

**Pre-service teachers' interests and dispositions towards
involvement in a physical education teacher education
programme**

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ABSTRACT

Investigating the reasons for pre-service teachers (PSTs) choosing to undertake a PETE programme can inform teacher educators on how best to define teaching tasks, organise knowledge relevant to student learning and shape PSTs' perceptions about teaching and learning (Calderhead, 1996). In this study Lortie's (1975) attractors and facilitators to the teaching profession frame the examination of PSTs' motivation to enrol on a physical education teacher education (PETE) programme.

The aim of the research is to examine the interests and dispositions that motivate PSTs to enrol in a PETE programme offered by an Irish university, acknowledging that little is known about candidates who enter teacher education in the Republic of Ireland (Clarke 2009). PSTs' current conceptions of the physical education field and the changing perceptions attributed to their subsequent experiences and opportunities of the programme are also identified. It is anticipated that the research will enhance the educational experiences of PSTs by investigating the social construction of educational discourse in and around the subject of physical education. The participants in the study were first year PSTs who were enrolled in a PETE programme at the university where the study took place. Data was collected from PSTs through surveys, interviews, a teaching scenario, revisited interviews on the scenario and a timeline. The surveys, teaching scenario and timeline were completed by the PST cohort as they began their first year of the PETE programme. Survey data was collected from 357 PSTs across five cohorts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of ten PSTs at the beginning of the first semester of first year and at the end of their second semester of their first year. Scenario interviews were conducted with the same sub sample of PSTs at the end of the first semester. The same sub sample of PSTs were used for the three interviews. While the initial interview examined attractors to teaching, the scenario interview refocused PSTs on the teaching scenario which PSTs had completed at the start of the year. Scenarios are short descriptions of situations that are usually shown to respondents followed by questions to elicit individual responses to these situations (De Vaus 1996). The scenarios and scenario interviews established any changes in the PSTs' views towards how they would envisage responding to a particular teaching scenario and encouraged exploration of reasons for such changes occurring. The final interview was structured to address gaps that had arisen between the research findings and the literature and to revisit the reliability of the survey data and the initial interviews.

The findings from the initial and final interviews and the timelines found that 'significant others' were frequently recorded as influencing PSTs' choice of

programme of study, with family emerging as the most frequently cited group of significant people. 'Significant others' are reported internationally as an influence on why PSTs choose to apply to a PETE programme; this cohort of Irish PSTs concur citing it as influential as 'interest in sport'. The more commonly reported attractors to enrolling on a PETE programme, 'sport' (Hutchinson 1993; O' Sullivan et al. 2009; Zounhia, Chatoupis, Amoutzas, and Hatziharistos 2006) and 'working with children' (O' Bryant, O' Sullivan, and Raudensky 2000; O' Sullivan et al 2009; Zounhia, et al 2006) were also noted by the PST cohort in this study. The significant influence of 'sport' was apparent from the findings of the survey, timeline and initial and final interviews. Interest in 'sport' appeared as influential as cited by other authors, but the influence of 'working with children' was less influential than previously reported. PSTs changing perceptions about physical education and the teaching of physical education were apparent in the scenario interviews. The PSTs revisited responses to the teaching scenario were more informed and provided greater in-depth information. The PSTs believed their responses had changed because they were applying what they had been taught in the physical education programme and because they were now more educated in physical education.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own, and was completed without collaboration or assistance from others, other than the counsel of my supervisor, Dr. Ann MacPhail of the Physical Education and Sport Sciences Department, University of Limerick.

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Table of contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
Author’s Declaration	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
Table of contents	vi
List of tables.....	ix
List of Abbreviations.....	x
Preface	xi
Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Post-primary education in Ireland	1
1.2.1 Post-Primary Physical Education in Ireland.....	2
1.3 Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) in Ireland	5
1.3.1 PETE in University A	5
1.3.2 Entrance into PETE at University A.....	7
1.4 Relevant literature to the research	9
1.4.1 Theoretical Framework	11
1.5 Purpose of the study and research questions.....	11
1.6 Chapter summaries	12
Chapter 2.....	13
Literature review	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 PSTs’ reasons for choosing to study physical education	14
2.2.1 Choosing an occupation	15
2.2.2 Recruitment resources	16
2.3 Pre-service teachers’ entrance into teacher education programmes	20
2.3.2 Low academic requirements of PETE.....	20
2.3.3 Suggestions for attracting appropriately qualified PSTs.....	21
2.3.4 An Irish context	22
2.3.3 PSTs’ experiences of school physical education	22
2.4 Pre-service teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about Physical Education	23
2.4.1 PSTs beliefs about physical education.....	23
2.4.2 Pre-service teachers’ changing beliefs and attitudes.....	25
2.4.3 Enhancing PSTs’ beliefs and attitudes.....	26
2.4.4 Pre-service teachers own healthy life-style	28
2.4.5 PSTs’ views on PETE programme experiences and content.....	28
2.5 Post-primary physical education and physical education teachers.....	30
2.5.1 Status of physical education in Ireland	30
2.5.2 Physical education teaching in Ireland.....	32
2.6.1 Reasons for choosing a career in physical education.....	34
2.6.2 Pre-service teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about physical education	35
Chapter 3.....	37
Methodology	37
3.1 Aim of the research.....	37
3.2 Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm.....	37
3.3 Data Collection.....	38

3.3.1 Survey data	38
3.3.2 Interviews	42
3.3.3 Timelines	44
3.4 Limitations of the study	45
Chapter Four	46
Demographics of PETE PSTs	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Demographics for five year PST cohort	46
4.2.1 Demographics for 10 PSTs from 2009 cohort.....	47
4.3 Influences for deciding to pursue the PETE programme	48
4.4 PSTs' career pursuit upon graduation from a PETE course	49
4.5 PSTs' recreational interests	50
4.6 PSTs' level of agreement with predetermined physical activity / sport-related statements.....	51
4.7 Conclusion.....	52
Chapter Five	54
PSTs' interests and dispositions towards enrolment on a PETE programme	54
5.1 Introduction	54
5.2 PSTs' introduction to the PETE programme.....	56
5.2.1 Beginning interviews	56
5.2.2 Final interviews.....	60
5.3 Interests and motivations of PSTs	63
5.3.1 Beginning interviews	63
5.3.2 Final interviews.....	68
5.4 Relationship with the programme.....	70
5.4.1 Beginning interviews	70
5.4.2 Final interviews.....	72
5.4.2.2 Least relevant aspects of the PETE programme	73
5.5 PSTs Lifestyle	74
5.5.1 Providing knowledge to students.....	74
5.5.2 Participation important in promoting a healthy lifestyle.....	75
5.5.3 PSTs personal lifestyles	76
5.6 Discussion	77
Chapter Six.....	81
PSTs' responses to a particular teaching scenario	81
6.1 Introduction.....	81
6.2 PSTs' reading of the scenario and associated implications for students: initial response	83
6.3 Revisited responses.....	84
6.4 PSTs' proposed action in response to scenario initial responses	86
6.5 Revisited responses.....	87
6.6 Proposed student learning with respect to PSTs' reconfiguration of the scenario initial responses	88
6.7 Revisited responses.....	89
6.8 Modules that informed PSTs' answers	90
6.9 Changes between initial and second responses	91
6.10 PSTs' reasoning for why/why not changes have occurred in their responses	93
6.11 Discussion	94
Chapter Seven	97
Conclusion and Recommendations	97

7.1 Introduction	97
7.2 The significant influence of interest in sport on PSTs' decision to enter PETE.....	97
7.3 The influence of significant others on PSTs' entrance into PETE.....	98
7.4 Occupational choice.....	99
7.5 PSTs' perspectives on the PETE programme	100
7.6 Recommendations.....	100
7.6.1 Recruitment of suitable PETE candidates.....	100
7.6.2 The acknowledgement and accommodation of PSTs' likely interests and strengths	101
7.6.3 Relationship between school physical education teachers and PETE programmes.....	101
7.6.4 Application and relevance of the PETE programme	102
Epilogue.....	103
References.....	106
Appendices.....	A
Appendix A	B
Educational Discourse Survey	B
Appendix B	C
Attitudes about Physical Education Survey.....	C
Appendix C	D
Initial Interview Protocol.....	D
Appendix D.....	F
Scenario Interview Protocol.....	F
Appendix E	H
Final Interview Protocol	H
Appendix F.....	J
Layout of Timeline	J
Appendix G.....	K
Survey Data.....	K
Appendix H.....	Q
Initial interviews coding	Q
Appendix I.....	Z
Final interviews coding.....	Z

List of tables

Table 1.1	Irish Leaving Certificate points calculation grid
Table 3.1	Number of surveys distributed
Table 4.1	Demographics of all five year surveys
Table 4.2	Demographics of the ten 2009 PSTs
Table 4.3	Please indicate how influential individuals or reasons were in your decision to pursue physical education
Table 4.4	I have selected an undergraduate physical education course because I would like to pursue a career
Table 4.5	What are your main recreational interests?
Table 4.6	Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements
Table 5.1	Codes for beginning PST interviews
Table 5.2	Codes for final PST interviews

List of Abbreviations

APA	Adapted Physical Activity
CAO	Central Applications Office
DES	Department of Education and Science
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HRA	Health Related Activity
JCPE	Junior Certificate Physical Education
LC	Leaving Certificate
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCPE	National Curriculum Physical Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PE	Physical Education
PETE	Physical Education Teacher Education
PST	Pre-Service Teachers
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
US	United States

Preface

This study is focused on the physical education undergraduate degree programme at an Irish university. The survey data was collected at the start of first year pre-service teachers' (PSTs') first semester in 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009. The main focus is the 2009 first year cohort of PSTs.

