacy**, found in this journal edition.

My Philosophy: Becoming a Mother, Unbecoming a Teacher, Becoming Stacy

Stacy Johnson – Teacher of Performing Arts and EdD Student Birmingham City University

Introduction

This is the second of a two-part series. In the previous article I engaged in a process of self-inquiry, examining the influence of a range of women with whom I have interacted throughout my development as a teacher and an emerging researcher. In this concluding article I bring together the experiences which led to my decision to take a step away from education as well as the emergence of a philosophy which brought me back.

Section 4: 'Becoming a Mother, Unbecoming a Teacher, Becoming Stacy

- Headteacher of multi academy trust state secondary school
- Inner city
- Newly appointed

This concluding section I have labelled 'Becoming a mother, Unbecoming a teacher, Becoming Stacy" as I feel that it was a time when all the facets of my positionality were in collision, and as a result forced me to decide what was important. Engaging further with Zizek's concept 'events', it has been important to reflect on a period of my career that I now see as fundamental in the shaping of my current practice and philosophy towards education.

In July 2020 I returned to my position as Teacher of Drama at a state academy secondary school following 11 months maternity leave for my first daughter. Whilst in some ways I had returned to that which I had left 12 months earlier, in more ways that not everything had changed. As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, this period began with a series of virtual meetings and online lessons during the summer of 2020 and was followed by a phased return to 'normal' schooling in September 2020. This period of my career forced me to evaluate what it really meant to be a teacher and as referred to above, a drama teacher. During this period, what it meant to be a drama teacher was stripped almost entirely. With pupils confined to 'bubbles' and 'base rooms' the period between September 2020 and July 2021 (when I made the decision to step away from teaching temporarily) was a time of great uncertainty and vulnerability. Contributing to this and relevant to my unique circumstances, Thomson & Kehily (2010) discuss the origins of teaching as being closely intertwined with 'mothering' duties, but that in recent neo-liberal contexts the experience and expectations of teachers has changed. They examine how "changes in the educational landscape have disrupted the empathetic bond between teacher and pupil, as care gives way to individualised learning programmes and strictly adhered to forms of educational development" (Thomson and Kehily 2010 p236). This literature appears particularly relevant to explore my experiences during this period of my career. At a time when my life had already shifted unrecognisably, becoming a mother

as well as being engulfed in a national lockdown, I was now faced with fundamental changes in the one place where I had always sought consistency, education.

Interestingly, upon reflection on this time, it has become apparent that the influence of this period of my career began well before the global pandemic. In this section, I want to expand on ideas that I began to explore during my previous research as part of a master's level teaching and learning dissertation. I will begin by providing a further review of the macro context of the school and the educational landscape that I operated within during this time. The woman represented in the image above symbolises that experience. She is representative of wider, complex issues connected to leaders in education, of significance for my experiences: female leaders in education. The image represents an opposition to my values as a teacher and a culture of education that I see more and more.

Before the pandemic, including the time I spent within this institution prior to maternity leave, the school experienced what I see now to be the impact of neo-liberal practices and ideologies. Giroux (2013) provides a useful definition of neo-liberalism which seems appropriate to begin this discussion. He suggests that neo-liberalism is;
"unbridled free-market fundamentalism [that] employs modes of governance, discipline, and regulation that are totalizing in their insistence that all aspects of social life be determined, shaped and weighted through market-driven measures… it is also a mode of pedagogy and set of social arrangements that uses education to win consent, [and] produce consumer-based notions of agency" (Giroux 2013 p459).

From this, I am drawn to the notion that current educational practices, as echoed by Thomson and Kehily (2010), are encapsulated by the needs of the society and that 'agency' is a social construction- an idea that links to the views of educationalists like Bourdieu and Foucault. It provokes a question within my own self-reflection about how much I as an agent in my pedagogy had power to construct my practice and to what extent my practice was defined by those in positions of power. Mudge (2008) adds to this debate defining neoliberalism as "the superiority of individualised market-based competition over other modes of education" (Mudge, 2008 p4). The common thread here being the weight placed on the needs of the 'market'. Mudge however is distinct in the way she highlights the 'individualised' nature of education within a society led by neoliberal ideas. Neoliberalism seeks to negate itself and make itself invisible under the guise of 'the free market', 'itself' in this situation being the centralised governing body. In other words, if there is a problem, the 'market' (i.e., the people within it) will fix it. The problem with this, and what I have seen within my own experiences is that a school can capitalise by manipulating said market (league tables/exams grades for example) or an individual teacher can capitalise by manipulating their practice to provide evidence of what is valued in that 'market' or institution. Building upon the points raised by Mudge and Giroux, Lambert (2015) goes further in suggesting how governmental decisions informed by neoliberal ideologies impact directly upon classroom teachers in the way of "reforms [that] trickle down educational pathways to become classroom realities" (Lambert 2015 p2): a point echoed by Bell

and Stevenson (2006). Whilst engaging with this literature it has become clear to me that the wider educational landscape has huge implications for me as a classroom teacher and that despite not being directly involved in the policy making, it is within the classroom that the impact of education reform is manifested. Ball et al (2012) suggests that the implementation of policy is a complex mix of factors, which includes personal values, available resources and stakeholder power and perceptions (Ball et al 2012) and in a similar pool of thought, Easton refers to policy as the "authoritative allocation of values" (Easton, 1953 p56). Their arguments offer the notion that if policy dictates values, it could be that teachers, including myself, suffer "value schizophrenia" where their "commitment, judgement and authenticity in practice are sacrificed for impression and performance" (Ball 2003 p221). The concept 'value schizophrenia' resonates strongly with my experiences prior and post maternity leave. During my pregnancy, at a time when my maternal instincts had peaked, I was in an environment where the natural maternal elements of teaching had been marginalised in favour of academic outcomes. At a time where I felt compelled to nurture pupils, I was expected to be distant and clinical.

Building on this idea, Barber (2007) offers the term "deliverology" (p208) as a reflection on current systems of accountability within teaching. His view is that the ideology behind the current system of education has an over focus on results that are 'delivered' and consequently the unique journey of ones' learning is overlooked. The concept of 'performativity' through results amongst teachers feels particularly relevant in relation to my experiences post maternity leave. At a time when my identity as a teacher, a woman and mother was unclear I also felt the pressure to continue to 'perform'. Laney et al (2014) describe the process of becoming a mother as "losing and regaining the self" (Laney et all 2014 p132). In returning to my role 'teacher', I felt inclined to regain the aspects of myself that contributed to that identity and as I have uncovered, vital aspects of my identity as a person. However, in opposition to this desire was a host of government restrictions and conflicting demands forcing me to adapt my behaviours. Reflecting on this, Page (2016) talks about the surveillance of teachers in a world of 'performativity'. He comments on how teachers now face scrutiny from all angles- parents, senior leadership, Ofsted and the students themselves and that teachers now "operate in a context of normalised visibility" (Page 2016 p2). Whereby it is the norm to be continuously monitored, reviewed and scrutinised. What Page hadn't experienced at this time however was a period in global education that disrupted all areas of the 'norm'.

He suggests that leaders are driven by "a preoccupation with risk: the risk of a poor inspection, poor exam results, poor league table ranking, negative parental attention, bad press in the media" etc (Page 2016 p2). It is interesting reflecting on Page's writing now following the disruption caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The period following the pandemic represented for me a period significantly 'preoccupied with risk' and consequently a restructuring of my priorities as a professional. As both a teacher and a mother during this time, 'managing risk' became a guiding principle in nearly all decisions. In a review of the legacy of Covid 19 on education, Breslin (2021) explores the impact of the pandemic on both students and their teachers. He offers a statement from the Department of Health and Social Care in relation to the return to face-to-face teaching in autumn of 2020;
"Transmission of COVID-19 to staff members in school does

occur, and data from UK and international studies suggest it may largely be staff to staff (like other workplaces) rather than pupil to staff. This reinforces the need to maintain social distancing and good infection control inside and outside classroom settings" (Department of Health and Social Care 2020 cited in Breslin 2021 p43).

This statement encapsulates a feeling of heightened risk and fear felt during this very uncertain time. Suddenly as teachers on the front line, we were afraid of each other and our students. Considering Bourdieu's argument that our habitus is continually redeveloped by our everyday experiences, as well as Foucault's notion as the 'self as subject' (Foucault 1982 p778) it would be naive to not give credit to the influence of my post pandemic experiences. As a new mother, I was fully aware of the dangers of Covid 19 for me and my infant daughter, yet also craved a sense of normality and a feeling a competency in my professional role. This had important implications on my then and current practice as an educator. I recognise that without the strong relationships with pupils I had previously built up, I felt somewhat ill-equipped to fulfil my role effectively. As I have recognised previously, positive relationships with pupils have always been a core element of my pedagogy and during this time all relationships were restricted and regulated. As well as a physical distance between pupils and teachers, there existed at that time emotional distance, whereby both my pupils and I were weary of each other. In addition, as Foucault's work implies the way in which students viewed me at this time, I feel had a significant impact on my own self view. Where I had once felt seen by pupils as the 'drama teacher', who's lessons were distinct from the rest of the curriculum, I was now just another teacher stood in their box (physically in a box taped out on the floor). This period reinforced to me the need to have positive, meaningful relationships with pupils, built on mutual respect, as well as the essential individuality of drama as a subject. Breslin (2021) refers to the emphasis presented by government bodies in making up for 'lost time' (Breslin 2021 p116). The complexity with this however, as somewhat alluded to by Breslin, is that the focus became catching up on formal learning that was 'lost', yet neglected the need for what some might describe as 'informal' learning. The softer skills – emotional awareness, communication, empathy and collaboration – all traits fundamental to a drama lesson. The irony is that even when schools were re-opened for face-to-face teaching, very little of this happened. It was in this period where on reflection, I began to fully appreciate the complexity and privilege of being a drama teacher.

During this period, it also became apparent that the restrictive nature of already highly regulated neo-liberal academy culture was being accelerated by the post lockdown regulations. Giroux's earlier explanation of neoliberalism referred to 'all social aspects to be defined' (Giroux 2013 p459). At this time, school leaders had been given exact instructions to do just that. Furthermore, even once the legal restrictions of the pandemic eased, the structures that had emerged during this period, silent corridors and segregated social times etc, were retained way beyond the removal of legal social distancing, further enhancing the control and conformity culture of this school and quite possibly, many others. Supporting this, over two decades ago, Ball (2003) wrote about the invasive and persuasive nature of educational policy, suggesting that the legacy left by the pandemic only exaggerated issues already deeply engrained. Policy for Ball "does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do" but "changes who they are" (Ball 2003 p215). The significance of this for my

practice can be usefully explored through a concept offered by Laney et al (2014). The authors suggest that new mothers experience a process of "expanded consciousness" (Laney et al 2014 p134) following the birth of a child. This expanded consciousness manifested for me in an increased criticality of the policies and ideologies playing out around me. Where I might previously have accepted the decisions made by leaders and policy makers, I now felt compelled to question those practices which did not align to my values as a teacher and as a woman. This increased criticality has remained a constant within my practice today and I hope will form a strong foundation for my future research.

Conclusion: Thinking ahead

The women I have described and the themes that link to them represent aspects of me as a person and as a teacher and exploring them has provided further insight into why I do the things I do and feel the way I feel in times of pressure. Importantly three recurrent themes have emerged that intersect with one another as part of my daily practice; myself as a motherless daughter, myself as a teacher of drama and myself as a critical practitioner. The ramifications of this, which I have begun to examine within this paper, are great.

In my role as a researcher, I am interested in exploring *alongside* other teachers how the many facets of their own experiences impact upon their ability to sustain (and remain) within the profession. As well as the extent to which they, as professionals, are aware of the 'bidirectional influences' (Aubrey and Riley 2017, p150) on the many facets of their lives and whether it is possible, as Freire advocates for education to inspire and awaken not only the students, we teach but us as teachers. Within this paper I am aware that I have only scraped the surface in fully appreciating the complexity of my positionality yet have also begun to develop a level of reflection and reflexivity that will allow me to acknowledge the challenges, as well as the value, of my position within research.

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Embracing Rhizomatic-Nomadism: Exploring Positionality in the Journey of Becoming-researcher PART 1

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What has shaped me into the person I am? What has impacted on the professional that I am? To address these questions, I draw upon Tripp's (1993) work on 'critical incidents,' that illuminate the impact on social and education policy, philosophical standpoint, research paradigms, and teaching practice on the multi-dimensional nature of my researcher positionality. As I portray my lived experiences as textual "vignettes," my most cherished memories come from pivotal events that reconfigured my cognitive landscape and prevailing ideologies (Zizek, cited in Hamilton, 2016). In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in positionality and its significance within academic research (Warren, 2017; O'Conner 2022; Czerniawski, 2023). The role of auto-ethnology as an approach to guide positionality, can reveal personal habitus and professional capacity to clarify and amplify my professional voice (Anderson, 2006). This involves the acknowledgment that my own individual history, background, identities, and belief systems influence outcomes within research endeavours (Crenshaw, 1991).

Throughout this paper, a concise analysis of reflexivity of key events are made, which involves critical self-awareness and introspection throughout establishing my position, thereby heightening academic rigour (Guetterman et al. 2015). Habitus has been shown to play a pivotal role in positionality, with Bourdieu (1990) emphasising the importance of recognising deeply ingrained dispositions, which can shape the research agenda and approach. Kincheloe & McLaren (2000) parallels Bourdieu, arguing a continuous interrogation into own perspectives, biases, and values is needed to avoid undue influence on research design and exposition. Reflexivity makes a strong case for researchers, not unlike myself, to engage in critical self-reflection to mitigate potential biases and enhance the trustworthiness of findings. According to Collins and Bilge (2016) the complex nature of incorporating intersectionality into researcher reflexivity warrants further exploration. The scholars warn that ignoring intersectionality can lead to incomplete or misleading understandings of educational phenomena, especially evident when delving into the multidimensional ideologies, ontology, and epistemology that interplay within the research process.