I am a 'product' of this physical education undergraduate degree programme, entering the programme in 2004 with a teaching orientation, always wanting to be a teacher. During my decision of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life my decision went from teaching home economics, to science to physical education. In the end it was my love of physical activity and sport that swayed me towards physical education.

My physical education classes within primary school consisted of jumping jacks and GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association). I had never attempted anything such as swimming, gymnastics or athletics, only being aware of such activities through watching them on television. I progressed from primary school to post-primary school with very little knowledge of any sports other than GAA and soccer. In post-primary school we were timetabled for an hour and ten minutes of physical education in first year with a brilliant and enthusiastic teacher. I thoroughly enjoyed physical education, experiencing so many different activities and becoming invested in basketball, finding a new love for a different sport.

In my second year of post-primary school I had a different teacher who was lazy and did not appear to care about her students to the same extent as the previous physical education teacher. I had the opportunity to participate only in basketball and indoor soccer for the next two years. In third year the time for physical education was reduced to thirty-five minutes a week on a Friday morning. After being out drinking the night before, our 'PE teacher' often came in hung-over and sat on a rocking chair at the back of the hall while we did what we wanted. I was glad not to experience physical education after third year. This teacher had already warped my image of physical education and another two years with her I probably would not have decided to choose physical education as my career. I did continue with camogie, Gaelic

football and basketball in school, and camogie and Gaelic football outside school. I loved participating in them, training twice a day in some instances. I was involved with over eleven teams between school, club and county. Eventually, at the end of fifth year, one of my school camogie trainers sat me down and told me I had to slow down or I was going to burn out. I respected her for looking out for me and I decided that I would like to look out for students' health and physical activity like she had for me.

I believe this trainer and the physical education teacher I had in first year were positive influences on me. I wanted to be able to teach like the physical education teacher I had in first year and I wanted to look out for my students like my camogie trainer had looked out for me. I entered the physical education programme in 2004 and thoroughly enjoyed the programme. One of the modules that really stood out for me focused on the adaptations of physical education. Before this class we did not talk about or focus on how to adapt our lessons for the different abilities within the class. Before I started on the programme I never thought of all the different levels of ability students could have in your class. I was always good at physical education and those who were not good or disliked physical education would always sit out so I never contemplated having to deal with different abilities in physical education. Another module that had a significant impact on me would have to be the outdoor adventure module we had in fourth year. The module was brilliant and very well run and taught. It provided me with information and activities that could be used in schools and allowed a significant amount of time to practice our planning and delivery of lessons.

Before I entered the programme I did not know what to expect. I knew that there would be some teaching involved and that there would be a lot of different sport and physical activities. I did not expect the extent of theory we would have to learn. We never did any theory during physical education in school so I did not know that there would be any theory involved in learning about teaching physical education. I also did not expect the amount of planning that is involved in being a physical education teacher, i.e., schemes of work, lesson plans and organisation. I never saw my physical education teachers with any plans and I presumed teachers would come to work and then decide what to do with the class.

Upon graduating I was successful in securing a one-year contract and began teaching in a vocational school. I taught physical education to post-leaving certificate students, i.e., students who have finished their Leaving Certificate and can range from 17 years up to any age. I taught health-related fitness and exercise and fitness. This teaching experience was very different from what the PETE programme had prepared me for. I was prepared to teach students between the ages of 12-18 years and here I was teaching women and men up to fifty years old. It was an interesting experience and I did enjoy it. I had a chance to apply a significant amount of theory which I had learned during my health-related activity modules and exercise to music modules. I also had to apply some of the theory from my anatomy and physiology and biomechanics modules. I think that for what I was teaching to the post-leaving certificate students the theory I learned in the programme was very transferable.

After my first year of teaching I again had to search for a teaching job and after a couple of months of being unsuccessful I contacted an Irish university to pursue a Masters in physical education. I subsequently enrolled back into the department through which I had completed my PETE programme.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that those involved in teacher education must identify, acknowledge and understand the experiences of those coming into teacher education and their reasons for choosing teaching as a career (Clarke 2009). This study will complement and develop the few Irish studies that have explored entrants' reasons for choosing a career in teaching, specifically examining the interests and dispositions that motivated pre-service teachers (PSTs) to enrol in a physical education teacher education (PETE) programme (O' Sullivan, MacPhail and Tannehill 2009).

Understanding teaching recruits' beliefs is essential as beliefs filter what recruits learn during formal education, most adopting ideas that fit rather than contradict their initial beliefs (Doolittle, Dodds and Placek 1993). PETE recruits' changing attitudes and beliefs throughout their teacher education has been investigated internationally (Doolittle, Dodds and Placek 1993; Calderhead 1996; Richardson 1996) with little research being carried out on PSTs' beliefs and attitudes within an Irish context (O' Sullivan, MacPhail and Tannehill 2009).

In the following sections I will provide the reader with an overview of PETE in Ireland, information on the education of Irish teachers to deliver post-primary physical education and PSTs' experiences of school physical education. I begin with a brief introduction to post-primary physical education in Ireland to introduce the context in which PETE in Ireland operates.

1.2 Post-primary education in Ireland

Post-primary education in Ireland consists of a three-year junior cycle followed by a two or three year senior cycle (MacPhail and Halbert 2005). The Junior Certificate

examination is taken after three years when students are usually 14 or 15 years old. The senior cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18-year age group. Students normally take the Leaving Certificate examination at the age of 17 or 18, after 5 or 6 years of post-primary education. Students may opt to follow a non-examinable one-year Transition Year programme before proceeding to study for the Leaving Certificate.

1.2.1 Post-Primary Physical Education in Ireland

The Department of Education and Science (DES) (2004) reported that in their 743 funded post-primary schools, 651 provided physical education at junior cycle and 516 at senior cycle.

Physical education is not provided in all post-primary schools and the quality and breadth of provision varies (MacPhail, O'Sullivan and Halbert 2008). MacPhail, Halbert, McEvelly, Hutchinson and MacDonncha (2005) reported from 417 principals in Irish post-primary schools that 88% supported compulsory physical education in the junior cycle and 53% supported compulsory physical education at senior cycle. There is concern from those involved in PETE that people without any formal PETE training are teaching within post-primary schools (MacPhail and Halbert 2005; MacPhail, et al. 2008). While the Department of Education and Science (DES) recommend two hours of physical education per student per week evidence suggests that there is a reduction of physical education curriculum time from 75 minutes in first year to 57 minutes in sixth year (MacPhail and Halbert 2005). While this reduction is reported as an international trend, the increased time allocation to 101 minutes per week in Transition Year is particular to Irish post-primary schools (MacPhail and Halbert 2005). Schools, while encouraged to offer physical education, can and are granted an exemption if circumstances warrant (such as lack of adequate facilities) (O' Sullivan 2006). Approximately 70% of second level schools in Ireland employ a qualified physical education teacher (Deenihan, 1991, in MacPhail and Halbert 2005) and it is suspected that a large proportion of teachers without a formal physical education qualification teaching physical education concentrate on teaching competitive games (MacPhail and Halbert 2005).

In the context of Irish post-primary schools the barriers that were seen as influential for the provision of physical education were provision (facilities, equipment, staff, funding, time, resources), curriculum (student-related issues, over crowded curriculum, examinable physical education, current practice), teacher education (in-service teacher education, pre-service teacher education) and communication (issues to be addressed, information, promotion) (Halbert and MacPhail 2005). MacPhail et al (2005) found provision to be the most identified issue made by principals and teachers as influencing provision within their schools. PSTs should be aware of the reality of teaching physical education in a post-primary school in Ireland which can include the lack of or limited availability of facilities, equipment, staff, funding, time and resources.

1.2.1.1 Junior cycle syllabus

A revised junior cycle syllabus was introduced in 2003 to support the planning and teaching of the subject for lower post-primary students (Halbert and MacPhail 2010). The emphasis of the junior cycle physical education programme is on “the participation of each student in purposeful physical activity and the learning associated with this participation” (DES and NCCA 2003: 58). The revised junior cycle syllabus included a number of areas of study representing a range of practical activities: adventure activities, aquatics, athletics, dance, invasion games, net and fielding games, gymnastics and health-related activities.

There is a realisation that the introduction of the revised junior cycle physical education (JCPE) syllabus will require teachers to follow a prescribed programme possibly for the first time, a prospect described by one principal as ‘quite alien’ to some teachers (Halbert and MacPhail 2010).

1.2.1.2 Senior cycle

Senior cycle physical education in Ireland is inconsistent across schools. There is limited time allocated from what students receive at junior cycle. Some schools may

not even offer senior cycle physical education. If senior cycle physical education is offered in schools it is usually recreationally based and may include many students opting to not take part in the physical education class. Many schools provide leaving certificate students with the option to study for their exams rather than take part in the class.

2.5.2.3 Proposed Leaving Certificate syllabus

When a resource-intensive subject like physical education does not contribute to the race for points awarded in the Leaving Certificate (LC) national examinations, it is more difficult to persuade principals to increase time allocation or the appropriate personnel for the subject (O' Sullivan 2006). A Leaving Certificate physical education syllabus has been created by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), but is not yet approved. Similar to the A-level physical education structure in England and the higher physical education structure in Scotland the proposed Leaving Certificate physical education syllabus has three assessment components: performance, movement analysis and a terminal written examination (Macphail and Halbert 2005). The syllabus will be offered at two levels, ordinary and higher level. The Leaving Certificate syllabus comprises similar theoretical and practical aspects as the revised senior cycle syllabus with the health-related activity component being omitted (Macphail and Halbert 2005). The majority of principals and teachers agree that student learning and achievement in physical education ought to be recognised formally and in the Irish context that means through the examination system (Halbert and MacPhail 2010). It is also acknowledged that examinable physical education may be likely to increase the credibility of the subject within schools (Halbert and MacPhail 2010). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment are considering the introduction of Physical Education as a leaving certificate subject in Irish schools and associated developments are ongoing.

1.3 Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) in Ireland

From 1973 to 2006, only one four-year teacher education programme in the Republic of Ireland was available to qualify those wishing to teach physical education in Irish post-primary schools (MacPhail, O'Sullivan and Halbert 2008). Since 2006 two additional four-year teacher education programmes at undergraduate level and a one-year Graduate Diploma teacher education programme have been approved. We will reference the undergraduate programmes as taking place at university A, university B and university C. The university my research is based on is university A.

The three undergraduate programmes have a similar structure based around three areas: physical education, education and an elective. In Ireland all physical education PSTs choose an elective subject to study along with physical education. University A offers their PSTs five choices: maths, English, Irish, geography and chemistry. University B offers biology. University C gives the PSTs a choice of six subjects: English, French, Irish, history, mathematical sciences and sociology. All three universities offer their PSTs a chance of gaining teaching practice in schools. University A and B offer teaching practice in the second year and fourth year of the programme. University C offer teaching practice during years two, three and four.

1.3.1 PETE in University A

The BSc in Physical Education is one of the most sought after undergraduate programmes in the university from the 75 undergraduate programmes on offer (www.ul.ie). Approximately 70 PSTs enter first year of the PETE programme every year. The central focus of this programme is on teacher education and PSTs are educated to teach physical education and a specialist option. The aims of the physical education programme are:

- To enable graduates to become reflective teachers, who will provide educationally worthwhile learning experiences for children in second level schools, through the medium of Physical Education

- To enable graduates to respond in an informed way, to the health, recreational and special education needs of the wider community (www.ul.ie)

The physical education component of the programme is twofold. It includes the academic study of human movement from the disciplinary perspectives of kinesiology (science of movement), sociology, psychology, and philosophy, together with curricular and pedagogic implications. The practical experience involves engagement in a range of competitive, aesthetic, adventure, aquatic and artistic activities, in order to illuminate and enhance teaching effectiveness (www.ul.ie). In preparation for their roles, as reflective teachers, opportunities for working with children in specific contexts are provided, on campus and in schools, together with analysis of the experience, in consultation with tutors. The teaching practice process begins in the spring semester of year 2, when PSTs participate in a six-week teaching practice block. The year 4 teaching practice of ten weeks occurs in the autumn semester.

PSTs will be introduced to a variety of pedagogy modules over the duration of the programme. The PSTs experience modules such as foundations of teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment, teaching and learning for individuals in physical education, etc. PSTs are introduced to the theories underpinning youth sport participation and policy. Policies and international strategies related to youth sport are examined. Students are also encouraged to examine the social construction of such strategies. The practical application of motor learning from previous modules are adapted and applied to youth sport contexts. Students are required within the teaching practice environment to evaluate current youth sport provision in schools and physical education and to present strategies for future youth sport provision. PSTs gain experience in the area of special needs and adapted physical activity. In this module students are introduced to terminology and definitions related to adapted physical activity (APA). Historical aims and objectives of the APA movement, legislation and disability, categories of disability, and overview of aetiology and incidence of disabilities are examined. Integration and inclusion in schools and the community, adapted physical activity programming (principles, content and implementation, integration problems, public facilities adaptations for disabled individuals), sport and disability, adapted physical activity infrastructure in Ireland are also examined. Topics

also include growth, posture and development, role of exercise in rehabilitation, care and prevention of injury.

1.3.2 Entrance into PETE at University A

The Central Applications Office (CAO) points to enter the physical education programme at University A in 2009 were 500 points, an exceptionally high requirement for a teacher education programme. It is the third highest points out of all the undergraduate degree programmes at the university (www.ul.ie). The CAO provides a centralised applications mechanism to many of the third level institutions in Ireland. Students wishing to take courses in any of the participating institutions indicate, in order their course preference on the CAO form. Places are offered on the basis of points calculated on the Leaving Certificate results. Although the Central Applications Office makes offers of places to applicants it does not calculate the points. The points awarded for Leaving Certificate results are calculated by the participating institutions. This allows these institutions to build into the CAO system any special requirements which they might have.

At the end of second-level education in Ireland students have the opportunity to sit a Leaving Certificate examination. The results achieved in this examination determine what third-level programmes of study students will be in a position to apply to. The grades obtained by the students in each of their exams are transferred into points. The points received for each leaving certificate grade can be seen in Table 1.1 below. The Leaving Certificate students can sit a higher level or an ordinary level paper. The higher level paper receives more points than the ordinary level paper, which can be seen in Table 1.1. The bonus points are awarded by University A to those students who sit the higher level mathematics paper. For example if a student receives an A2 for their higher level mathematics paper they will receive an extra 35 points giving them a total of 125 points for mathematics.

Students choose seven school subjects and the best six are added for a cumulative number of points. Third-level programmes are offered to students with the highest amount of points interested in that programme and works down the points gained until all the places are filled. The lowest amount of points gained in completing the full complement of student places on a programme serve as the minimum entry for the programme and act as a guideline of points to strive for students interested in entering the programme the following year. This is the route that the majority of the PSTs in this study will have taken to enter the PETE course.

The university in which this study is based has two other entry routes to the PETE programme. A certain amount of places are set aside for mature students, that is, students who are over 23 years of age and have an interest in returning to formal education. Mature students are not expected to have accumulated the points necessary from those entering the programme straight from school. Another route of entry is through the Higher Education Access Route. The Access Route is a college and university admissions scheme which offers places at reduced points to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This route is for school leavers who have the ability to benefit from, and succeed in, higher education and who come from socio economic groups in Irish society that are under-represented in third level education.

The data in Table 4.1 and 4.2 (appendix G) reports that some PSTs entered the programme with points below the CAO entry points for that year. (The CAO system and CAO points have been discussed in chapter 1). This reflects those entering the programme as mature students or through the Access Route. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 (appendix G) display the CAO points of the PETE programme for the year the survey was distributed, it also shows the average points achieved in that year.

Leaving Cert Grade	Higher Paper	Ordinary Paper	Bonus *
A1	100	60	40
A2	90	50	35
B1	85	45	30
B2	80	40	25
B3	75	35	20
C1	70	30	15
C2	65	25	10
C3	60	20	5
D1	55	15	
D2	50	10	
D3	45	5	

Table 1.1 Irish Leaving Certificate Examination Points Calculation Grid

1.4 Relevant literature to the research

There are three stages in an individual's decision to choosing an occupation potentially allowing us to understand why people choose to enter PETE (Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad, and Herma 1951). The 'fantasy period' is where reflections of occupational stereotyping come into play. The individual's interest in the occupation appears sufficient for choosing the occupation. The 'tentative period' is where an increased awareness of the personal and educational attributes required for entry into the occupation is apparent. The 'realistic period' is where the individual attempts to work out a plan by looking at the subjective and external factors. They move through a series of narrowing choices until their final decision is reached.

Researchers report PSTs' attitudes and beliefs and how they change, if at all, during their teacher education (Doolittle, Dodds, and Placek 1993; Matanin and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). A handful of studies followed PSTs through their years of teacher education and report if their views on physical education changed from when they started the programme. PSTs' attitudes and beliefs did not change significantly (Doolittle, Dodds, and Placek 1993; Matanin and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). Doolittle, et al (1993) studied three PSTs enrolled on a PETE programme in the United States. They report that two of the PSTs beliefs had no significant change from

when they started on the programme. In contradiction to the statement above they found one PST whose beliefs about physical education on completion of their PETE programme were the exact same as when they had started.