To consider the extent of my position, I designed a mosaic art piece (Diagram 1) to use as a lens through which you can see the origins of my identity and how differential aspects collide, interlocking and intersecting. Drawing on my scientific acumen and understanding of the world, it is symbolic of the universe in its continuously expanding nature, not unlike my scholarly inquiry, highlighting my ongoing process of acquiring and refining knowledge. It is certainly true that art has the power to transcend boundaries and communicate complex ideas in a visual and accessible way (Mitchell et al. 2011; Knowles and Cole, 2007).

My position argues the importance of 'becoming,' an underlying principle of Deleuze and Guattarian philosophy, with a spiral design representative of a transformative "new image of thought," further challenging static identity notions in research positionality and 'confirmation biases' that could form (Wason, 1960; Evans, 2016). My autoethnographic journey ends up linking the personal to pedagogical theory focusing attention
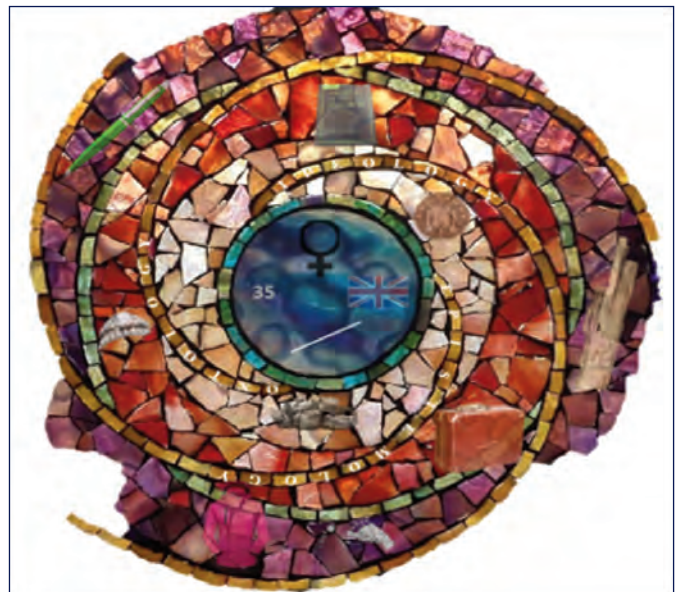

Diagram 1 – My researcher positionality

to relationships between a sense of 'being' and 'becoming,' crossing boundaries as a 'Nomad-Rhizome researcher,' mirroring qualities of an emergence of criticality in which I rediscover my sense of self that ultimately redefines me as a human being.

Vignette

I am a 35-year-old, British female. These are interpreted as my constant or 'fixed' notions of identity. However, identity is much more than this. An often-cited phrase, Foucault declared 'Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same'. For Foucault, the idea of a straightforward, fixed identity is difficult to accept. Agreeably, our lives offer various discourses at key times, so there is a change in the way of thinking, like a path veered off or a root shooting off in a different direction...from being to becoming.

When considering my 'situatedness,' Rowe (2014) implores that a researcher's positionality can change over time. Although some notions of identity are constant, others, such as personal life history and experiences are more fluid, subjective and contextual as noted by Chiseri-Strater (1996). This raises the question of upholding scholarly integrity, thereby acknowledging an ideological standpoint is essential for facilitating nuanced data interpretation, identifying research constraints, and established methodological rigor (Semetsky, 2007: 198). Grounding myself in qualitative inquiry, and informed by poststructuralist perspectives, my approach accentuates the fluidity of my subjectivity, thereby underscoring the importance of continuous identity negotiation as I aim to explore lived experiences in education. Of particular interest, Butler (2016) asserts the importance of transversing power,

ethics, and relationship dynamics in research environments, crucially substantiated by a growing number of literatures including Darwin Holmes (2020), Rowe (2014) and Zamora (2016).

Deleuze and Guattarian philosophical principles regarding 'being' and 'becoming,' resonate the spiral configuration that symbolises a paradigm shift towards transformative "lines of flight," interrogating conventional, static notions of identity within the context of my research positionality (Deleuze and Guattari, 2001). As Natanasabapathy and Maathius-Smith (2019: 370) posit the state of being reflects how a person's nature or behaviour is at present. Arguably, 'becoming' is a transition towards an embodiment of a desired change which will demonstrate a transformative movement, offering new possibilities and change: for us as researchers to be prepared to accept unanticipated findings that may contradict our deeply held views. A criticism of this approach is to verify its authenticity, to demonstrate that transformation has successfully taken place, leads to the importance to distinguish that a changed behaviour, belief, or attitude has occurred over a prolonged duration. In view of this, to connect to others by what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what concepts we think to think other concepts with (Hausermann and Adomako, 2022) Henceforth, critical incidents and events mentioned within this paper have meaningfully shaped my position and align with these views proposed here.

As discussed by Le Guin (2019: 37) the most important and illuminating stories are often found in the metaphorical carrier bags of experience filled with memories of the past that we all carry with us. By adapting Le Guin's (1986,2019) 'Carrier bag of theory' framework, semi-transparent objects are used within the mosaic art piece to find the 'untold' stories. Although these stories are not about making linear progress towards goals, they elucidate the complexity of objects, ideas, and experiences that we gather along the way and can tell a different story about being human, about struggling, learning, nurturing, and helping one another (O'Conner et al. 2022: 94).

Vignette

My family's background is defined by working class, minimum paid coal workers. I grew up on a council estate, although quiet, the area had a reputation for trouble. My family had a firm belief that despite achieving several A-A GCSE's, I must leave school at 16 to find work, earn a living and pay my way in life. Which I did... dropping out of sixth form, to the despair of my teachers, I joined the military shortly after celebrating my 17th birthday. However, at 25 years old, I was the first person to go to university. Upon retrospection, my family had a fear that I was stepping out of what was considered the norm.*

Bourdieu's (1984: 170) examination of habitus is notable, that shaped by past events, influences current practices and conditions our very perceptions of these, potentially introducing bias without clear reflexivity. To put this another way, individuals are constructed in particular ways depending on the environment. In retrospect, it is clear how discourses become deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel

and act in determinant ways (Wacquant 2005, cited in Navarro 2006: 16).

Historically, the habitus of my family is characterised by a working-class background predominantly engaged in minimum waged, constrained coal-related occupations. Marxist theories (Springer, 2012), particularly within the relations of history, recognise labour-related issues, economic inequalities, and the significance of workers' rights, not dissimilar to my family's experiences. These views posit class struggles as history's driving force, as it sees capitalism as the most recent and critical historic stage. This deep-rooted influence on my values has denoted a strengthened capacity for empathetic understanding and methodological rigor in research endeavours. Furthermore, the "work mentality" cultivated in such an ideological framework further fortifies my scholarly dedication, instilling an advocacy-oriented vantage point, originating from my desire to challenge societal norms surrounding working class researchers.

Unlike Marxist standpoints, a meritocratic view suggests that regardless of social position at birth, society does offer enough opportunity and mobility for 'talent' to combine with 'effort' to progress. Undoubtedly, the key cultural means of legitimation for contemporary neoliberal cultures, whilst promising opportunity, justifies the existing social hierarchy, as as experienced within my family's historic struggle. Interestingly, the sum of experiences and identities informs my 'professional capital,' otherwise known as attributes recognised and valued as professional labours. As a result, the way in which my 'professional capital' intersects with my ideology, aligning core goals, emphasises continuous learning and collaboration (Harris, 2010).

Notwithstanding this, I emerged as the first member of my family to pursue higher education. In contemplation, a trepidation within my family members was discernible, serving as a sign of apprehension towards deviating from established societal norms. Thomas and Quinn (2007) align with this standpoint suggesting many working-class parents, want their children to go to university, but there remain underlying fears that the move may result in abandoning the family, its norm, and values. This influence predisposed my choices related to research design and data analysis. To give an example, my cultural background has reinforced my leaning towards mixed research methods and interpretation of qualitative data to enable the opportunity to represent marginalised communities or individuals in my field of interest (Mertens, 2014; 2015).

On the other hand, it is important to note that although culturally ascribed, fixed perspectives may predispose someone towards a particular point of view, however, this does not inevitably dictate their resulting opinions or perspectives (Darwin Holmes, 2020). This is significant when determining research aims and questions to ensure that I do not become 'too close to practice' as initially coined by Delamont (2016). The ramifications of being 'too close to practice,' will result in uncritically accepting the dominant ideology, assumptions, prioritises, culture and language of the practice. Subsequently, I aim to create the space for criticality to grow and lead off on various 'lines of flight,' to discover new possibilities in thinking (Deuchars, 2017).

The trajectory of my professional journey has been distinguished by the distinctive experiences that have defined it. These encompassed various skillsets including managerial and

leadership roles; symbolic of my commitment to both scientific inquiry and educational pedagogy. Within the Royal Navy, I spent eight years as a meteorologist and oceanography specialist, providing up to date planetary data to inform global military operations, including involvement with forward operating bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Arguably, this fortified my scientific acumen, and the high-stakes nature of naval operations cultivated resilience and composure, which are essential attributes when confronted with pressured and demanding circumstances. Transitioning from this scientific perspective, I subsequently retrained as a primary teacher, where I meticulously tailored pedagogical strategies to promote an inclusive and nurturing classroom environment. During this time, the evolving standards of what is deemed 'outstanding' teaching practise, embedded within the institutional habitus, prioritised fixed curricula, reinforcing teachers as skilled mediators, subjected to regular monitoring and testing. As a result, the internal conflict regarding my professional identity and sense of belonging lead to a heightened sense of disconnect.

Vignette

My professional career is defined by diverse roles, reflecting a commitment to scientific inquiry and educational pedagogy. Beginning as a meteorologist and oceanography specialist in the Royal Navy, I applied analytical expertise to decipher atmospheric and oceanic phenomena, contributing to critical decision-making in global deployments. In this disciplined, colonising environment, characterised by a "do not ask questions, just do" ethos, a deference to authority were ingrained. Transitioning to primary teaching, I grappled with evolving expectations of 'outstanding' practice, feeling that efforts were not institutionally valued. I felt that emergent neoliberal practices prioritise delivering a fixed curriculum, with teachers as skill mediators subject to regular monitoring and testing. These changes, disrupt the teacher-pupil empathetic bond, replacing care with rigid educational forms.

Within education, it was clear these paradigmatic shifts disrupted the compassionate teacher-pupil bond, displacing care with inflexible educational structures. My development of professional identity was premised upon a notion of technical expertise and the conceptualisation of the pupil body as disciplined and schooled subjects focused on output; due to marketisation of the educational landscape (Thomson and Kehily, 2011). Lyotard (1984) articulates my position clearly, that education has become a product, with parents as consumers, shackling teachers to their desks with heightened performativity measures from a growing number of 'stake holders.' As Ball (2003) describes, performativity impacts negatively on relationships between teachers and pupils, causing disconnects between institution values and individual teachers' ethics and values. Ultimately, this issue within my professional practise furthered the troubling and nagging;

reinforcing an innate desire to find a solution to the mattering, exploring the significance within social, cultural, and political contexts.

An assumption, implicit in Goodson and Rudd's argument (2016), that practice can be understood from a policy perspective and the policy history which has shaped it. Policy can be deemed as 'law,' or more controversially a 'strand of speeches' with initiatives that don't stay long. It tells us what is valuable and originates from power structures that regulate it. In agreement with Ball (2010), regulatory practices constrain individuals and utilise 'technologies of disciplinary control' over those who conform to it. One may question whether policy feeds directly into marketisation, so I consider this more as a process, changing with the evolving neoliberal landscape. It would be more accurate to comment that policy can be refracted or bent through institution cultures or practices, not dissimilar to experiences I have had within education and military contexts (Goodson and Rudd, 2016).

A prevailing view is institutions (such as the military or education) construct habitus aligning individuals with dominant discourses (Wacquant, 2016). Through the process of 'Othering', an individual/groups of people attribute negative characteristics to others that set them apart as representing that which is the opposite to them. The politics of "othering" is predicated on the territories of recognition that create boundaries of belonging/non-belonging and inclusion/exclusion according to the powerful actor's discourse of nation, state, citizenship, subject formation, and identity (Butler, 2016). There can be no doubt that Butler's emphasis on power dynamics is particularly relevant in disciplined environments. This strongly suggests that in this environment, I, the subject, an affect of power with the intersectional power altering my 'sense of self'. The institutional habitus engrained within these power structures reinforce conformity that is indicative of when I gained experience within a particular field, I developed a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990; Brown, 2006) or habitus. The characteristics that shape me as a subject certainly reinforce judgements about me and how people perceive me (Rosenthal, 1968). Indeed, due to the powerful actors' discourse, I created various layers of identities, such as 'Emma,' 'teacher,' 'soldier' or 'mother,' within social contexts that highlight the intersectional nature of identity, proposed by Butler (2016).

Although there is a necessity for conformity at points when dealing within military activities, particularly when considering how we learn in professional settings in a collective as a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wanger, 1991 cited in Harris, 2010). Drawing on critical and post-structural theoretical concepts, as Fean (2012) suggests, cultural capital discourses are shown to derive from the operations of power that legitimise and marginalise forms of knowledge. After all, the cultural discourses reinforce key ideas at the time, in this respect, the notion that lives are on the line if commands are not followed (Iddings and Roscoff, 2023; Freire cited in Caraccioli, 2018). At the age of 17, my exposure to this military institutional habitus enforced traits like obedience and conformity, fostering a limitation in my critical thinking along with a loss of independent significance. Within this highly strict environment, Nadaee (2017) asserts the coloniser maintains a dominant status and prevents the Other from sustaining a sense of self altogether. When this autonomy was compromised, I found myself constrained by prevailing paradigms and institutional norms, limiting the scope of my intellectual contribution.