Research reporting the motivations of PSTs in entering PETE has concluded the main influence on their decision was interest in sport (Placek et al 1991; O' Sullivan et al. 2009). Other influences include working with children (Clarke 2009), giving back to society (Richardson 1996) and significant others (O' Bryant et al. 2000). Little research has been carried out on the interests and motivations of Irish PSTs' decisions to enter PETE with the exception of O' Sullivan et al. (2009) investigating the influences of one cohort of PSTs in their first weeks of enrolling on an Irish PETE programme. Interest in sport and physical education, working with children and significant others were the three themes that captured the key influences in their decisions to become physical education teachers (O' Sullivan, et al. 2009).

It is anticipated that this study will develop the work of O'Sullivan et al. (2009) by revisiting first year PSTs' decisions to enter the PETE programme at the end of their first year and also contextualise their experiences to date by examining their responses to a particular teaching scenario. Survey data will also provide demographic information on the sample of students being studied as well as their year group and previous year groups, investigating the maintenance or challenge of the demographic make-up of PSTs over five years. It is anticipated that the findings will be informative to those involved in PETE as they strive to provide worthwhile and valuable opportunities for PSTs (Clarke 2009). Knowing and understanding PSTs' beliefs allows those involved in PETE to prepare potential teachers to move beyond their own personal views and experiences to bring a wider body of knowledge and experiences to bear on how best to help students learn (O' Sullivan, et al. 2009). It is envisaged that this research can help teacher educators in physical education to prepare PSTs as members of the teaching profession.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework

Lortie's (1975) framework on attractors and facilitators as recruiters to the teaching profession will guide the presentation and analysis of data. Attractors are seen as comparative benefits that are offered to potential individuals and Lortie (1975) suggested five attractors: continuation theme, service theme, interpersonal theme, time compatibility theme and material benefits and sex differences. Facilitators are social mechanisms that ease an individual's entry into an occupation or profession and Lortie (1975) suggested three facilitators: significant others, absence of career alternatives and the subjective warrant. This study investigates which attractors and facilitators are most significant in influencing a PSTs' entry to PETE.

1.5 Purpose of the study and research questions

Drawing on Lortie's (1975) framework this study sought to investigate PSTs' motivations and interests for choosing to study physical education. It also investigates if changes occur in PSTs' beliefs and attitudes throughout the first year of their programme. The focus of the study is on a first year cohort although data from previous first year cohorts was utilised to contextualise the chosen PSTs' demographics. Data was collected from a sample of ten first year PETE PSTs (2009) through surveys, interviews, scenarios and timelines. Survey data was also collected from previous first year cohorts (2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008). Triangulation took place between each of the data sources to inform the two research questions;

1. What are the interests and dispositions that motivated pre-service teachers to enrol in a physical education teacher education programme?
2. What are pre-service teachers' perception of the field and are changing perceptions attributed to their PETE experiences and opportunities?

1.6 Chapter summaries

This chapter has provided an introduction to my research setting out the intention to provide evidence for the motivations that influence Irish PSTs to study physical education. Chapter two provides a detailed account of research related to PSTs' beliefs and motivations for choosing a career in physical education teaching. Chapter three provides an outline of the research methodology and identifies the interpretive/constructivist paradigm as the theoretical paradigm used to frame the research. Chapter four reports findings from 357 educational discourse surveys of first year PSTs from 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Chapter five focuses on the findings from initial and final interviews and the timelines of the PSTs, particularly the interests and dispositions of the PSTs. Chapter six focuses on the teaching scenario and scenario interviews of the ten PSTs. Chapter seven considers the implications of the findings and provides recommendations for PSTs and those involved in delivering PETE.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Teaching as a career in Ireland has traditionally enjoyed high status with keen competitiveness for entry to all categories (primary and post-primary) of teaching (Coolahan 2003; Heinz 2008; Killeavy 1998, cited in O' Sullivan, MacPhail, and Tannehill 2009). Internationally, those pursuing teacher education programmes come from low socio-economic backgrounds and are most likely to be the least qualified (Clarke 2009). This is not the case in Ireland where there is no difficulty in recruiting individuals from a wide array of backgrounds and with high academic standards (Clarke 2009; O' Sullivan et al. 2009).

It is important to qualify the difference between Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Ireland is a country located in the northwest of Europe, divided up into two jurisdictions, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is to the south and consists of twenty-six of the thirty-two counties. Northern Ireland, ruled by Great Britain, is to the northeast and consists of the remaining six counties. This study is concerned with examining a PETE programme that resides within a Republic of Ireland university and is thus governed by the Irish government.

Little is known about those who enter second-level teacher education in the Republic of Ireland (Clarke 2009) and the focus of this study is PSTs who enter a four-year concurrent undergraduate PETE programme. It is important for those delivering teacher education to identify, acknowledge and understand the experiences of those coming into teacher education and their reasons for choosing teaching as a career (Clark 2009) and for those involved in delivering PETE to understand, in particular, experiences the PSTs have had with school physical education. These experiences can be built upon, or enable, changes in PSTs perception of physical education based on their beliefs and experiences. I am interested in establishing why PSTs are interested

in becoming physical education teachers and if these interests are maintained or change throughout the first year of their programme. I will examine the PSTs' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, physical education, noting the extent to which these change throughout their first year.

I will reference studies from the United Kingdom, the United States, Hong Kong, Greece, Australia and Turkey. A considerable amount of information will be from research based in the United States (US) as there has been a substantial amount of research done on teacher education and PETE within the US. This chapter will first examine the reasons PSTs share for entering PETE. I will then look at the low entrance requirements of physical education programmes. I will report PSTs' previous experience of school physical education and their attitudes and perceptions of the duties and responsibilities of physical education teachers and of school physical education. I report PSTs' beliefs and the extent to which they change throughout the duration of their teacher education programme along with their perception of the PETE programme. Next I explore the health discourse of PSTs, exploring their lifestyle with regard to healthy eating and regular exercise. Finally I report the areas of post-primary school physical education and physical education teachers within an Irish context to contextualise for the reader the PSTs probable experience of school and the environment in which they are likely to move into as a qualified teacher.

2.2 PSTs' reasons for choosing to study physical education

O'Sullivan, et al. (2009) convey that understanding the factors that lead young people to choose teaching as a career pathway provides us with one set of data to help teacher educators prepare student teachers as members of professional learning communities who work together to advance their knowledge and critique of schooling and curriculum. According to Dewar (1989), recruitment is defined in many different ways, depending on the theoretical perspective of the researcher. Drawing on the interpretative perspective I will examine recruitment as the process involved in making the choice to become a physical education teacher acknowledging that the interpretative perspective allows for greater understanding of the ways in which

potential teachers of physical education create and negotiate their personal and professional identities (Dewar 1989).

2.2.1 Choosing an occupation

There are three stages in an individual's decision for choosing an occupation (Ginzberg et al, cited in Dewar and Lawson 1984). Firstly there is the 'fantasy period', where reflections of occupational stereotyping come into play. The individual's interest in the occupation appears sufficient for choosing the occupation. This may come into play when an individual enjoys their physical education class or perhaps has an interest in sport or different physical activities. The individual may think that this enjoyment or interest is sufficient criteria for choosing to become a physical education teacher. Secondly, there is the 'tentative period', with an increased awareness of the personal and educational attributes required for entry into the occupation. Within this stage the individual may become aware of the high entrance requirements in Irish universities for physical education and so realize that they will have to work hard at their school exams to achieve the highest grades. The individual may also realise that choosing physical education involves being a teacher and not just being involved in sports. At this stage interest and enjoyment of physical education is not sufficient. Thirdly, the 'realistic period' is where the individual attempts to work out a plan by looking at the subjective and external factors. They move through a series of narrowing choices until their final decision is reached. At this stage the individual is choosing between physical education and other career choices. They weigh the subjective and external factors that are associated with each career and decide if they have the requirements or abilities necessary to become a physical education teacher.

2.2.2 Recruitment resources

Lortie first developed recruitment resources for legal careers (Lortie 1958). Later Lortie focused on the teaching profession and developed attractors and facilitators specific to teaching in a US setting (Lortie 1975). Lortie's (1975) two types of recruitment resources, 'attractors' and 'facilitators', are widely acknowledged by many researchers (Mulling, et al. 1982; Dewar and Lawson 1984). Lortie's (1975) 'attractors' and 'facilitators' offer a framework through which to examine the reasons why people choose to enter a physical education programme. Attractors are seen as comparative benefits that are offered to potential individuals, while facilitators are social mechanisms that ease an individual's entry into an occupation or profession.

2.2.2.1 Attractors

Lortie (1975) describes five attractors within the teaching profession. The 'interpersonal theme' denotes when individuals choose teaching because they want to work with and help others. The 'service theme' denotes when individuals are influenced by wanting to serve, and give back to, society. The 'continuation theme' denotes when individuals want to continue an association with something they enjoy. The 'time compatibility theme' is where individuals consider the implications of a teaching schedule with the possibility of leaving time for motherhood, more study and other things. 'Material benefits and sex differences theme' is where there are many material attractors to teaching such as money, social mobility and job security.