Consequently, the erosion of independent significance challenged my ability to shape my evolving academic identity, leading to a dilution of originality and a conformity to established conventions.

This raises another issue, it is clear many difficulties present themselves when attempting to decolonise institutions because ideologies and material manifestations that enable the persistence of colonialism are normalised, aggressively protected by those in power, tied to privileges that render us complicit in the systems of exclusion, extraction, and oppression. Neoliberalism, can be seen as an expression of coloniality, furthering the social divide between communities and individuals alike, within the contexts of education and armed forces. (Tuck, 2012; 2014).

Not surprisingly, epistemology as a knowledge-depository threatens institutions. Similarly, to my own position, Friere (2000) identifies dehumanisation is not our destiny as people, but rather the product of an unfair social order. He points out that oppressors use a variety of techniques to dissuade oppressed people from critical reflection: if oppressed people realise that they live in an oppressive system, more will be spurred to act against it. For this reason, I advocate a pedagogy that helps create freedom and should let oppressed people take the lead in deciding what's best for themselves. My position holds firm that the most important task of oppressed people is to liberate themselves (and their oppressors) from an unjust system, found in neo-liberal power structures such as education and the military, ultimately shaping my positionality to reflexively advocate for silenced voices to be heard.

Rejecting conformist tendencies within the collective, I under went a transformative shift toward recognising my individual self as a human being. Agreeably, Giroux (2014) argues that neoliberalism in higher education leads to a commodification of knowledge and a focus on market-driven values, which can create a disconnect between personal and professional values for educators. This disjuncture occurs as neoliberal policies prioritise competition and profit-making over critical thinking, social justice, and the public good in academia, impacting both the identity and practices of those working within the system. Freire (2000) advocates for an increased awareness of the researcher's ideological stance, which can shape research questions and data interpretation. My individual struggle for position within the field of education and naval communities, reinforced the oppression by the existing hierarchy of positions available within the field, the rules governing the field and the forms of capital valued within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant 2016).

As a researcher, the autonomy to define and shape the significance of my work contributes to the establishment of a unique scholarly identity. When this autonomy is compromised or diminished, my researcher positionality becomes intricately entwined with external influences, potentially eroding the authenticity and distinctiveness of my scholarly voice. This shift has implications not only for my individual researcher 'self' but also for the broader academic community as it may stifle innovation and hinder the emergence of novel and transformative ideas. Through these key events, the significant awareness of independent thought in research becomes clear, as it fosters intellectual diversity but also allows for the exploration of unconventional perspectives and methodologies.

The internal disjuncture I felt echoed through my sense of self, evident that the struggle caused an altered existential feeling that had become debilitating (Ratcliffe, 2008). Hence, I could say there was a change in my whole existential orientation. As a result, I found myself fundamentally disconnected between the institutionally defined values and those values and ideas that animated me as an individual (Warren, 2007). Therefore, the dislocation asserted itself and grew, beyond which I could control. At prevalence here, is the significant feature of neoliberal movement – pedagogically sound practices that were not institutionally valued, eventually causing a feeling of underlying constraints placed upon individuals by institutional somatic norms (Bassi, 2006).

Importantly, these transitions across disparate fields and roles; have contributed to a multidimensional skill set and comprehensive understanding of various domains. In retrospect, the combination of these divergent pursuits has not only cultivated adaptability but also promoted a holistic perspective that can be applied across disciplines. Through an analysis of these theoretical frameworks, the impact of institutional habitus becomes clear, thereby elucidating the contours of my evolving emergence of criticality.

Vignette

Despite a successful military career, a pivotal event fundamentally reinforced the internal dislocation. I was a first responder to a small village that had been devastated by Hurricane Dean. Without delay, I found myself confronted by a young boy trapped beneath debris that required swift aid and attention. Upon retrospection, the event became a moment of radical change that disrupted my existing order of things and opened new possibilities for action and thought. The conflictual legacy of the colonial period and the reconfiguring of my pre-conceived position as an 'insider' shifted significantly. This awakening instilled a conscious desire to work with children, aiming to equip them with essential life skills.

This critical incident or 'event' was a moment of unexpected and unpredictable change. For the sake of clarity, an event is something shocking, out of joint that appears to happen suddenly and interrupts the usual flow of things; something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernible causes (Žižek, cited in Hamilton, 2016). Upon reflection, this marked change guides my approach, notably in the examination of themes such as trauma, conflict, and resilience, requiring a delicate balance between institutional demands and individual needs. Despite the prevalent tendency to downplay or marginalise emotion in research as highlighted by Granek (2017), the enduring presence of emotions remains. Gilbert (2001: 10) noted, "this does not mean that emotions are not present, nor does it guarantee that the hidden emotions do not affect the research process." To maintain objectivity, it is imperative for me to create distance from the research by keeping the familiar strange, as described by Delamont (2016).

The habitus of both military and education reflect the values, priorities and traditions of the institute and broader community it serves. As in previous studies, the pivotal role of discourses in shaping the acceptance or rejection of ideas, particularly through dynamics of othering is evident (Butler, 2016). I believe

that these institutions are sustained by economic, cultural, and political colonial paradigms, integral to these power structures. My position contends this context, an ideological shift from a patriotic to a universally human perspective, fostering a nuanced understanding of human experiences. The event has been found to have an adverse effect on my perceptions of insider/outsiderness and the importance to take this into account (Darwin Holmes, 2020). My standpoint as an 'insider' and part of the 'collective,' within the military at this time shifted significantly, reinforcing my position on the 'edges' or as an 'outsider.' The dynamics of belongingness, or the lack thereof, shaped my perspective and can influence the interpretative framework through which data is analysed. Through experiencing a sense of detachment from the group identity and norms prevalent in that environment, I positioned myself on the margins. This detachment can provide a unique vantage point that allows for a more nuanced understanding of marginalised perspectives when engaging in research, as highlighted by Elias and Scotson (2012) in their study on social marginalisation and community dynamics.

This positioning can contribute to uncovering hidden narratives and as Elias and Scotson (2012) explain, the ability to critically engage with alternative viewpoints. Yet it also necessitates a furthering reflexivity, as I grapple with my own subjectivity and biases, acknowledging the potential influence of my positionality on the research outcomes. Therefore, embracing an outsider status within societal norms not only enriches the research endeavour by bringing marginalised voices to the forefront but as Larrea (2022) demands, a vigilant self-awareness to navigate the intricate interplay between my own identity and ideologies with the studied phenomena.

The 'event' marked a fracture in my ideology, similarly, compared to global climate change and a disruption in the 'flow of the weather'. The pair of tinted glasses through which I perceived the world were broken. It altered my view of surroundings and revealed a new set of colours, that changed my perception of policies, society, and the broader community it serves. The social and cultural capital that I served, which I was an insider and part of the collective, no longer served me.

Embracing Rhizomatic-Nomadism: Exploring Researcher Positionality in the Journey of Becoming-researcher. PART 2
Emma Dempsey – EdD Student, Birmingham City University

> **Vignette**
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>
>
> *Wearing a pink jacket symbolises my active involvement in fundraising and charity work, demonstrating a commitment to a cause. The baby footprints represent my journey as a mother, one complete and the other incomplete due to baby loss, highlighting the complex intersection of professional work with children and motherhood. At this point, I have summited 76 out of 108 county peak summits for the baby charity Tommys, who were instrumental in helping me navigate the dark abyssal plains of losing my daughter at 20 weeks pregnant. I hope to support and inspire others, who may need a shining light, during the darkest of their days. I am thankful for my struggle because without it I wouldn't have found my strength. I am forever indebted to my children for teaching me the importance of resilience and bravery*

Recent work by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) asserts that my identity as a teacher evolves through the interplay of biographical experience and professional practice, shaping a perspective that emphasises single parenthood, family dynamics, and challenges faced by women. It is evident that by understanding individuals' diversity, which encompasses their various backgrounds with unique social identities, promotes a more inclusive environment within my professional practice. In primary education, despite the widespread influence of neoliberal policies, many teachers, myself included, prioritise nurturing relationships as a fundamental aspect of their teaching approach. Therefore, giving my professional identity a particular emotional dimension that could be familial and, at times, maternal (Hargreaves, 2001; O'Connor, 2008 cited in Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). This conveys movement towards an empathetic approach in my research, highlighting

the importance of fostering a responsibility to advocate for underrepresented groups.

The profound impact of baby loss on my position as a researcher is undeniable, flowing through both the personal and professional dimensions of my academic pursuits. On a personal level, the emotional toll of such a devastating experience inevitably influences my ability to maintain the detached objectivity often demanded in the realm of scientific inquiry (Gilbert, 2001). The grief and sorrow that accompany baby loss can cast a shadow over the cognitive faculties essential for rigorous analysis and critical thinking. Moreover, the emotional connection to my research subjects becomes more poignant, as the shared human experience of struggle, particularly prevalent within educational experiences of children diagnosed with Pathological Demand Avoidance and their families, fosters a deeper understanding of the intricacies surrounding the complexities of being human (PDA Society, 2023). Professionally, the unavoidable hiatus imposed by the bereavement process has potential to disrupt the trajectory of my research agenda, potentially impeding the timely progression of projects and the fulfilment of academic obligations (Granek, 2017; Gilbert, 2001). Despite these challenges, there exists the potential for this deeply personal encounter with grief to enrich my scholarly contributions, imbuing my work with an intensified sensitivity to the complexities of the human condition and fostering a more nuanced approach to research inquiry. Subsequently, the ethical context is what gives me motivation, purpose, and intentionality, and thus ultimately impacts my potential to genuinely foster well-being. (Parsons et al, 2021: 794)

Grounded in the ethics of care, my values-driven approach aligns with social and humanitarian considerations, addressing global inequalities and social justice concerns as highlighted by Parsons et al. (2021). Social research allows a researcher to find 'people's truth,' a concept strongly attuned to my position. It is my view that qualitative research can unpick the context of

a conversation. Thus, enabling marginalised voices to be heard. However, it has both advantages, promoting a holistic understanding of participants, and limitations, including challenges in standardising methodologies and potential focus on individual relationships at the expense of broader societal issues. In agreement, Denzin and Lincoln (2017) explained the ethical challenges of educational research and the need for researchers to navigate these challenges through a lens of self-awareness and sensitivity. For this reason, I position myself on a continuum of insider/outsider debate, emphasising the need to continually reassess my position throughout the research journey. As a result, I must critically examine my own positionality to ensure ethical research practices that prioritise participant well-being and equity are followed.

Vignette
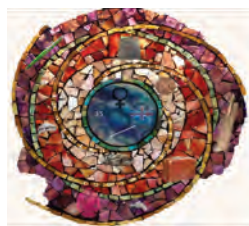
I've never felt like I have a fixed abode – living my life from place to place – uncertain of my destination. So, when adopting a rhizomatic approach to research, I begin to see my current situatedness as an opportunity to be nomadic – to live outside current norms. This feeling of not belonging, except for my son and angel winged daughter, who are anchors that ground me, defines my sense of self. The lack of boundaries in my visual artwork, reflect this nomadic identity, allowing 'lines of flight' to connect and grow in multiple directions as inspired by these Deleuze and Guattarian concepts.

The concept of Nomadism and Rhizomes as a research approach derives from Deleuze and Guattari (2001) and emphasises the refusal to be fixed or pinned down, even as "one does not go anywhere." Adopting the terminology of being a *Nomad-Rhizomatic researcher*, it can outline ways that re-envision educational research through the concept of the rhizome, as a hopeful pathway towards new ways of teaching and research by transversing various territories without fixed boundaries. To illustrate, it can facilitate an adaptable perspective, enhancing understanding of diverse environments and communities when exploring social, cultural, and ecological multiplicities within my research field, fostering a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Deleuze, 1977): 'It is a question of arraying oneself in an open space, of holding space, of maintaining the point of springing up at any point: movement is not from one point to another, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2001: 353)

Importantly, research becomes a symbolic construction of self as I gain agency and come to self-identify and act as a researcher (Biesta, 2007, 2010). As a case in point, the activity of conducting research shapes the lives and identities of those forging the constructions, or doing the research (Clarke and Parsons, 2013: 36). In essence, research transcends mere data gathering, as it is shaped and executed by individuals who, through their research endeavours, grapple with the intricate task of creating symbolic meaning and constructing their identity. This process is influenced by my evolving life narratives, reflecting the dynamic interplay between personal experiences and the intellectual pursuits inherent in my research journey, as demonstrated within my mosaic art piece.

Nevertheless, my aspiration extends beyond adhering to

traditional research paradigms. Instead, I seek to contribute to a broader shift in perspective, challenging categories that appear excessively bound to ideologies of representation and objectification within research design. Both approaches promote flexible methodology, allowing adjustments in response to evolving research questions and emphasising a rejection of stagnation with a commitment to thinking and acting differently (Deleuze, 1977; Deuchars, 2017). Embracing a flexible approach will allow research to organically navigate its course and guide me to uncharted territories, comparable to lines of fight taken by the rhizomes of roots through the soil. The notion of considering ourselves to be 'rhizomatically embedded to the other,' (Clarke and Parsons, 2013: 40) and is interesting to note, as it has the potential to give my research freedom to follow lines of flight (or living in view of the plane of immanence). Thereby, furthering a release, free from objectifying people, seeing difference as positive and not as a lack (Clarke and Parsons, 2013).

It is possible to agree that this journey signifies an exercise in agency. Hence, the concept emerged as an opportunity for me to conceptualise research as rhizomatic or to embody the role of "becoming a Nomad-Rhizome researcher". With this view, I hope this alternative framing will prove instrumental in unlocking novel viewpoints on my educational expedition. A further layer of complexity as described by Goh (2017) is where the transient nature of nomadism may impede the establishment of long-term relationships with study participants, potentially limiting insights. Consequently, balancing the advantages of nomadism with the need for methodological consistency is crucial moving forward.

Vignette
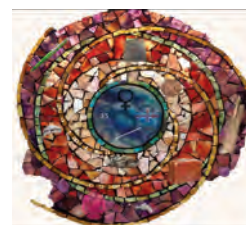
Given my scientific background in Earth Sciences, the spiral artwork piece is intricately linked to the unfolding cosmic narrative, mirroring the ever-evolving nature of the universe, and reinforcing the profound connection between intellectual growth and the broader direction of the cosmos. The design symbolises the evolving and expanding nature of my scholarly inquiry, highlighting the ongoing process of acquiring and refining knowledge, or becoming as a researcher.

Importantly, Delamont (2016) states that proximity to the subject may lead to uncritical acceptance of prevailing ideologies. An emphasises fostering an environment for critical inquiry in research, considering the influence of positionality is particularly prevalent as I become a doctoral researcher. In participatory research, recognising participants as active contributors is vital. Researcher positionality has ethical implications, particularly in relation to power dynamics and participant relations. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge my privilege and the potential for exploitation or harm in my interactions with participants (Lather, 2009). The integrity of my research is paramount, achieving a balance between preserving dignity and avoiding undue appropriation. Additionally, understanding my position as an insider/outsider is essential in qualitative research, particularly when exploring lived experiences in education. As Mercer (2007) comments that human beings can not be classified according to a single described status, therefore I contend that the two terms are to be considered as being poles of a continuum.

In line with notable scholars such as Foucault (Foucault cited in Springer, 2012; Zamora, 2016), the importance of ongoing reflexivity of the interplay of identity and research positionality has enhanced my clarity and authenticity, refined methodologies, and elevated ethical dimensions. Further highlighted within research by Bazeley (2013), the need for transparency in research design and data analysis, which is represented by the transparent nature of my objects in my art piece, is significant. This in mind, as explored in this paper, I have explicitly acknowledged how my positionality may impact these aspects and take measures to mitigate bias. This demonstrates that transparent reporting enhances the credibility and validity of educational research.

Furthermore, the cultural competence of my position, the acquiring skills and knowledge to effectively interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, will build and foster relationships with participants, promoting a sense of belonging. Inclusive teaching recognises this in others can influence curriculum development. My position sits firmly within the added value of incorporating diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences in teaching and within professional practises, particularly when considering special educational provision.

Lefebvre (1991) has gone to great lengths to explore the impact 'space' has on a subject or community. This perceived 'habitus' is greatly influenced by the conceived space, an area formed by an ideological view (such as the Government's ideology over what school space should look like). This only causes further disjuncture between conceived space and lived in spaces that are inhabited, a physical space that results in a created 'social' space. To take this further, Puwar (2004) demonstrates how spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically, and conceptually speaking) with some bodies deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked as trespassers, specifically in relation to race. Although my research field does not intend to explore race further, I feel it is necessary to consider this view when exploring the impact of space on a group of individuals sense of belonging.

This feeling is not uncommon amongst individuals who present with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), described as part of the autism spectrum. PDA is notably characterised by   extreme levels of anxiety in response to the demands of everyday life, manifested in excessive levels of demand avoidance (PDA Society, 2023). This results in complex interactions with service providers in education and health settings, impacting on outcomes for individuals and their families (Doyle and Kenny, 2023).

With this prevailing view, it can be argued that the power structures of education and resultant institutional habitus does not align with individual needs of this community of children, causing a sense of 'isolation and oppression'. PDA is symptomatic of system failure – schools have become very restrictive with autism strategies too rigid. My position concurs with this view, aiming to address the infancy of research in the field. Therefore, I aim to study the impact of spatiality in schools on the belongingness and 'othering' of children with Pathological Demand Avoidance, shedding light on educational disjunctions whilst representing marginalised individuals.

In summary, we can state that researcher positionality plays a pivotal role in shaping the research process and outcomes. Ongoing reflexivity and self-awareness, intersectionality and multidimensionality, ethical considerations, and implications for research design and data analysis will drive the authenticity and credibility to my scholarly work. The analysis of insights gleaned from educational theorists and philosophical Deleuze and Guattarian concepts as a "Nomad-Rhizome researcher," evidence an engagement in agency and ongoing critical self-reflection, recognising my intersecting identities, ethical considerations, and transparency that influence my positionality to conduct rigorous and socially responsible educational research. My research position aims to conduct research rhizomatically, acknowledging the process as organically evolving, reaching into unknown territories as I continue to expand my scholarly inquiry nomadically, developing innovate ways of finding solutions to combat 'world view' problems within my prevailing ideology.

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INDIVIDUAL ENQUIRY AND SCHOLARSHIP

Defining Teacher Effectiveness from Traditional to Modern Day Schools in Indian Context in the 21st Century
Sonali Malhotra – Early Childhood Educator

Evolving Educational Paradigms in the 21st Century

As K-12 educational institutions move into the new millennium, teachers must face various reforms and challenges in the educational world, particularly in teaching and learning. According to Kile (2018), there are four primary components of professionalism in the early childhood field: competence, professional knowledge, dedication to ethical norms, and personal character. Professionals in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) examine many aspects of the construct of preschool teachers' competency by drawing on theory and students' perspectives. Many of them acknowledge the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that are relevant for a student to assess to become an ECEC teacher, as well as the specific elements that are addressed.

In terms of knowledge, prospective ECEC teachers ought to be familiar with and comprehend the pertinent theoretical models in the area as well as the phases of child development as viewed from a holistic angle by the end of their studies so that teachers should be familiar with children's rights believe Urban et al. (2012) and the elements of a safe, healthy, and exciting environment for children advise Cho (2016). Understanding the professional standards of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is crucial for aspiring teachers informs Kile (2018). Auld and Morris (2019) highlight the crucial function of kindergartens in the early social development of children. Unlike other educational stages, the curriculum in these settings is less focused on academic subjects like mathematics and science. In Nordic countries, early childhood education (ECE) emphasizes the significance of play and the social growth of children. Conversely, in many East Asian nations, the focus of ECE is on fostering cognitive development in children and preparing them for the transition to primary education. Moving forward, training programmes for aspiring ECEC teachers ought to emphasise more how important it is to connect information, skills, and values in competencies that would help establish a professional ECEC teacher, highlight Pažur et al (2024).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) defined teacher continuous professional development (TCPD) as a process that helps teachers improve their teaching and learning skills. This statement is in line with Bolam (2002) where he stated that TCPD should start with training for teachers and continue throughout the service. As Shilvock (2018) emphasizes, the core objective of education has shifted from imparting static knowledge to equipping students with the ability to adapt to diverse situations. This raises a pivotal question: What defines teacher effectiveness in this dynamic context, and how can we nurture it?

Park (2013) expands on this evolution, portraying education as a lifelong journey integral at every life stage. It's no longer about rote learning; it's about developing critical reasoning, analytical skills, and the capacity for deep reflection on societal and individual values. A striking example of this approach is seen in Finland's education system, where the emphasis is on collaborative learning and student-led inquiry, fostering creativity and communication skills in real-world contexts.

The structure of schooling, in its organizational and formal aspects, still echoes much of the 20th-century model. However, thinkers like Howard Gardner (2008) and Daniel Pink (2005), along with institutions like the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007) and the Center for Public Education (Jerald, 2009), have highlighted the need for a paradigm shift. They argue for an education model that aligns with the demands of a globalized economy, focusing less on repetitive tasks and more on nurturing high-level cognitive and interpersonal skills.

Kereluik et al (2013) further reinforce this perspective, pointing out that the future relies not just on domain-specific knowledge but also on advanced cognitive abilities like creativity and critical thinking. These skills, far from being novel to the 21st century, are timeless necessities for learning and achievement. For instance, Singapore's education system has been lauded for integrating critical thinking and problem-solving in its curriculum, demonstrating the global relevance of these skills. Additionally, the significance of interpersonal abilities, encompassing life skills, leadership, and cultural competence, has been constant through the ages and remains vital in today's interconnected world.

Echoing Barnett's (2012) philosophy, education today is more than the acquisition of facts and skills; it's about fostering holistic development. This encompasses not only intellectual growth but also emotional, social, and ethical maturation. Goodwin (2022) brings attention to the intricacies of measuring teacher effectiveness. The unique dynamics of each teacher-student interaction make standard evaluations insufficient. This complexity calls for a more nuanced understanding of what effective teaching entails.

Central to this understanding is the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to effect change, a notion that has become fundamental in teaching. Bray-Clark and Bates (2023) tie this directly to the practical needs of educators, highlighting how in-service training that boosts self-efficacy can lead to improved class-room results. Furthermore, Pintrich and Schunk (1995) underscore the impact of self-efficacy on traits like resilience and stress management in educators. These qualities are increasingly vital in today's fast-paced, ever-evolving educational environments.

Moving Beyond Traditional Metrics to Embrace Holistic Development

Traditional metrics for assessing teacher effectiveness, such as subject matter expertise, standardized test scores, and adherence to lesson plans, while providing some insights, fall short in capturing the multifaceted and dynamic nature of contemporary teaching. These metrics often overlook aspects

like digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and the ability to foster critical thinking and creativity. A case in point is the growing emphasis on project-based learning, as seen in Scandinavian countries, which challenges the traditional metrics by focusing on student engagement and problem-solving skills rather than standard test results.

Moving away from the traditional 20th-century skill set, our current era, as Dede (2010) points out, is significantly influenced by advanced technologies and societal changes. This has led to a re-evaluation of the skills deemed necessary for work, citizenship, and personal fulfilment. The shift towards cultivating 21st-century skills among students underscores the pivotal role of teachers in guiding this transition.

In redefining teacher effectiveness for this new era, we move beyond traditional metrics such as subject matter expertise, standardized test scores, and direct instruction. Hasan and Zaheer (2022) and Ko and Sammons (2013) underline the importance of pedagogical innovation alongside content knowledge. Today, effective teaching demands a balance between diverse elements, recognizing the varied learning styles and needs of students. This is evident in the shift towards student-centred learning approaches, aligning with the principles of differentiated instruction, where teaching methods are adapted to cater to individual learning abilities and preferences.

Citing an example from my recent visit to Finnish Schools in Helsinki I observed redefining teacher effectiveness means moving beyond traditional parameters like subject matter expertise and standardized test scores. This shift aligns closely with the educational philosophy in Finland, renowned for its progressive and student-centred approach. Hasan and Zaheer (2022) and Ko and Sammons (2013) stress the need for pedagogical innovation in tandem with content knowledge. Finnish educators exemplify this balance, blending deep subject understanding with innovative teaching methods that cater to diverse student needs and learning styles.

For instance, in a mixed-ability classroom, a teacher might use technology to provide tailored learning experiences. A student struggling with a concept in mathematics could access additional resources through educational software for personalized practice, while a student excelling in the subject might be challenged with advanced problems. This approach not only caters to individual needs but also promotes self-paced learning, a key component of future education. Supporting this approach, Meyer (2009) advocates for training teachers in modern assessment methods that value creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking above traditional testing methods. Finnish schools are a prime example of this, often utilizing portfolio assessments and project-based learning. These methods allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's progress, focusing not just on academic achievement but also on their development as creative and collaborative problem-solvers.

Analyzing the Correlation Between a Teacher's Experience and their Effectiveness

Prensky (2014) challenges the status quo of global education with his proposal for a more personalized curriculum. He critiques the current uniform approach – offering the same core subjects to all students—and argues for a curriculum that focuses on Effective Thinking, Effective Action, Effective Relationships, and Effective Accomplishment. Prensky's vision aligns with the educational trends in countries like Finland, where personalized learning paths based on students' interests and needs are increasingly common. This approach suggests a shift from a one-size-fits-all curriculum to one that is flexible, catering to individual strengths and aspirations, while ensuring that all students develop essential underlying skills.

Table 1. involved a group of voluntarily participating Early Years teachers who shared their perspectives, identified strengths, specific challenges, and the variable needs for professional development. This revealed that having more years of experience does not necessarily equate to more effective practice, as mere subject knowledge alone is insufficient. This concept is supported by Patfield et al (2023), who argue that professional development (PD) is more effective when it is sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, draws on external expertise, has buy-in from teachers, and consistently evolves as a practice-based experience.

Teacher	Years of experience	Role Perspective	Strengths	Challenges	Professional Development	Definition of Effectiveness
1	7	Nurturing creativity and social skills	Curriculum design	Diverse learning needs	Training about thinking and imagination	Student creativity
2	2	Emphasizing foundational academic skills	Meeting benchmarks	Balancing knowledge and skills	Essential for school preparation	Academic preparedness
3	5	Emotional development and safe learning	Emotional support	Time management	Support students' emotional needs	Emotional well-being of students
4	1	Creating inclusive environments	Inclusivity	Limited resources	Training for special needs	Inclusive support in the classroom
5	3	Balancing academic and play-based learning	Academics + play	Parental expectations	Play based learning	Building skills
6	4	Facilitating curiosity	Inquiry based design	Observation	Assessment and Reflection	Inspiring curiosity
7	2	Student Agency	Instil a self-directed Approach	Building SEL skills	Goal setting and time management	Independent learners

Table 1. Teacher perspectives on their professional practice

The spectrum of role perspectives from fostering creativity to instilling a self-directed approach in students highlights the multifaceted nature of early childhood education. The correlation between these perspectives and years of experience is noteworthy. Teachers with more years tend to have a broader, more nuanced understanding of student needs, as seen with Teacher 1's focus on nurturing creativity and social skills after seven years in the field.