Lortie's (1975) 'continuation theme' appears to be the most significant reason why individuals choose a career in physical education (Lawson 1983; Placek et al 1991; Doolittle et al 1993; Hutchinson 1993; O' Bryant et al 2000; Matanim and Collier 2003; Zounhia et al 2006; O' Sullivan et al. 2009; Cancela-Carral and Ayan-Perez 2010). The main reason that PSTs give for choosing a career in physical education is their involvement in sport, wishing to 'continue' their involvement in sport by becoming a physical education teacher. This may contribute to the association that physical education is sport and that the favoured activities taught in physical

education class are sports such as soccer, basketball and hockey (Wong and Louie 2002). If the teacher is entering physical education because of sport then they may be more likely to concentrate on reproducing sports during their physical education class or fall into the stereotype of “rolling out the ball” (Hutchinson 1993).

The ‘interpersonal theme’ is also apparent with most individuals who choose a career in teaching enjoying working with children and wanting to help them to develop physically (Placek et al 1991; Darling-Hammond and Sclan 1996; Richardson 1996; Curtner-Smith 1997; O Bryant, et al. 2000; Tsangaridou 2006; Zounhia, et al 2006; Clarke 2009; O’ Sullivan et al 2009;). These individuals are likely to have experience coaching young people and being involved in summer camps or youth groups, realising that they enjoy working with young people and teaching them different activities.

The ‘service theme’ relates to people wishing to give back to society by becoming a physical education teacher. Being of service to society was not as popular as the ‘continuation theme’ or the ‘interpersonal theme’ (Richardson 1996; Mulling et al 1982; Clarke 2009). These individuals may have enjoyed their physical education class and were involved in a lot of sports teams or clubs, wishing to provide similar experiences they had to young people.

‘Time compatibility’ was less prevalent than the ‘service theme’ (Schempp and Graber 1992; Darling-Hammond and Sclan 1996; Clarke 2009). It may be less prevalent in a physical education context because it is assumed that most physical education teachers get involved in coaching, giving up their lunch hour or staying after school to coach teams. They then have a longer day than most teachers which is understandably not perceived as an attractor.

Similar to the time compatibility theme, ‘Material benefits and sex differences’ are less prevalent than the ‘service theme’ (Darling-Hammond and Sclan 1996; Clarke 2009). Lortie (1975) suggests that this is because people both inside and outside of teaching believe that teachers are not supposed to consider money, prestige and security as major inducements. Extrinsic reasons for choosing a career in teaching are reported to play smaller roles or received lower ratings than other reasons such as the

continuation, interpersonal or service themes (Richardson 1996; Zounhia et al 2006). In contrast to these US findings a study done on primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland found that the most significant reasons for choosing to enter teacher education were extrinsic factors such as the short day, good holidays and job security (Clarke 2009).

2.2.2.2 Facilitators

Lortie (1975) also identifies facilitators that influence an individual to a career in teaching. The ‘influence of significant others’ refers to the influence that others have on the individual. These include family, friends, physical education teachers, and guidance councillors. This influence might be positive or negative, having in some way influenced the individual when choosing a career in PETE. The ‘absence of occupational alternatives’ is when the individual has no other career available to them and they have to pursue a career in teaching. This might be because of high admission standards of other careers or perhaps due to the skills that the individual holds. The ‘subjective warrant’ of individuals is their perceptions of the requirements for teacher education and for teaching in schools (Lawson 1983). This means that the individual has an idea before they enter PETE of what is required of them within the career and so they enter PETE with this perception.

The ‘influence of significant others’ emerges most often in reasons for choosing to enter PETE. Parents, other family members, coaches, teachers and friends are the most significant people who influence individuals to enter PETE (Lawson 1983; Dewar and Lawson 1984; Placek et al 1991; Schempp and Graber 1992; Doolittle et al 1993; Bullough and Gitlin 1995; O’ Bryant et al. 2000; Matanim and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006; O’ Sullivan et al 2009). While significant others emerge as the highest cited facilitator, it appears to be less influential than the attractors of the continuation theme and interpersonal theme. They state one might expect that the person influencing an individual’s decision most to undertake a PETE programme would be the physical education teacher. An individual may admire their physical education teacher and wish to emulate them, or perhaps challenge the practices of

their physical education teacher by changing the delivery and subsequent experiences gained in physical education.

The 'absence of career alternatives' did not feature to a large extent in the literature. This may be due to individuals not wanting to admit that they did not have any other career alternatives offered to them. The absence of career alternatives may be because individuals who wish to enter PETE have low academic standards and so they will have no other university programme available to them (Dewar and Lawson 1984; Clarke 2009).

The 'subjective warrant' is not frequently reported in the literature, with most of the individuals in Hutchinson's (1993) study reporting a low subjective warrant for teaching as they believed they already had the skills required to be a teacher. Hutchinson's study was based in Massachusetts in the United States. Ten prospective PSTs participated in four semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study was to investigate prospective PSTs' perspectives on physical education teaching before entering PETE. Many individuals enter PETE thinking that they already possess the attributes to teach physical education (Hutchinson 1993). If their perception of what is involved in teaching physical education is similar to the 'roll out the ball' experience they may have had at school, then they can understand why they believe they are qualified to teach physical education (Hutchinson 1993).

Additional reasons to those cited by Lortie (1975) are frequently reported for choosing to study physical education, including PSTs wanting to be coaches as well as teachers (Placek et al 1991; Schempp and Graber 1992; Hutchinson 1993; Curtner-Smith 1997; Li 2000; Matanin and Collier, 2003; Collier 2006; Tsangaridou 2006). They believed teaching physical education to be a career contingency for coaching and this influenced them greatly to choose a career in physical education teaching (Hutchinson 1993; Tsangaridou 2006).

Another reason was that PSTs enjoyed their school physical education class and wanted to teach physical education (Bullough and Gitlin 1995; Curtner-Smith 1997; Li 2000; O' Bryant et al 2000; Matanin and Collier 2003). In contrast, other individuals choose physical education in spite of their physical education experience

(Lawson 1983; Doolittle et al 1993; Matanin and Collier 2003), with one prospective teacher wishing to change the activities taught in physical education and the way they were taught in schools (Doolittle et al 1993).

2.3 Pre-service teachers' entrance into teacher education programmes

2.3.1 The recruit

Summarising the above information, I will define the individual who enters PETE and wishes to become a physical education teacher. Most of the individuals who enter into PETE have some association with playing sport and are on organised sports teams (Dodds et al 1991; Hutchinson 1993) or past sporting experiences have influenced them to enter PETE (O' Bryant et al 2000 and Tsangaridou 2006). An exception to this has been some people who do not participate in sport but enjoyed their physical education class (Curtner-Smith 1997). Some individuals may not enjoy the competitive aspect of sport but enjoyed the variety of activities that they experienced within the physical education class

2.3.2 Low academic requirements of PETE

Similar to other teacher education programmes, it is widely reported that physical education pre-service teachers generally have very average records of high school academic achievement (Dewar and Lawson 1984; Collier 2006; Tsangaridou 2006; Clarke 2009) and enter teaching because they cannot gain entry into fields with more stringent entry requirements (Schempp and Graber 1992). This results in the concern that teaching as an occupation needs to retain bright students (Sherman 1987), and to prepare individuals for all classrooms (Darling-Hammond and Sclan 1996). Some physical education programmes have very low entrance requirements (Dewar and Lawson 1984), attract too many PSTs with low measures of academic talent (Sherman 1984) and allow anyone who applies to enter (Mulling et al. 1982). In an international context those pursuing teacher education programs tend to come from backgrounds where socio economic status is not as high as that of students pursuing other professional programmes (Clarke 2009).

Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) reviewed American literature and they note that in the 1980s teaching was an occupation that was least selected by the students with high aptitude and achievement tests. They describe how five to ten years after the 1980s teacher education institutions began to require higher grade point averages and test scores for admission. A study was carried out in the 1990s on individuals of the teaching/coaching sector versus individuals of other sports related occupations. Dodds et al. (1991) investigated PSTs' physical education background and beliefs about the purpose of physical education through a questionnaire and found that more of the teacher/coach individuals than expected were found in the lower part of the grade point average (Dodds et al. 1991).

2.3.3 Suggestions for attracting appropriately qualified PSTs

Sherman (1987) offers ideas for graduate study in PETE and discusses professional versus scientific degree options. Sherman suggests that teacher education programmes need to raise the admission standards, offer intellectually challenging curricula and campaign for more graduate assistantships (similar to the teaching assistant position but usually with the opportunity to complete a graduate degree while they assist with teaching) to help elevate the problem of low academic students.

There are numerous suggestions about the type of individual to recruit into physical education teacher education and how to recruit them. PETE needs to be more proactive in recruiting minority students to address the changing diversity of our students within primary and post-primary education (Ayers and Housner 2008). We need to be able to recruit and retain a more diverse pre-service teacher population who possess the knowledge and skills to make a difference in the lives of children and youth (Collier 2006). Recruiting PSTs (i) who are physically active and holding them responsible to 'walk the talk' (Steen 1988), (ii) who are good role models and are required to practice what they will be teaching (O' Bryant, et al 2000) and by (iii) employing a selective admissions process to raise the ante for many students and in turn increase their commitment to the programme's view of effective teaching (Steen 1988; Tsangaridou 2006) have all been ideas shared on how to recruit the ideal

individual. If candidates who represent the beliefs and philosophical orientations that are similar to the programmes goals are recruited, it may be easier than attempting to change the beliefs of candidates in line with the beliefs of the programme (Collier 2006).