Newer teachers like Teacher 4, with one year of experience, often align with modern educational trends such as creating inclusive environments. This indicates a tendency for early-career teachers to adopt recent educational philosophies. There's a clear alignment between a teacher's strengths and their educational philosophy, which appears to be influenced by their years in teaching. For instance, Teacher 6's inquiry-based approach after four years suggests an evolution from basic teaching methods to more complex, student-centred strategies.

Challenges faced by teachers range from managing diverse learning needs to building SEL skills, reflecting the complexities of teaching young learners. Notably, less experienced teachers, like Teacher 2 with two years, tend to struggle with balancing foundational skills, a common challenge in the early stages of a teaching career.

Teachers must also embrace adaptability and continuous learning, staying updated with new educational technologies and methodologies. Regular training, online courses, and participation in educational conferences are crucial for maintaining effectiveness in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Ultimately, as Waddington (2023) points out, education is increasingly focused on nurturing human traits and mindsets for an unpredictable future, rather than just imparting knowledge. This perspective recognizes the complex and varied roles of a teacher, which cannot be fully measured by traditional quality criteria.

Irvine (2019) highlights a common misconception that more experienced teachers are always more effective, which isn't necessarily true. The effectiveness of a teacher is often measured by student achievement, but as Doherty and Jacobs (2013) point out, there's little agreement on what exactly constitutes this achievement. Often, it's tied to increases in standardized test scores, but this is a narrow view. Palardy and Rumberger (2008) took a broader look at teacher effectiveness by examining three aspects: instructional practices, teacher attributes (like self-efficacy, attitude, and enthusiasm), and background characteristics (such as certification and years of experience). Their research found that instructional practices had the most direct impact on student achievement. Surprisingly, they discovered that background characteristics, including years of experience and certification, didn't significantly affect student achievement. Establishing a culture of feedback literacy helped participants identify and develop coping strategies to deal with receiving feedback about their teaching.

Unpacking the Role of the Teacher

The role of a teacher in the 21st century is defined not just by their subject knowledge or instructional skills, but also by their ability to promote critical thinking, adaptability, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence in students. Developing skills like empathy, communication, and self-regulation in teachers is crucial. In an age where education is evolving, focusing on digital skills, understanding emotions, and teamwork, the impact on both teaching and learning is significant. Teachers play a crucial role in preparing students for the future, with

self-efficacy being a key factor in their approach and effectiveness, as noted by scholars like Pintrich and Schunk (1995) and Kennedy (2008). A major aspect of this new educational approach is the involvement of the community and parents. Engaging in community projects or forming parent-teacher committees extends learning beyond the classroom, providing practical experiences that enhance learning outcomes. This engagement is essential in enriching the educational environment.

The requirement for personalized professional development is evident. Experienced teachers seek advanced training aligned with their evolved teaching philosophy, while newer teachers need foundational courses. Teacher effectiveness is a dynamic concept that evolves with experience. Experienced teachers demonstrate a broader range of skills and deeper understanding of student needs, as opposed to newer teachers who focus more on fundamental skills and classroom management.

Importance of Social Emotional Intelligence

The years of experience profoundly influence teachers' perspectives, strengths, challenges, and definitions of effectiveness. Recognizing this evolution is crucial for teacher trainers in designing support and development strategies. Effective teaching is not static but a continually evolving journey, shaped by years of experience and ongoing learning. This understanding is pivotal in fostering a dynamic, responsive, and multi-faceted approach to early childhood education.

Integrating emotional intelligence into the curriculum is also vital, as suggested by Goe, Bell, and Little (2008). This integration benefits both students and teachers, enhancing the overall educational process.

Frenzel et al (2009) added another dimension to the discussion by emphasizing the importance of teacher enthusiasm and the motivation of students. They argued that achievement in academics is just one part of student development. Positive attitudes and growth in areas like self-efficacy and persistence are equally crucial.

Supporting this view, Hill, Blazar, and Lynch (2015) conducted a study focusing on the personal and institutional predictors of high-quality instruction. They affirmed the idea that student development includes a variety of outcomes beyond academic achievement, underscoring the multifaceted role of teachers in fostering both academic and personal growth in students.

Benton-Borghi (2006) highlighted the challenge in ensuring teacher candidates graduate with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to educate effectively. This issue points to the complexity of preparing teachers to meet diverse student needs. For example, a teacher must be equipped to handle different learning styles and cultural backgrounds in a single classroom. Burger (2024) emphasized the importance of mentoring in teacher induction, pointing out that its effectiveness depends on the mentor's support quality and the mentee's professional beliefs. This illustrates the dynamic nature of teacher development and the need for supportive relationships, especially in the early stages of a teaching career. For instance, a new teacher might benefit from a mentor's guidance in managing classroom dynamics. Strong (2010) points out that while 1 to 3 years of teaching experience generally has a positive effect, and experience in the same grade is beneficial, the impact of more than 3 years of experience on student achievement remains unclear.

Personalised Professional Development for Effectiveness

Professional development (PD) is crucial, as Timperley et al (2007) discuss. They highlight the effectiveness of PD that involves external expertise and international exposure, broadening teachers' perspectives and teaching methods. This approach enables teachers to integrate new knowledge into their practice. Similarly, Porter et al (2003) advocate for ongoing PD, combining contact hours, duration, and coherence. This could be seen in PD programs that span several weeks, offering workshops, seminars, and hands-on activities. Kennedy (2008) underlines the importance of collaboration with educators, parents, and the community, bringing new perspectives and resources. This collaboration can take forms like community projects or parent-teacher meetings. Guskey (2023) criticizes one-day PD sessions for their ineffectiveness, suggesting iterative development instead. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2018) support this view, emphasizing the need for structured collaboration within a 'community of practice' to enhance student learning outcomes.

Knowles (1983) describes how adult learners prefer relevant learning opportunities to their experiences. This concept, expanded by Hunzicker (2010) supports job-embedded PD, involving learning through daily teaching activities. For example, teachers can learn new classroom management strategies by applying them in real-time and discussing the outcomes with peers.

Reflective Practice Programs, as advocated by Pirkle (2011) and Meyer (2009), are essential in teacher development. These programs encourage teachers to critically evaluate their teaching methods and student engagement. Tools like reflective journals or collaborative workshops can be effective, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and self-assessment. For instance, a teacher might reflect on a lesson's effectiveness through a journal entry or a peer review session.

Suggestions for a proposed framework have been made for pre-service and in-service teachers. The landscape of education continually evolves, necessitating a dynamic approach to teacher development. The new name such as "Dynamic Educator Framework" serves as a guiding structure for both pre-service and in-service teachers, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet these changing demands. As cited in Comb et al (2023) If teachers are expected to prepare pupils to be lifelong learners, they must continue to study and grow throughout their careers As OECD (2014) pinpointed, teachers must be able to employ not only the most up-to-date tools and technologies with their students, but also the most up-to-date research on learning, pedagogies, and practices.

While there are inherent similarities between the frameworks for pre-service and in-service teachers, significant differences also exist, reflecting the unique needs and challenges at different stages of a teaching career.

Reflection in Action

At the core of both frameworks is the emphasis on continuous learning and growth. This aspect underscores the necessity for teachers, whether novices or veterans, to stay abreast of the latest educational trends, theories, and technologies. Reflective practice is another critical similarity, where teachers at all stages engage in introspection of their teaching methods and outcomes, fostering an environment of continuous improvement. Furthermore, both frameworks highlight the importance of diversity and inclusivity.

Example 1

Teachers are encouraged to adapt their teaching styles to cater to the diverse needs of their students, encompassing various learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and abilities. Collaboration also forms a significant part of both frameworks, encouraging teachers to engage with their peers, mentors, and the broader educational community for shared learning and support.

Example 2

Despite these similarities, the frameworks diverge significantly to address the distinct needs of pre-service and in-service teachers. For pre-service teachers, the focus is on building foundational knowledge in subject matter and basic pedagogical skills. This stage is crucial for establishing a solid base upon which they can build their future teaching practice.

In contrast, the in-service framework shifts towards the advancement of this existing knowledge and skill set. Here, the focus is on deepening understanding and exploring more sophisticated pedagogical techniques and specialized areas of interest. Similarly, while pre-service teachers concentrate on developing initial classroom management strategies, in-service teachers delve into more complex classroom dynamics and advanced inclusive teaching strategies.

Technological proficiency also differs between the two stages. Pre-service teachers focus on developing initial competence with educational technologies, essential for modern classrooms. In contrast, in-service teachers are encouraged to integrate technology more innovatively and comprehensively into their teaching practice.

Example 3

Another key difference lies in the approach to mentorship and leadership. For pre-service teachers, receiving mentorship and guidance is vital as they navigate the initial challenges of the teaching profession. In-service teachers, however, are encouraged to take on mentorship roles themselves, stepping into positions of leadership within their educational communities and advocating for educational reform and improvements.

Example 4

Professional development also takes on different forms at each stage. Pre-service teachers engage in professional development that is more general, aimed at building broad teaching competencies. For in-service teachers, professional development becomes more specialized and targeted, focusing on specific areas of need or interest. This stage often includes contributing to the professional development of others, sharing their expertise and experiences.

Example 5

For Pre-Service Teachers:

Focus on gaining a deep understanding of the subject matter you will be teaching. This includes not just the content but also the pedagogy, or how to teach that content effectively.

Reflective practices can involve journaling, peer discussions, or mentor feedback, helping you understand what works and what needs improvement.

A simple six step reflection cycle can be followed.
1 *Experience*: Begin with a specific teaching experience or activity.
2 *Observe*: Observe the outcomes of the experience. This coul involve considering student feedback, engagement levels, and your own feelings about how the lesson went.

3 *Analyse*: Analyse the observed outcomes to identify what worked well and what could be improved. Consider the reasons behind the success or challenges.

4 *Plan*: Based on your analysis, plan for changes or enhancements. This could involve modifying teaching strategies, trying new approaches, or seeking further knowledge or training in specific areas.

5 *Implement*: Implement the changes in your next teaching experience.

6 *Reflect Again*: After implementing the changes, the cycle returns to the observation stage. Reflect on the impact of the changes made and continue the cycle.

For In-Service Teachers:

Engage in ongoing professional development through workshops, seminars, and online courses. Focus on both subject matter expertise and pedagogical skills. Collaboration with peers can provide new insights, strategies, and support.

Stay informed about the latest educational research and apply these findings to your teaching practice. Engaging in action research within your own classroom can also be a valuable tool for professional growth.

Seek regular feedback from students, peers, and administrators. Use evaluations constructively to guide your professional development journey.

Nurturing Adaptive and Lifelong Educators

Both pre-service and in-service teachers can benefit from a framework that focuses on a balance of knowledge acquisition, practical application, reflective practice, and continuous growth. This approach ensures that educators are well-equipped to meet the evolving challenges of the teaching profession.

In essence, the Dynamic Educator Framework provides a comprehensive approach to teacher development, tailored to the specific stages of a teaching career. While it establishes a common ground in continuous learning, reflective practice, diversity, and collaboration, it also recognizes the need for differentiated focus areas for pre-service and in-service teachers. This framework ensures that educators are not only equipped with foundational skills and knowledge but are also prepared to evolve, adapt, and lead in the ever-changing world of education. Through this dual approach, the framework aims to nurture educators who are lifelong learners themselves and who can instil these qualities in their students, thus aligning with the evolving demands of 21st-century education.

Future Directions in Teaching effectiveness

Teachers must become adaptive learners, continually updating their knowledge and teaching methods in accordance with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory. This approach redefines teacher knowledge to focus on creating environments that promote lifelong learning, critical thinking, and personal growth. According to Hattie (2012), who claims that this is true for both teacher candidates and their pupils, learning is expedited by insightful feedback that highlights strengths and points out areas of development for next steps in learning. Looking towards the future, the role of educators is becoming increasingly crucial in preparing students for a rapidly changing world. As Kim et al (2019) emphasize, this involves fostering critical skills like problem-solving, adaptability, and creativity in students.

Kini and Podolsky (2016) note that teacher effectiveness varies at every career stage. Not all inexperienced teachers are less

effective, nor are all experienced teachers more effective. The true benefits of teaching experience are realized when teachers are carefully selected, well-prepared at entry, intensively mentored, and rigorously evaluated before receiving tenure. This ensures that those entering the professional tier have a solid foundation of competency to build upon throughout their careers.

Finally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2024) advise practitioners to engage in collaborative research while treating K–12 student learning as the top priority for all school and university educators. They should also work together to prepare new teachers and improve the learning of seasoned educators. This preschool system addresses not just the academic needs of students but also their emotional, social, and personal growth, aligning with the demands of 21st-century education. It underscores the need for teachers to be adaptable, lifelong learners capable of nurturing these qualities in their students. As education continues to evolve, the focus remains on equipping educators with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to meet the challenges of a globalized and complex world. All these efforts are relevant especially when Chetty et al (2011) highlight the largest study and most famous Project STAR – Tennessee experiment that showed data to support the impact of kindergarten and childhood learning having a long-term impact into adulthood towards a better quality of life. In conclusion, by integrating emotional intelligence, modern assessment techniques, reflective practice, community involvement, continuous learning, holistic development, and collaboration, we can create a more effective, dynamic, and responsive educational system.

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How does the National Curriculum impact Physical Education Curriculums in Special Schools for Children and Young People with Disabilities?
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Recently, there has been a heightened focus on the integration of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Physical Education (PE) across various facets of the education system. Despite the presence of regulations such as the Department for Education's (DfE) SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015) and the PE National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013) in England effective support for inclusive PE practices for students with SEND is limited. These policies often lack a comprehensive implementation framework, specificity in addressing diverse needs, and sufficient training for educators, resulting in challenges in establishing an inclusive environment. The scarcity of resources, including specialised equipment and support services, further hinders the equitable participation of students with SEND. The overemphasis on traditional assessment methods in the PE National Curriculum may overlook the progress and accomplishments of these students. To advance equity, policymakers must develop more comprehensive and tailored guidelines, provide enhanced training for educators, allocate additional resources, and implement flexible and inclusive assessment strategies. This approach aims to foster collaboration among schools, parents, and stakeholders, aligning with recommendations from Armstrong (2018), Cunningham and Smith (2017), and Davis and Johnson (2019).

The provision for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and PE in the UK over the last five years has been a focus of research and policy making (Meir and Fletcher, 2019; Morley et al., 2020; Yıldızer and Munusturlar, 2021) as inclusive practice is now a statutory recommendation by Ofsted. According to recent reports, the DfE has increased its investment in SEND and PE provision throughout primary and secondary schools in the UK, with eligible schools receiving up to £16,000 per academic year (DfE, 2014). More recently, the success of the Lionesses during the Euro 2022 has led to the DfE setting out plans to promote new standard for school sports that will see girls and boys offered the same sports, with over £600 million of funding over the next two academic years (DfE, 2023), targeting primary Physical Education and the development of Physical Education and Physical Activity throughout the day.

Schools have received funding for staff and resources catering to children with special educational needs and physical disabilities. The allocation of funding significantly impacts the resources available to teachers for supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), thus influencing their experiences in physical education (PE). This funding shortfall particularly affects pupils with the most complex learning needs. The introduction of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans, replacing Statements, aimed to address inconsistencies in support provision outlined in the revised SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education/Department of Health, 2015). However, criticisms of the previous system highlighted significant variations in support across different local authorities, with some children receiving Statements while others with similar needs did not (Marsh, 2014). Additionally, there's a greater emphasis on accountability, requiring schools to showcase the effectiveness of their

support for special educational needs and physical education, as well as the advancement of their students. However, concerns persist about the inclusivity of physical education lessons, particularly regarding the physical infrastructure and resources available for supporting disabilities (Maher, 2018).

The majority of children and young people's specific needs will be met through high-quality teaching that is differentiated and individualised, according to the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), which offers regulatory requirements for educational settings in the UK that work with students with SEND. Vickerman and Maher (2018) assert that contextualised assessments are essential for individualised instruction for students with SEND as the criteria demonstrates a scaffold-like approach to progress. Despite the DfE's (2015) SEND code of practice requiring schools to monitor SEND students' progress, little is known about evaluating their learning in PE environments. According to Penney (2019), for assessments in physical education to be inclusive of all students, teachers need to have the freedom and flexibility to modify the tasks, settings, and instructional strategies they employ. Similar to this, using standardised methods to evaluate learning in PE could disadvantage some students with SEND because their needs and abilities—that is, what they are good at – are frequently neither considered nor valued (Haycock and Smith, 2010), especially when viewed through an ableist lens (LeRoy et al., 2020).

In addition to this, in recent years there has been a greater recognition of the importance of physical education in developing the health and wellbeing of children, especially post-Covid, as a response to guidance on vigorous physical activity and life-long participation (Blain et al., 2022). The National Curriculum for PE in England (DfE, 2013) has been revised to include a greater focus on physical activity, physical education, and a healthy active lifestyle. This has been further supported by resources provided by the DfE to develop initiatives (through Sport England) such as Active Lives, School Games, This Girl Can and Active Kids Funds to encourage and support physical activity in schools, by providing free resources such as lesson plans and curriculum ideas. Smith and McGannon (2018) discovered that on the National Curriculum level, students with SEND receive the same as everyone else. However, teachers and senior leaders in schools must consider the Ofsted Inspection framework, as the focus is promoting high quality education through a broad and balanced curriculum, whilst also attempting to ensure inclusion. Schools have recently received a welcome funding boost to enhance the inclusivity of their physical education programs, aiming to cater to the diverse needs of all students, including those with special needs and disabilities (DfE, 2023). Despite this positive progress, concerns remain regarding the actual accessibility of lessons and the adequacy of teacher training in addressing diverse student needs (Bailey et al., 2022). While the revised PE curriculum prioritizes collaboration and enjoyment over competition, further steps are crucial to ensure truly inclusive PE for all students.

Studies highlight the need for teachers to receive comprehensive training in supporting students with varying abilities (Bailey et al., 2022). This training should equip teachers with strategies

for adapting activities, fostering positive interactions, and promoting a growth mindset (Rimmer and Kiwan, 2018). Equipping themselves with these skills will enable teachers to create a learning environment where every student feels valued, challenged, and capable of success. Investing in accessible facilities and equipment is essential for removing physical barriers and enabling all students to participate actively and confidently (Fitzgerald, 2009). This includes providing ramps, specialized equipment, and inclusive spaces. By ensuring all students can physically access and utilize the space and resources, we create an environment that fosters participation and enjoyment for all. Open communication and shared understanding between schools, parents, and the government are crucial to fostering a supportive environment for inclusive PE (Florian, 2005). Parents can provide valuable insights into their child's individual needs and preferences. Government initiatives can offer resources and training programs for teachers, ensuring they have the necessary skills and knowledge to support diverse learners. By working collaboratively, all stakeholders can contribute to creating a truly inclusive PE experience for every student.

There is evidence above that these changes have been beneficial for children with SEND and those with physical disabilities, with a greater focus on individualised learning and teaching approaches, as well as greater access to specialist staff and resources. However, further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of the increased investment in SEND and PE provision in the UK and to make sure that it is having the desired impact, whilst also questioning the quality of SEND continuous professional development for PE. According to the Office for National Statistics (2021), SEND students cause a variety of reactions in young people during PE, including feeling angry or frustrated and potentially distracting others, which is sometimes treated as "naughty" behaviour and met with punishment, such as isolation and exclusion.

Physical education is a mandatory part of both the school timetabled curriculums and children's development, enabling them to learn about their bodies and the various physical activities they can take part in. Unfortunately, for children with SEND, physical education can be difficult to access due to the lack of understanding surrounding their condition or the lack of appropriate resources available. This can lead to a negative relationship between children with disabilities and physical education, with the child being unable to fully participate or benefit from it.

In the UK, there are numerous reports that highlight the problems surrounding physical education for children with disabilities. A study conducted by the University of Birmingham in 2019 found that teachers often felt unprepared and lacked the confidence to support children with disabilities in physical education classes. It also found that most teachers felt that there was inadequate support available for them to make sure everyone could participate (Bertills et al., 2019). Similarly, a report by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) in 2019 highlighted that physical education can often be a trigger for anxiety for children with disabilities. The report found that children with physical disabilities often found physical education classes to be inaccessible and uncomfortable, leading to further exclusion from the activity.

Physical activity has been shown to have several positive benefits, including increased strength, improved cardiovascular health, and improved motor coordination and balance. Additionally, physical activity can help children with disabilities

to develop physical confidence, improve self-esteem, and a sense of achievement. However, the quality of PE and primary development has impacted the development of physical capabilities. Northey et al. (2018) found the following negative effects associated with the quality of SEND PE; higher risk of injury, types of burnouts, exercise-induced gastrointestinal tract discomfort, and reports of physical and psychological abuse. Yet, Physical education is a form of physical activity that places particular emphasis on skill development, coordination, and agility. These activities are not always suitable for children with disabilities, particularly those who have physical or mobility impairments. Such activities can be physically and emotionally stressful for these children, leading to a feeling of exclusion or inadequacy. Considering the long-term effects, such discomforts could lead to life-long physical issues such as obesity, unhealthy diets, and type 2 diabetes (Lloyd and Bailey, 2020). Furthermore, their physical differences can lead to the risk of injury or potential embarrassment in a physical education class, especially as the SEND schools have smaller class sizes. Griggs and Fleet (2021) argued the reality of repetitive learning amongst students with disabilities, suggesting pupils need a wider movement culture in opposed to traditional games and sports. They believed that students were constantly exposed to knowledge that was rehashed and that was often removed from the context of their movements.

While physical education classes may not be suitable for all children with disabilities, this does not mean they should be excluded from physical activity altogether. Special accommodations can be made to modify activities, making them more suitable for children with physical or mobility impairments. For example, a large ball can be used instead of a regular-sized one, a stationary bike can be used instead of running, or activities can be done in a smaller group with more individual attention. Maher (2017) conducted a study that assessed inclusive practices for SEND students amongst mainstream schools. Whilst the study focussed on mainstream schools rather than specialist schools, it found a constant focus on social ideology, whereby inclusion was subject-specific and required the teachers to adapt to meet the students' needs. Yet, these adaptations also caused barriers, as the reasonable adjustments influenced the development of social and physical skills, whilst also restricting the comprehension of meeting the National curriculum needs for physical development. Ogden et al. (2012) raised similar concerns when they discovered that while some physical activities may help psychological outcomes, they also risk movement and involvement in physical activity (PA), which may add to a sedentary lifestyle. The research looked at how technology can be used to increase access to physical activity, with an emphasis on game-based fitness (e.g. Nintendo Wii Games).

Finally, physical education can also foster an environment of competitiveness, which can be detrimental to children with disabilities. These children may already feel insecure or inadequate due to their disability, and this feeling can be exacerbated when they are unable to compete with their peers. This can lead to feelings of exclusion, inferiority, and even depression. Haegele and Maher (2021) reviewed the perception of PE and students with disabilities in regard to competition and within groups. They discovered that structured school-based interventions that improve awareness of disabilities, foster cooperation rather than competition, highlight the similarities rather than the differences between children, and are administered in early infancy are the most successful. It is believed that children who have a better understanding of

disability are likely to have more positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. These attitudes, in turn, make children more likely to initiate interactions with peers.

Such an environment can make disabled children feel like they are able to keep up with their peers, which can avoid feelings such as being vulnerable and insecure about their disability, and this can be further exacerbated by being unable to compete. Babik and Gardner (2021) examined factors affecting the perception of disability, highlighting the correlation between social inclusion with physical activity and mental age. They found that schools with high(er) expectations to learn promoted a salience to typically developing children than physical disability, as the exposure of individuals with disabilities led to better understanding and acceptance.

Fitzgerald (2012a) thoroughly investigates the barriers to achieving inclusive physical education, shedding light on the difficulties encountered by educators and policymakers in establishing an environment that promotes equal opportunities for students with diverse needs. This underscores the crucial role of policy development and implementation in the education system to facilitate inclusive practices in PE. Expanding on this discourse, Maher (2018) underscores the challenges and opportunities involved in advocating for inclusion in physical education, emphasising the necessity for continuous professional development and training for educators within the education system. Peterson and Williams (2023) critically assess the ongoing struggles highlighted by Maher (2018), emphasising the persistent challenges faced by educators in fostering inclusion in physical education and emphasising the need for more comprehensive and impactful professional development programs to effectively address the diverse needs of students with special educational needs (SEN).

Haegele's (2019) research delves into the broader landscape of inclusive physical education, examining the interplay between policy, research, and practical implementation. This underscores the significance of a holistic approach within the education system that integrates research findings into policy frameworks, ensuring the effective translation of inclusive practices into tangible outcomes within the PE curriculum. Shifting the focus to inclusive school sports and physical education in the UK, Haycock and Smith's (2011) study highlights the often-neglected aspect of inclusive practices. This research emphasises the critical need for comprehensive policy frameworks within the education system, addressing the specific challenges faced by students with SEND and advocating for a more inclusive approach to sports and physical education at the school level. Nevertheless, Thompson and Clark (2023) examine overlooked aspects of education support, pointing out limitations in comprehensive policy frameworks and inclusive approaches to school sports and physical education for students with SEND. This highlights persistent gaps in policy implementation, emphasising the need for more comprehensive and targeted professional development initiatives that specifically address the challenges faced by students with SEND in the context of school sports and physical education.

Townsend, Cushion, and Smith's (2018) investigation delves into the perceptions surrounding inclusion in physical education, underscoring the crucial need for cultivating a supportive and inclusive school environment that promotes active participation and engagement for all students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This emphasises the pivotal role of the education system in fostering a culture of inclusivity within the PE setting, thereby creating a positive

and empowering experience for students with diverse needs. Shifting focus to the perspectives of children with SEND in school sports, Vickerman and Maher's (2019) research stresses the importance of understanding these perspectives in decision-making processes within the education system. This approach ensures that student voices are integral to the development of inclusive practices within the PE curriculum. Nevertheless, Wright and Turner (2022) confront the challenge of insufficient policy integration, shedding light on the constraints in promoting inclusive approaches to school sports and physical education for students with SEND in the UK. These intricacies and policy integration limitations advocate for more extensive and targeted professional development programs that effectively support the implementation of inclusive practices within the education system.

These studies highlight the vital responsibility of the education system in tackling inclusion challenges and barriers within Physical Education. By implementing comprehensive policy frameworks, personalised interventions, and inclusive research practices, the education system can cultivate an environment conducive to the active participation and engagement of all students, including those with diverse needs, in physical education and school sports.