2.3.4 An Irish context

In the early 1990s there was still an international disposition within teacher education towards low academic standards, although this was not the case Irish PETE. Since the early 1970s there has been a high academic calibre of applicants attracted to physical education teacher education (O'Sullivan et al 2009). As noted on page 7 in 2009 the applicants to physical education achieved the third highest points in their Leaving Certificate examination from all 75 undergraduate degree programmes at the University (www.ul.ie). The CAO system was noted previously in the introduction chapter. They have been high calibre (high calibre is referenced in O' Sullivan et al. [2009] page 180) individuals who are academically high achievers (Clarke 2009). It is also acknowledged that there are several countries where entry into physical activity fields are highly competitive (Macdonald, Kirk and Braiuka 1999), including Spain (Cancela-Carral and Ayan-Perez 2010).

2.3.3 PSTs' experiences of school physical education

In some cases PSTs note that after-school experiences were more significant than physical education (Hutchinson 1993) and that inter school sport was given priority over physical education (Curtner-Smith 1997). In some schools the physical education teachers use physical education timetabled hours for the sports teams to train. This can result in students not experiencing a physical education class and subsequently not experiencing all aspects of the physical education curriculum (Curtner-Smith 1997). Most students have stated that their physical education class was structured on a multi activity model and there was little emphasis on instruction in physical education (Curtner-Smith 1997; Curtner-Smith 2001 and Matanim and Collier 2003). If physical education is structured on a multi-activity model it is usual that students participate in a selection of physical activities rotated after a set amount of time (Hutchinson 1993; Curtner-Smith 2001). Some physical education teachers will not

provide any instruction during the physical education class, tending to result in the class being structured around game play (Curtner-Smith 2001). Some PSTs reported enjoying their physical education class because it was another chance to play sports rather than any other type of physical activity (Hutchinson 1993).

2.4 Pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs about Physical Education

2.4.1 PSTs beliefs about physical education

O' Sullivan, et al. (2009) suggest the study of teacher beliefs is critical to understanding the value added nature of teacher education. It is also important to identify the reasons why PSTs enter PETE. Earlier in this chapter interest in sport was established as a major influence on PSTs entering PETE. There is some evidence to suggest that the type and level of sport and physical activity engaged in by recruits have a long-term influence on their beliefs about teaching (Curther-Smith 1999). Mitchell, Doolittle and Schwager (2005) studied seventy PSTs representing four different profiles of expertise in soccer in the northeastern United States. They conclude that at different stages within a teacher education programme the experiences PSTs have with the activities taught, may affect their beliefs and attitudes. Comparing the responses of PSTs with varying experience of playing and teaching soccer, Mitchell et al. (2005) identified four groups, (1) novice (18 people with no formal soccer training), (2) theorist (17 people with experience in coaching/teaching but no formal playing experience), (3) player (15 people who have some formal playing experience) and (4) player plus (20 people who have formal playing experience and teaching and/or coaching experience). The novice group were found to be more interested in student learning and participation while the remaining three groups were interested in the content of the lessons.

2.4.1.1 Attitudes toward the duties and responsibilities of physical education teachers

Graham, Hohn, Werner and Woods (1993) investigated three different groups of physical education teachers' views on physical education teaching in the United States. They discussed the views of six prospective PSTs, four PSTs on the PETE

programme and four cooperating teachers. Graham, et al. (1993) found that PSTs view the tasks of teaching in a vague way, have little specificity of how to perform or carry out the activities in class and / or the reason for doing the activities. Routines were seen as tasks teachers must do consistently during the day while class routines were seen as managerial tasks, such as attendance, warm-up and game play (Hutchinson 1993). Some PSTs noted that they would grade students on attire, active involvement, skill performance (Hutchinson 1993) and participation and effort (Matanim and Collier 2003). Prospective teachers also had a simplistic view of planning, noting they would spend two to three hours a night on planning, but did not know what their planning would entail (Hutchinson 1993). Such views may arise through PSTs having been exposed to school physical education where the notion of preparing for class was not evident to them as students.

2.4.1.2 Perceptions of physical education and physical education teachers

PSTs' views on what physical education entails have been reported as catering for 'non-athletes', that physical education should not be competitive, and students should physically learn about themselves and learn about a healthy lifestyle (Doolittle et al. 1993). One PST stated that physical education teachers are in an important position to understand the importance of physical fitness and to help their students (O'Bryant et al. 2000). Other prospective teachers believe that teachers should build their students' self-esteem (O' Bryant et al 2000; Doolittle et al 1993) while making their classes fun and enjoyable (Matanim and Collier 2003). PSTs believe that teachers should be good role models, good communicators and compassionate toward their students (Matanim and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). In one study the PSTs viewed the role of a teacher and a coach as identical (Lawson 1986), while in another they viewed coaching as "fine tuning elite performance" while teaching "allows you to guide children to be active" and promote life long physical activity (Matanim and Collier 2003, p. 159).

2.4.2 Pre-service teachers' changing beliefs and attitudes

It is critical we prepare new teachers to move beyond their own personal views and experiences to bring a wider body of knowledge and experience to bear on how best to help students learn (O' Sullivan, et al. 2009). Studies that have followed pre-service teachers through their years of teacher education and examined if their views on physical education changed from when they started the programme, report that PSTs' attitudes and beliefs did not change and if they did, it was only slightly (Doolittle et al 1993; Tsangaridou 2006; Matanim and Collier 2003). Doolittle et al (1993) report a particular instance where, upon finishing their PETE, one pre-service teacher's beliefs about physical education were the exact same as when they had started on the programme.

Matanim and Collier (2003) followed three PSTs through their four year teacher education programme at a university in the United States. They used a combination of semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires and non-graded course assignments. They report that at the start of a PETE programme the pre-service teachers stated that an effective teacher was a good role model and compassionate towards their students. This belief stayed with the students throughout the programme and in only one case changed slightly where the PST added that as well as being a good role model and compassionate, an effective teacher knows the material in detail and can teach someone how to correct a mistake. These findings convey that teacher education does not necessarily affect the core beliefs that the pre-service teacher has on entering a PETE programme.

In another study, one pre-service teacher who initially believed that a physical education teacher's job was teaching the basic skills of sport changed their focus to a good teacher being open minded and involved in flexible leadership in their class to promote student decision making (Doolittle et al 1993). From the same study, another pre-service teacher's beliefs changed during their teaching practice from being optimistic about being able to teach any student to having to face the realities of teaching a variety of students.

Matanim and Collier (2003) found that all of the pre-service teachers' views on instruction changed during the programme, implying that there was some evidence of PSTs assimilating the philosophy of the programme into their beliefs of instruction. However, the PSTs resisted the notion that they should hold students accountable for skill competence and the only factor that had a slight impact on one of their pre-service teacher's beliefs was his teaching practice. His views of being able to teach any student changed after he experienced teaching practice.

It is evident that the majority of PSTs' beliefs and attitudes do not noticeably change throughout the years they spend in teacher education. It seems that the most evident way PSTs change their beliefs are by experiencing teaching practice or if they have vague beliefs and attitudes at the start of the programme. Individuals' beliefs can be deeply ingrained and neither teacher education nor teaching experiences are believed to significantly alter them (Tsangaridou 2006). Teacher education is about helping teacher candidates develop their beliefs about teaching and learning (Richardson 1996) and there is evidence to suggest that PSTs' attitudes impact their teaching which will have a significant impact on student learning (OECD 2006). It is therefore important for teacher educators to design experiences and tasks that bring these beliefs to the surface and provide opportunities for PSTs to challenge and reflect on their beliefs (O' Sullivan, et al. 2009).

2.4.3 Enhancing PSTs' beliefs and attitudes

Steen (1988) believes that commitment is the key to teaching, stating that a teacher committed to teaching will consistently practice teaching in an effective way. He suggests that we may be able to use this idea of commitment to examine if pre-service teachers use the skills and knowledge that they learn during the programme and apply them to their teaching. Many PSTs' beliefs may not correspond with those of the PETE programme resulting in many PSTs complying with the beliefs of the programme and subsequently submitting assignments that they do not necessarily appreciate or agree with (Steen 1988).

The introduction of a selective process to physical education teacher education was discussed earlier in the chapter (p. 20). Steen (1988) suggests different reasons for a selective process including admission standards set so that each individual would need to achieve this standard before they can enter the programme. He indicates that by introducing this process it may raise the popularity and demand of the programme which in turn may enhance the individual's commitment to teaching. Steen (1988) also proposes that if early teaching practices are provided in the programme it may increase the student teachers' commitment to teach.