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How Prepared are Primary Pre-Service Teachers when Teaching Physical Education? Do University-based lectures Effectively Develop PPSTs' PE Subject Knowledge and Subject Pedagogy? Part Three

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Introduction

This article, the third of five, explores the second research question from a Master's in Education thesis considering Primary Pre-Service Teachers' (PPSTs) preparedness to teach Physical Education (PE) after competing Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The article focuses on developing subject content and pedagogical knowledge. It commences with a literature review focusing on an overview of perceptions concerning PE provision within ITE over time. Following this, a brief overview of the study's methodology is provided before findings and recommendations for practice are made.

Literature Review

ITE is responsible for developing PPSTs' PE subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. However, historically, research labels university-taught aspects of PE within ITE as 'insufficient' not preparing PPSTs to teach the subject (Caldecott *et al.*, 2006; Harris *et al.*, 2012). Following the introduction of Primary League Tables (1996), schools became concerned with rankings and began prioritising the teaching of core curriculum subjects – English, mathematics and science (Duncombe *et al.*, 2018); consequently, ITE followed suit attributing fewer hours to foundation subjects, including PE (Griggs, 2015).

Carney and Armstrong (1996) found 93% of surveyed students were dissatisfied with time allocated to PE during ITE leading to some, including Warburton (2000), suggesting PPSTs only receive an introduction to PE during training; Blair and Capel (2008) outlined 40% of PPSTs received less than six hours of training. Recent studies however highlight a variation between 0-15 lecture hours across institutions (Elliot *et al.*, 2013). Subsequently, PPSTs have entered the profession with limited, and varied, experiences teaching PE (Blair and Capel, 2011).

A House of Lords Select Committee (2021) described PE within ITE as 'inadequate' calling for appropriate time allocated to develop trainees' physical literacy. Ofsted (2022a) supported this noting PPSTs must develop subject and pedagogical knowledge to effectively deliver PE, contradicting Freer (2011) who suggested subject pedagogy should be emphasised because of time restrictions.

Some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) adopt cross-modular approaches for developing subject and pedagogical knowledge, empowering PPSTs to become proactive 'agents of change' in their learning (Caldwell *et al.*, 2021) meaning trainees develop general pedagogical approaches and theoretical understanding across modules, before applying these to other subject areas.

Table 1. Teacher perspectives on their professional practice

However, Morgan *et al.*, (2019) challenged skill transference arguing PE is taught in isolation, for example, other subjects use learning objectives and success criteria, but these are often ignored in PE. Others argued PE on ITE was too theoretical with PPSTs overloaded with information (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), yet the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood (2019) recommended provision is remodelled to provide a more thorough grounding in PE theory.

There is recent positivity in relation to university-based provision in developing subject and pedagogical knowledge. PPSTs are more consistently recognising links between university-taught and school-based ITE elements understanding they are equally as important as one another in putting theory into practice (Randall et al., 2016); specifically, PPSTs expressed positivity about the importance of developing practical teaching experience in university-based lectures to develop their autonomy (Caldwell *et al.*, 2021).

Methodology

This research was conducted as a case study within a HEI with the aim of seeking the truths of participants at a specific moment in time, namely, at the end of their ITE experience.

A mixed methods research approach was utilised. Participants completed initial online questionnaires (n=39) with semi-structured interviews conducted with participants keen to be part of follow up research as identified in the questionnaires (n=6). Questions were based upon the Professional Knowledge Model (PKM) (Randall, 2016) (Figure 1) which provided greater opportunities to understand participants' truths through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Feilzer, 2010). This increased the validity and trustworthiness of the data meaning recommendations for future practice could be developed (Guba, 1981; Denscombe, 2010).

During data analysis, coding identified key themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For quantitative data, a JISC Survey analysis tool was used to generate statistics and charts whilst with qualitative data, transcriptions were made using Otter.ai; these were then manually coded into primary and secondary themes.

Before researching, the BERA Guidelines (2018) were consulted to ensure the study was ethical and rigorous; ethical approval was provided by the case study institution and participant consent was obtained during the questionnaire and in advance of interviews.

Findings

To investigate this question, the context of lectures at the HEI was explored alongside PPSTs' perceptions of these. Focusing on the PKM domains as guidance, participants were questioned about aspects of subject knowledge including curriculum knowledge, Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS), child development and health and fitness to ascertain the effectiveness of lectures. Subsequently, they were asked to reflect upon aspects of subject pedagogy including factors in addition to lectures, principles of planning PE, specific strategies to teaching PE and Health and Safety – these areas will be explored in turn.

Lecture Context

Despite recent studies demonstrating PPSTs receive 0–15 hours of PE lectures, this study's HEI provided 20 hours of lectures; 46.1% (n=18) of participants noted they attended more than fifteen hours of these (Figure 2). Contrastingly, this also highlights 20.5% (n=8) did not attend half the scheduled lectures.
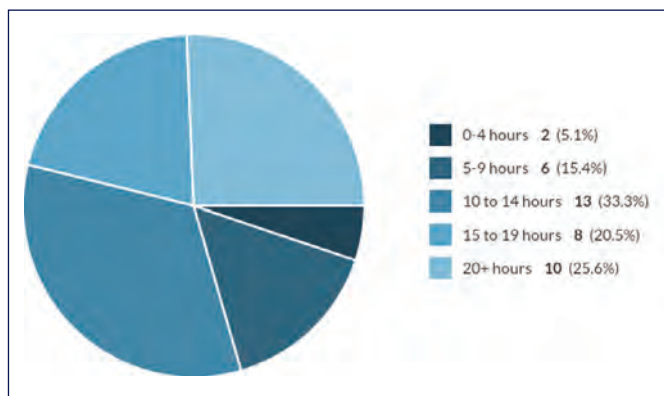

Figure 2: Hours of PE lectures attended

A correlation between lecture attendance and PPSTs' end of course preparedness exists. 90.3% (n=28) of PPSTs who attended more than ten hours of lectures somewhat agreed or agreed to feeling prepared to deliver PE. However, two PPSTs, who attended 20 hours of lectures 'somewhat disagreed,' yet these trainees cited pre-course negative perceptions of anxiety and limited teaching opportunities on placement as key factors. Nevertheless, this underlines the importance of attending lectures as generally, they positively impacted PPSTs' preparedness.

Subject Knowledge

Knowledge of the National Curriculum

The PE National Curriculum states children should learn to become physically confident, developing their health and fitness through broad ranges of physical activities including gymnastics, dance, games, swimming, athletics and Outdoor and Adventurous Activities (OAA) (Department for Education (DfE), 2013). Lectures at this study's HEI aligned with these areas with 94.8% (n=37) of participants noting provision developed their understanding of curriculum expectations. As lecture attendance records were not utilised, findings assumed PPSTs attended sessions relevant to specified areas. At least 92.3% (n=36) somewhat agreed or agreed lectures developed their PE subject knowledge in games and dance (Figure 3); interviewees underlined the importance of lectures stating, "lectures were great; there were lots of demonstrations and were really practical" and "my subject knowledge was down to the university side of the course." The majority of PPSTs were satisfied with university lectures praising their practical nature, drawing upon this when teaching PE having experienced the subject themselves from a pupils' perspective.

Lecture Area	Somewhat Agree/Agree	Somewhat Disagree/Disagree
Games	94.9% (n=37)	0%
Dance	92.3% (n=36)	2.6% (n=1)
Gymnastics	76.9% (n=30)	7.6% (n=3)
Health and Fitness	69.2% (n=27)	10.2% (n=4)
OAA	66.7% (n=26)	12.8% (n=5)
Athletics	58.9% (n=23)	15.4% (n=6)
Swimming	2.6% (n=1)	76.9% (n=30)

Figure 3: PPSTs' perceptions of lecture themes

Participants felt putting PE theory into practice within lectures was a highlight; they utilised these experiences when opportunities arose in placements. This implies university-based training impacts preparedness as lectures align with the PE National Curriculum areas PPSTs will teach, developing subject knowledge through self-experiencing lessons. These findings contradict research concerning dissatisfaction with contact hours and the basic overview PE ITE provision provides and conflict research advocating the prioritisation of theory over subject knowledge (Freer, 2011).

However, in some areas, fewer PPSTs somewhat agreed or agreed on the impact of lectures, for example, within gymnastics (76.9%, n=30); health and fitness (69.2%, n=27); OAA (66.7%, n=26); and athletics (58.2%, n=23). Some participants suggested alternative factors, including placements and wider reading, were more significant in impacting their preparedness; this however reinforces the importance of Reflective and Academic Engagement and Developing Practice in Context PKM domains.

PPSTs also outlined areas of limited preparedness; 25% (n=9) cited gymnastics and 11.1% (n=4) athletics as future professional development areas. No PPSTs referenced health and fitness for additional professional development, however, this could be attributed to developing understanding through a cross-modular approach with some participants noting "health and fitness touches on science lectures where you're talking about growth and healthy eating" suggesting PPSTs are consciously aware of cross-modular links (Caldwell, et al., 2021).

An exception to feeling prepared was swimming where 76.9% (n=30) disagreed lectures developed subject knowledge. However, Covid-19 restrictions during the participants' study meant swimming provision was rescheduled and conducted after this research took place with trainees directed to asynchronous resources to develop subject pedagogy and water safety.

Fundamental Movement Skills
Teachers must understand what FMS are and how children develop these in different contexts. Primary-aged children are not mastering basic FMS (Lawson et al., 2021) meaning PPSTs must develop their subject knowledge to ensure they provide quality PE outlining what skills are. Data highlighted only 43.6% (n=17) agreed that lectures developed understanding in this area with interviewees noting they "have heard of FMS but would definitely need to relook at them." This supports research demonstrating teachers' FMS knowledge is limited from EYFS and throughout primary phases (Eddy et al., 2021) as several participants indicated limited or no knowledge of these or how to teach them. Limited understanding could be a semantic issue – PPSTs are taught about FMS yet recognising a specific skill is a fundamental one may not be highlighted explicitly enough meaning trainees unconsciously develop understanding.

Child Development
Teachers require an understating of theory underpinning the developing child and stages children move through to learn new skills. Yet children develop physically at different rates; one factor that affects this is obesity which is impacted by poor diet and limited regular physical activity (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022).

Data suggested PPSTs placed some emphasis upon lectures developing their understanding of child development with 64.1% (n=25) somewhat agreeing and 28.2% (n=11) agreeing. Participants noted "a strong knowledge [of children's

development] is needed for someone who is prepared to deliver PE." However, another participant outlined they 'knew the basics of child development, but not the specifics like the exact stages of a developing child in PE' implying some PPSTs may have insufficient understanding of PE specific child development.

Participant responses outlined a holistic, cross-modular approach developed child development knowledge noting "there are some areas, especially in Professional Studies, that you could link towards every subject we teach," and "the stages of developing child – I remember being taught that and not just in PE" contradicting views that PE on ITE is taught in isolation (Morgan et al., 2019) supporting the notion PPST agency across modules and subjects (Caldwell et al., 2021).

Health, Fitness and Wellbeing
Teachers must understand and promote health, fitness and wellbeing. Ofsted's Inspection Framework (2022b) holds schools to account for their pastoral support and ability to help children understand and lead healthy lifestyles. Post Covid-19, the UK government issued guidance on supporting these areas through a cross-curricular approach incorporating PE, science, PSHE and RSE (DfE, 2021).

The majority of PPSTs, 94.8% (n=37), believed lectures developed their understanding of health, fitness and wellbeing as they "helped refine how to promote health and fitness." PPSTs were aware these areas were developed across ITE modules including science and Professional Studies and that they used these to develop their PE preparedness.

Subject Pedagogy
The PKM suggests teachers must develop subject pedagogy by planning sequences of lessons using PE strategies to promote learning, understanding risk and safe practice, being inclusive, and assessing accurately. Ofsted (2022a) note pedagogical content knowledge is essential in effective PE delivery. Data implied PPSTs discover subject pedagogy in lectures before developing this on placement.

Not Just Lectures
From thirty-nine PPSTs, at least 70% highlighted they somewhat agreed or agreed lectures supported their development in areas outlined in the subject pedagogy PKM domain (Figure 4). PPSTs did not elaborate further on the importance of lectures; reflecting, this area required greater enquiry during data collection.

Pedagogical Area	Somewhat Agree/Agree	Somewhat Disagree/Disagree
Risk, Health & Safety	100% (n=39)	0% (n=0)
PE Specific Strategies	82% (n=32)	5.6% (n=2)
Being Inclusive	76.9% (n=30)	5.6% (n=2)
Planning	71.7% (n=28)	2.6% (n=1)

Figure 4: PPSTs' perceptions of lectures developing areas of subject pedagogy

Alongside lectures, PPSTs credited placements and cross-modular teaching in developing subject pedagogy because on placement they "stand up in front of children and teach putting elements into practice." This supports research highlighting growing positivity within ITE that trainees recognise university-

taught and school-based aspects are equally important as learning occurs practically in university and in school (Randall *et al.*, 2016).

Planning

Participants explicitly referenced placement opportunities as a method for developing planning as they developed sequences of lessons as medium-term plans as part of directed activities which are compulsory tasks PPSTs must complete during school-based learning. Participants noted they "ended up doing a medium-term plan and following it which went really well. I think that was a turning point for me," and that they "had ownership of the planning in my third placement." Again, within all ITE modules, PPSTs learn to plan effectively, considering key principles including theory, questioning, resources and pedagogical approaches. Yet here, PPSTs did not directly reference a cross-modular approach, perhaps unconsciously aware that planning in other subjects also impacted the process in PE.