O' Sullivan et al. (2009) state that using a student's current knowledge base can broaden their understanding of subject matter urging that if we understand the PSTs' beliefs and values then we can use these values to help the student to learn new ideas and perhaps contemplate changing their beliefs where appropriate. O' Sullivan et al. (2009) choose adventure education as one of the first content areas in their teacher education programme because it sought to build on Loughran's (2002) ideas of learning something for the first time (few of the candidates knew much about adventure education) and what implications this might have for their thought process on planning to teach this content to a group of children. Also, building on student teachers' likely enjoyment of working with young people, giving them the opportunity to teach or coach sessions in their specialised area are suggestions O' Sullivan, et al. (2009) made on how best to encourage PSTs to develop their knowledge base.

Capel and Katene (2000) investigated 27 PSTs' perceptions of subject knowledge in the six activity areas of the National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) in the United Kingdom. Capel and Katene (2000) suggest that we begin to identify students' subject knowledge weaknesses before they enter the programme, advising PSTs of knowledge they need before they enter. Their rationale was that this would not only aid the PSTs to gain insight into some of the course work that they may be learning while on the PETE programme but also allow PSTs to work towards achieving similar credentials when starting the PETE programme.

2.4.4 Pre-service teachers own healthy life-style

When it comes to physical activity and healthy living some pre-service teachers do not practice what they plan to teach (La Vine & Cortney 2006). La Vine and Cortney (2006) got 17 first and second year PSTs to wear a pedometer for 60 days across two semesters in the United States. Findings revealed that after the first 30 days the students' average steps were below the recommended step count implying that PSTs were not taking part in the recommended amount of physical activity. After the second 30 days their average step count was above the recommended number of steps and it was suggested that this may have been due to the heightened awareness by the PSTs and their goal setting. After this activity the PSTs stated that they would help their students to see the relevance of being physically active, encouraging and mentoring students about the importance of leading a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

Many pre-service teachers believe that they have a healthy diet. According to Blum (2007) only 50% of PSTs reported consuming five portions of fruit and vegetables every day and that a good proportion of the PSTs scored high in the high-fat category, meaning they consumed a lot of fatty food in their diet (Blum 2007). Blum (2007) suggests that perhaps needs to be addressed if teachers are to support their students in pursuing a healthy diet and lifestyle.

2.4.5 PSTs' views on PETE programme experiences and content

Curtner-Smith (2001) examined the influence that one American PETE programme had on a particular PST called 'Ed'. Findings on Ed's story revealed he saw his teaching practice and methods course as the key modules he took during his undergraduate programme. Ed saw his teaching practice as one of the most valuable experiences on the course because he believed in spending as much time in schools as possible. He also believed he learned all his practical skills and knowledge during his teaching practice. Ed noted that the courses he had taken in exercise physiology and human anatomy and physiology had been very valuable mainly because they had provided him with much of his health-related fitness content.

PSTs believe they have not received enough teaching practice and suggest more and longer time in them (Curtner-Smith 2001; Chepyator-Thomson & Liu 2003; Robinson & Melnychuk 2009). Chepyator-Thomson and Liu (2003) conducted a study with 40 PSTs in their fourth year and final semester in the physical education department at a medium-sized university in the northeastern part of the United States. These PSTs felt that teaching practice was lacking within the programme, "I feel that more time is needed with the field experience. Not only more time but with a wider range of experiences. More practical experience in the field is needed. I personally feel my experience in the field is lacking" (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu 2003, p 4). PSTs suggested that their undergraduate program needed to be adjusted to focus on how to teach rather than how to perform physical activities (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu 2003). Robinson and Melnychuk (2009) investigated PSTs' experiences of teaching practice. Fifty-seven PSTs completed the survey and nine PSTs were interviewed. The majority of the PSTs felt that their 9 weeks teaching experience was not enough. When asked how long the teaching experience should be 66% of the PSTs wanted between 12 and more than 20 weeks teaching practice. One student stated that more time should be spent on teaching practice and less on classes that teach teaching strategies and classroom management. Researchers reported that students suggested there should be a full intern year after getting their degree and that teaching experiences should be introduced earlier in the programme (Robinson & Melnychuk 2009). In addition when asked what should be the structure of the field experience, students suggested more teaching practice and longer time in them.

Other areas that the pre-service teachers believed were lacking in their physical education programme were a special populations module (Robinson & Melnychuk 2009), physical education pedagogical and content modules (Curtner-Smith 2001; Chepyator-Thomson & Liu 2003), a nutrition component (Blum 2007) and critiquing lessons (Chepyator-Thomson & Liu 2003) all of which were deemed important to the PSTs. One PST stated "I think we don't need more courses. I just think we need quality courses in the ones we are taking" (Robinson & Melnychuk 2009). Chepyator-Thomson and Liu (2003) found that when it came to pedagogical knowledge the PSTs thought that the programme should focus on how to teach instead of focusing solely

on the activities. In Turkey, Baloglu (2008) found that PSTs exhibited a helpless approach to stress and a ruler attitude (they rule and command the class) toward student management. Baloglue (2008) suggests that perhaps when the PSTs were school students they were not exposed to strategies for coping with stress or preparing for professional life, both of which may not be evident in the PETE programme. It was found that psychology, history, sociology, and human development were seen as not very useful to PST who believed they were 'no help' due to the 'scientific', 'theoretical', and 'impractical approach' taken by the lecturers teaching him (Curtner-Smith 2001).

2.5 Post-primary physical education and physical education teachers

This section will look at post-primary school physical education and post-primary school physical education teachers to provide a context for the reader on the PSTs' probable experience of school physical education as well as the positioning of physical education teachers in Irish post-primary schools. This may have subsequent connotations for the likely school environment PSTs will experience during teaching placements and on graduating as a qualified physical education teacher.

2.5.1 Status of physical education in Ireland

There are currently 29 subjects approved on the Department of Education and Science (DES) list for junior certificate students, only two of these physical education and social, personal and health education, are not examined at junior certificate (<http://www.education.ie>, 06/11/10). Often the physical education lesson time is reduced to accommodate other subjects, or the only indoor facility is blocked by non-physical education activities (MacPhail & Halbert 2005).

Inadequate physical education facilities and equipment, a general reduction in time allocated to physical education and teachers with little or no preparation in teaching physical education being responsible for physical education are both international and Irish concerns (MacPhail, Halbert, McEvilly, Hutchinson & MacDonncha 2010). MacPhail, et al. (2010) carried out a study in Ireland and investigated the areas of

physical education facilities, time allocation and staffing, as a contribution to the debate on the way forward for physical education at post-primary level, illuminating both issues of policy and practice found the most frequently made qualitative comments made by principals and teachers related to issues of provision. (staffing, funding, time, resources). In teachers' opinions their schools' state of readiness (in terms of facilities, equipment and staffing) declined as schools moved beyond accommodating their current physical education programme and towards the possibility of accommodating Leaving Certificate (i.e. the State examination at the end of post-primary education) physical education (MacPhail, et al 2010). The teachers in the study believed that their schools were not as well prepared as they might have been in terms of facilities and equipment to offer the revised and new syllabuses, especially the Leaving Certificate. Disturbingly MacPhail, et al (2010) found just 12% (308 schools in total) of schools only have tarmacadam facilities and 3% of schools have no outdoor facilities. Some schools reported using off site facilities but this frequently provided difficulties. The lack of a purpose-built sports hall was deemed as the most significant limitation on the provision of a comprehensive, well balanced physical education programme particularly when the climate does not always allow for lessons to be held outside. (MacPhail, et al. 2010). There was a perceived inadequacy among principals and teachers of the numbers of qualified physical education teachers employed within the system. Eighty-eight per cent (out of 411 in total) of principals supported the designation of physical education as a compulsory subject in the junior cycle while only 53% supported compulsory senior cycle physical education. MacPhail, et al. (2010) state that in recent years there have been significant developments in relation to curriculum in primary and post-primary physical education. If such developments are to exert an ongoing influence on the physical education experience of young people, the state commitment to addressing the constraints identified in this study is critical (MacPhail, et al. 2010).

There is a serious rise in overweight and obese adults in Ireland (Oireachtas 2005). Keeping in mind one of the key aims of the physical education curriculum is to encourage participation in physical activity in adult life (Oireachtas 2005). Lack of participation in physical activity is cited as a major problem for the increase in overweight and obese adults inadequacies in the curriculum or delivery of the curriculum mean some students are not getting quality exercise (Oireachtas 2005).

2.5.2 Physical education teaching in Ireland

There is huge interest from Leaving Certificate students in a physical education teaching degree. During the last 20 years over 700 students from Leaving Certificate classes annually request physical education teacher education as their first-preference degree programme (O' Sullivan 2006). Until 2000, approximately 40 places were available to study PETE. Since then 70 to 80 students have been admitted annually to what was the only PETE programme in the country and in 2006, the Irish Teacher Registration Council (reconstituted as the Teaching Council in March 2006) approved three additional pathways for a physical education teaching credential (O' Sullivan 2006). The three new pathways are two undergraduate degrees in different universities (approx 40 students in each) and a post-graduate degree at the university (15-15 students) which this study was based. The DES has been slow to support an infrastructure (time, staff, facilities and professional development for teachers) to ensure all children have access annually to a quality physical education experience while at school (O' Sullivan 2006).