PE Specific Strategies

One participant noted they developed different teaching approaches having conducted placements in both Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2), however, these strategies were not specifically outlined. From an Emotional Intelligence perspective, different approaches are required for different key stages: in KS1, teachers should respond enthusiastically to children's emotions whereas practitioners must display self-regulation within KS2 as older children interpret teacher confidence levels (Klemola et al., 2013; Al-Adwan and Al-Khayat, 2016). No participants mentioned widely advocated specific PE pedagogical approaches including the Sports Education Model, Teaching Games for Understanding or STEPs which are explored during PE lectures suggesting although PPSTs planned and delivered PE on placement, they may have utilised more generic planning principles.

Inclusive Practice

PPSTs should also adopt inclusive principles, however, one interviewee noted complexities here as "being inclusive for all learners [in PE] is hard because needs are so varied;" others echoed this as 11.1% (n=4) outlined inclusive practice as a professional development area. More than 80% of teachers noted the number of children with additional physical needs in PE lessons is rising supporting a study conducted by Marron et al., (2021). PPSTs did not reference lectures or placement experience, however, inclusivity and adaptive practice are taught across modules throughout ITE.

Summary

Data suggested university lectures do develop PPSTs' PE subject and pedagogical knowledge as per aspects of the PKM, but to different degrees. With subject knowledge, PPSTs agreed or somewhat agreed lectures developed their understanding of PE National Curriculum areas including games and dance; an anomaly being swimming yet provision here was disrupted. PPSTs are offered twenty hours of PE lectures during ITE but under half of trainees attended above 15 hours suggesting the impact could be greater. For subject pedagogy, the case differs. Despite most PPSTs agreeing lectures developed understanding, they also acknowledged placements and cross-modular approaches. Moreover, some PPSTs still felt unprepared in their subject and pedagogical knowledge. For example, one interviewee stated: "can I remember the skills, the approaches? What should I be focusing on? What should I be teaching? When should I assess? How do I assess? All these things

worry me." Improvements can therefore still be made to provision to ensure all PPSTs feel prepared teaching PE.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations could be made to develop the effectiveness of lectures and general practice. Firstly, PPSTs' felt their subject and pedagogical knowledge benefitted from a combination of discrete PE lectures with themes also addressed through cross-modular teaching and school-based training experiences; this is something to be considered in future curriculum planning – certainly in a context of the ITE Market Review. Additionally, subject knowledge concerning FMS needs to be developed and lecturers must highlight these more explicitly to develop learners' conscious competence. Lastly, data highlighted PPSTs saw merit in wider use of the PKM in their PE training to set targets which can be shared with lecturers and school-based mentors. Additionally, they felt the PKM could develop and track their PE subject and pedagogical knowledge across the duration of their ITT experience.

What's Next?

The next article, part four, focuses on the study's final research question exploring whether school-based placements effectively develop PPSTs' PE subject and pedagogical knowledge. There is also a specific focus on the role of outsourced PE provision and the impact this can have on PPSTs' experiences and therefore their preparedness to teach PE.

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An Exploration of Modern-day Teaching Practice Through the Understanding of the History and Application of Engestrom's Activity Theory
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Introduction

Jean Piaget (1964) and Lev Vygotsky (1978) were 20th century pedagogical psychologists, who had opposing theories when considering cognitive development in children. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory suggests children progress through set cognitive stages of development: maturation, assimilation, and accommodation (Piaget, 1964). Whilst Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) placed less emphasis on prescribed stages and highlighted the importance of the environment and language on one's cognitive development with mediated activity, the 'more knowledgeable other' (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). He believed that our social and cultural context has a profound influence on, thinking patterns, our behaviour, ideas, and beliefs. Both theorists inspired and influenced the work of many others that followed (Benson, 2020). Since the 'sociocultural turn' and

the dominance of sociocultural theories in education (Block, 2003), Vygotsky's concepts are more extensively used throughout established teaching practices today through more evolved theories, such as Yrjö Engestrom's Activity Theory (AT). This essay will explore the development of Engestrom's AT from the origins of Vygotsky's work and apply these to modern-day practice. It will also draw on the work of social learning theorists Bruner *et al* (1976) and Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Engestrom's Activity Theory

Activity Theory (AT) is a conceptual framework that can be used to explore the inter-relationships between activities, actions, mediation, and characteristics of the social and organisational contexts within which these activities are used (Batiibwe, 2019). It offers a developmental view of the ways that individuals, practical actions in the world and social institutions influence the learning process (Wiske and Spicer, 2010). One of the historical origins of AT stems back to the principals originally proposed by Vygotsky, which were then developed by Leontiev and subsequently influenced Engestrom (McAvina, 2016). Leontiev and Engestrom's theories are often conflated in literature, which often results in confusion in understanding, adopting, and interpreting the frameworks (Bakhurst, 2009). Cong-Lem (2022) states this highlights the importance of exploring the history of the frameworks to ensure they effectively explore the activity systems, as understanding the differences allows academics to capitalise on the theory's strengths and consider the theoretical limitations. It also increases the awareness that the same concept can have different meanings in different contexts (Cong-Lem, 2022).

Vygotsky (1978) sought to establish new approaches to psychology after rejecting Piaget's (1964) behaviourist ideas of activity as the response to a stimulus. Vygotsky believed cognitive development is influenced by cultural and social factors and emphasised the role of social interaction in the development of mental abilities (Vygotsky, 1962). Since his work was written in Russian, these have been translated to make them more accessible to the Western world. Newman (2021) expresses some concerns about the heavy editing of Vygotsky's work throughout the translation process due to the complexity of his concepts and some words within the Russian language do not have literal English translations, thus leaving them open to interpretation of the translator (Cong-Lem, 2022).

One of the primary concepts within his SCT is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), outlined by Vygotsky (1962) as the range of a child's immediate potential for cognitive growth. The ZPD is defined by the lower end and what the child can accomplish independently, and the upper end with what the child can accomplish with the help of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), often through observation and imitation. Interactions with more experienced partners in a child's ZPD enable them to apply their current capabilities and engage in more complex thinking (Gauvain, 2001). Findings by Abtahi, Graven and Lerman (2017) suggest the MKO can alternate and change to accommodate technology and objects, as well as teachers and peers. They propose the consideration of tools as possible MKOs opens a discussion about how the alternation of MKOs within an activity could encourage learning at a deeper level.

Mediated Action (MA) is another feature of Vygotsky's SCT, which is highlighted as essential for the development of higher psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Engestrom (2001) suggests this is the first generation of AT. MA comprises an interaction between an individual (the subject) and a mediating artifact or tool for the purpose of finding new meanings in the world (achieving an object) (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) advocates this as being at the centre of developing higher psychological processes, thus leading to actualisation for the individual (Bakhurst, 2023). Wertsch (1985) criticises Vygotsky's theory as the analysis of the individual is undertaken first, followed by the analysis of cultural, institutional and environmental factors which are considered secondary and recommends these should be considered altogether.

Vygotsky's MA theory was extended by Leontiev (1978) to consider the place of individual activity within a group. Leontiev's (1978) developments include the socially mediated nature of activity and the influences others have, primarily based on a psychological approach (Hakkarainen, 2008) and to facilitate understanding and practice (Bakhurst, 2009). He extended the theory to consider the place of individual activity within a group and advocated that a division of labour between individuals has a significant impact on the outcome of the activity (ibid). Kaptelinin (2005) suggests that although this is an extension on Vygotsky's original theory, Leontiev's analysis was still primarily analysing activities at an individual level. Engestrom (2001) concurs, and criticised Leontiev's theory as he identified the instrumental and communicative characteristics of activity were not brought into the model he formulated, and therefore extended AT again.

Engestrom's AT proposed to study organisational learning and change (Kaptelinin, 2005) by using a system of 6 elements with the potential to produce new forms of activity that all interrelate and impact upon each other: the subject, object, tools, rules, community, and division of labour (Engestrom, 2001). According to Wiske and Spicer (2010), Engestrom used AT to demonstrate how several distinct elements play crucial parts of mediating individual and group learning processes and is therefore, the most appropriate generation of AT to use to examine the collective progress towards outcomes in the modern-day classroom. Aspects of this will be used to explore my practice and the progress made towards the outcome.

Application of Engestrom's Activity Theory

Subject, Object

Engestrom and Sannino (2021) define the subject as the individual whose position and point of view is chosen as the perspective of the analysis. As the class teacher, I am the subject for this analysis. I work in a primary special school in a class of eight children and supported by five teaching assistants (TAs). As one of the eight children in my class, Child A is the object within this analysis, as Engestrom and Sannino (2021) define the object as referring to the 'raw material' at which the activity is directed. Child A has a diagnosis of autism, ADHD and has communication difficulties. Although Child A communicates verbally, he had a limited vocabulary and at the start of the year. He communicated his feelings mostly through outbursts of physical aggression towards staff and other children, including hitting, kicking, jumping on tables and throwing objects.

Outcome

In order to align with Engestrom's generation of AT, Cong-Lem (2022) state the outcome must relate to the transformation of the whole activity system. My outcome for this activity system is to maintain a safe, supportive environment within which all children can make progress and actualise. However, for Child

A, his outcome is to communicate with others in an effective way to get his needs met. Although these outcomes differ, we are both working towards the same goal – to have effective ways to communicate safely and achieve actualisation. Prain, Cox and Deed (2014) explain it is important the long-term outcomes align and are compatible to ensure the outcomes will be achieved in the most efficient way.

Tools

Since the era of Vygotsky, there has been a widespread recognition of his claim of two main types of tools existing within AT – physical and psychological. Each type has different properties and advantages, and often work within the same activity system (Daniels, Cole and Wertsch, 2007; Engestrom, 2001). Several tools were implemented to support Child A to achieve the outcome. Wertsch (1998) suggests language is a psychological tool, as its development is a process where change takes place in the internal tools of the child and therefore transforms their mental functions. According to Vygotsky (1978), as the brain develops, it enables the development of language and the way we interact with the world. For children diagnosed with special educational needs, language, thoughts and feelings are all processed and communicated differently (Greaves et al, 2002). Since Child A did not have access to the language required to communicate his thoughts and feelings, I worked with him to ascertain the emotions he could identify independently and those he could name with adult support, and also the emotional regulation techniques he was aware of – thus determining his ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). I then used this information to adapt the tools to support Child A to achieve the outcome.

Margolis (2020) suggests one way of constructing the ZPD and ensuring the child meets the outcomes is to scaffold the learning, a concept proposed by Bruner et al (1976). They define scaffolding as a special type of support given to each student when performing a task that can be removed as the student progresses towards the outcome. Puntambekar and Hubscher (2005) caution the profuse use of the term 'scaffolding' is often incorrect due to it frequently being used to describe any type of support given to a student in the learning process, and not specifically removed as the child progresses. The scaffolds used to support Child A included a visual calm-down card outlining an accessible way to regulate his nervous system and emotions boards, providing Child A with a visual representation of different emotions and different activities he could use to regulate. As Child A has progressed towards the outcomes, these scaffolds have gradually been removed. As a result of these tools, he now has the language to verbalise how he is feeling and can recall the regulation process independently. As Abtahi, Graven and Lerman (2017) suggest, these tools can be classified as MKOs and can offer a potential explanation for the accelerated achievement of the outcome. Although Rytivaara (2015) supports the individualised learning approach, their findings recognise how time consuming this can be and the additional workload it adds for teachers. Personal experience has demonstrated although this may be the case, effective scaffolds ensure the children feel supported and engage with the learning – whether that is during a literacy lesson or to regulate emotions, resulting in a safer environment and more opportunities to make progress.

Rules

The activity system itself is constrained by various cultural factors including explicit and implicit regulations, societal norms and conventions (Engestrom and Sannino, 2021).

For the activity system to be effective, all the participants' understanding of rules and socially acceptable behaviour need to align otherwise this can be problematic and the outcome less likely to be achieved (Young, 2022). In September, Child A disengaged from a literacy input session, climbed on the table, hit a TA and threw his shoes at me. Once he calmed using the tools that were implemented, we discussed how he was feeling using a visual aid and he communicated, "I felt angry. I want outside". I reminded Child A of our school rules and explained how he hurt me, which Cosme (2021) concurs with as learning occurs best through reflection and evaluation of the behaviour's consequences. This suggests that his understanding of the rules and the socially acceptable way to express his wants and needs did not align with everyone else's understanding, and therefore he was not meeting the outcome.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory highlights the importance of developing Child A's understanding of rules, through the microsystem (including at school), as this influences his understanding of the macrosystem and socially acceptable behaviour in wider society once he leaves the education system. At the microsystem level, the main influence is the behaviour policy implemented within the school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The policy implemented in School A (Name withheld, 2023) acknowledges the complex needs of the children within the school and the need for clear structure and consistent boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Although the boundaries are the same for each child, it is important to differentiate the strategy used to support their regulation (Gilbert, Gus and Rose, 2021). At the start of the year, I discussed the classroom rules with the students. We agreed on "kind words, kind hands, kind feet". As a result, everyone within the community of this activity framework is aware of the same rules and boundaries, ensuring Child A is aware of acceptable behaviour and thus meet his outcome. This policy is influenced by the exosystem, which includes the current government procedures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Department for Education (2022) state behaviour policies in schools are central to a good education because it enables children to thrive and learn how to be a positive, active member in society when they leave. In turn, this is influenced by the macrosystem and wider societal norms, including government legislation which keeps all members in society safe (Legislation, 2024).

Conclusion

This essay has used social learning theories and Vygotskian based concepts to explore modern day practice. Through doing this, it has demonstrated that although Vygotsky's concepts are dated, they have been adapted and developed upon by theorists such as Leontiev and Engestrom to be beneficial and applicable to educational practice today. From completing this analysis, my understanding of social learning theory and the role of the teacher has evolved, as has the potential, and benefit I see in the group as a whole. The activity system for Child A will continue to evolve as the outcomes are achieved and new outcomes come into view, ensuring they continue to actualise.

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