2.5.2.1 Irish veteran physical education teachers' experiences

It is important to establish the reality of physical education teaching in an Irish context. In this section I will discuss Irish veteran physical education teachers and how they have struggled to improve the status and quality of physical education in their schools. It is important for the reader to know where the cohort of PSTs have come from and the school setting where they will be going once they have graduated.

Irish teachers' contact teaching time is considered to be above the OECD average in comparison to other countries (Murphy & Coolahan 2003, cited in O' Sullivan 2006). The first ever Irish physical education teacher education graduates graduated in the 1970s (O' Sullivan 2006). O' Sullivan (2006) studied this class of 66, she found 42 were still teaching and 33 were no longer teaching. She noted that more than half of the veteran teachers (55%) worked as the sole physical education teacher at their current school, 5% worked with two other physical education teachers, and one worked with three physical education teachers (in a school with 800 pupils). Some of

the veteran teachers had been successful in employing other physical education teachers at their school. After 21 years the majority (76%) of the teachers were still coaching school teams, with male teachers (60%) doing more coaching than female teachers (40%) (O' Sullivan 2006). O' Sullivan (2006) reported that most teacher coaches (77%) were not allowed coaching time on their school timetable, nor were they paid extra for this work. A small number of the teachers (7 teachers) had taken career breaks, with the majority using the time to try other occupations (O' Sullivan 2006).

Teachers in O' Sullivan's study seemed relatively content and happy with their teaching lives, though not necessarily with teaching physical education. All of the veteran teachers suggested working over the years to create a more positive school climate for physical education at their schools and adopted several strategies for dealing with problem conditions (O' Sullivan 2006). Most believed the attitude to physical education within their school had improved and was more positive now than when they had arrived in the school (O' Sullivan 2006). Twenty-eight teachers had negotiated double periods for junior cycle physical education, while teachers had been less successful with senior cycle time for physical education, six schools did not allocate any time for senior cycle physical education (O' Sullivan 2006). The teachers believed that teaching an 'academic subject' along with physical education provided academic credibility with their colleagues and the students as they were seen as a regular teacher (O' Sullivan 2006). O' Sullivan (2006) reported that 21 out of the 66 teachers had left teaching permanently. This is not a large number by international attrition standards, though it is quite large by Irish standards for teachers of other subject areas (Murphy & Coolahan 2003, cited in O' Sullivan 2006). Teachers who were no longer teaching physical education had stopped because workplace conditions frustrated them (O' Sullivan 2006). One teacher commented 'PE could be soul-destroying and I lost my appetite for it. There is only so much extra curricular stuff you can do [and] I couldn't risk demonstrating any longer as I got injured' (O' Sullivan 2006, p. 277). This group of teachers established physical education as a legitimate subject in Irish schools without any physical or emotional support for their work (O' Sullivan 2006).

2.6 Conclusion

My research questions have evolved from my review of literature and my research questions will be stated at the end of each of the following summary sections.

2.6.1 Reasons for choosing a career in physical education

I decided to look at pre-service teachers' reasons for choosing a career in teaching through Lortie's (1975) attractors and facilitators. The attractors that emerge are remaining involved or associated with sport (continuation theme), enjoyment in working with children (interpersonal theme), being of service to society (service theme), time compatibility and material benefits and sex differences. Other attractors that emerge that were not identified by Lortie (1975) were individuals wanting to coach as well as teach (Collier 2006; Tsangaridou 2006), and enjoying their physical education class (O' Bryant et al. 2000; Matanim & Collier 2003) and wanting to change the way physical education was being taught (Doolittle et al 1993).

The facilitators that emerge were the influence of significant others, the absence of other careers and the subjective warrant. Significant others emerge as the highest cited facilitator but it seems to be less influential than attractors such as the continuation theme and interpersonal theme.

Areas in the literature that I see as lacking or that need to be investigated further are:

1. the use of Lortie's (1975) attractors and facilitators and weighting the importance of each to establish which is the most influential and least influential to individuals who enter PETE. I wish to examine the attractors and facilitators and establish which of the two is most influential. Within the literature, attractors seem to emerge as the category that had the most influence. I want to investigate if this is the case within my population of PSTs.
2. I would like to define the weighting within the attractors and facilitators to determine within each category the influence ranking.
3. Internationally, coaching as well as teaching physical education seems to have a significant influence on the PSTs decision to enter PETE. O'Sullivan et al (2009) studied a group of Irish PSTs and found coaching was not identified as an influence for choosing to enter

PETE. This may be because coaching within Irish post-primary schools is not as important as it would be in other countries such as the US. Within an Irish context it would be interesting to investigate the influence of coaching on PSTs decision to enter PETE

The literature has informed me on the reasons why people choose a career in physical education. The attractors seem to have influenced individuals more than the facilitators. From a Republic of Ireland perspective I would like to see if the attractors and facilitators stated by Lortie (1975) emerge as influential or if other attractors arise. That is, ‘What are the interests and dispositions that motivated pre-service teachers’ to enrol in a physical education teacher education programme?’

2.6.2 Pre-service teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about physical education

Each PST seems to have different views on what physical education should be about. PSTs believe that physical education teachers should make their classes fun and enjoyable, be good role models, good communicators and compassionate toward their students (Matanim & Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). Class routines are seen as managerial tasks, such as, attendance, warm-up and game play, and note they would grade students on attire, active involvement, skill performance, participation and effort (Hutchinson 1993). PSTs state that physical education should not be competitive yet they see game play as one of the class routines and would grade students on skill performance.

Most PSTs enter teacher education with a set of beliefs about physical education. From reading the literature one can see that these pre-service teachers usually exit their teacher education with the same set of beliefs. According to Tsangaridou (2006) an individual’s beliefs are deeply ingrained and neither teacher education nor teaching experiences significantly alter them.

Areas that are lacking are studies that follow PSTs through their PETE programme to see if and how their beliefs and attitudes change. Internationally few researchers have followed PSTs through their PETE programme. There has been no research carried

out on changing beliefs of pre-service teachers within an Irish context. I will follow a cohort of PSTs through their first year of teacher education, reporting if their beliefs change and their changed conceptions are attributed to their experiences on the course. That is, ‘What are pre-service teachers’ perception of the field and are changing perceptions attributed to their PETE experiences and opportunities?’

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Aim of the research

The aim of the research was to examine the interests and dispositions that motivate PSTs to enrol in a PETE programme offered by an Irish university as well as establish PSTs' conceptions of the physical education field and any changing perceptions attributed to their experiences of, and opportunities on, the programme.

Social scientists have abandoned the choice between qualitative and quantitative data and are now concerned with a combination of both, making use of the most valuable features of each (Mackenzie & Knipe 2006). Research can be described as a systematic investigation (Burns 1997) or inquiry where data is collected, analysed and interpreted in an effort to understand, describe, predict or control an educational or psychological experience (Mertens 2005). The definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework, sometimes referred to as a 'paradigm' (Mertens 2005). A paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Guba 1990) or the philosophical aim or motivation for undertaking a study (Cohen & Manion 1994).

3.2 Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) encourage researchers to identify their theoretical paradigm as it helps set down the intent, motivation and expectations for their research. The interpretive/constructivist paradigm suggests that knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that research is a product of the values of the researchers conducting it (Mertens 1998; Schwandt 1994). Interpretive/constructivist approaches to research have the intention of understanding "the world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion 1994, p.36). According to Creswell (2003) the interpretive/constructivist researcher relies on the participants' views of the situation and develops a theory of meanings throughout the research

process. Interpretive/constructivist researchers rely on qualitative data collection or mixed method (Mackenzie & Knipe 2006). O'Leary (2004) defines qualitative data as represented through words, pictures, or icons and analysed using thematic exploration, and quantitative data as represented through numbers and analysed using statistics. A mixed-methods approach to research is one that involves gathering both numeric information (in this study, surveys) as well as text information (in this study interviews, timelines and scenarios) so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information (Creswell 2003, p.20).

3.3 Data Collection

There is a distinct tradition in social science research methods that advocates the use of multiple methods (Jick 1979) through 'triangulation'. Berg (2009) stated that by combining several research methods researchers can obtain a better picture of reality, a complete range of concepts and a way of verifying many of the results. Altricher, Posch and Somekh (1993) emphasised the importance of triangulation for comparing different accounts of the same situation. Data for this research was collected from surveys, interviews, scenarios and timelines. Triangulation will be evident between the survey and interviews, between the surveys, timeline and interviews and between the scenarios and interviews. Triangulation shares the concept that qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than as rival camps (Jick 1979).

3.3.1 Survey data

The first data to be collected from the PSTs was survey data. Surveys collect information about the same variables from a particular population and contribute to a data grid. Within the data grid each column represents a variable and each row represents a person (De Vaus 1996; De Vaus 2002). Surveys are usually conducted for the purpose of making descriptive assertions about some population (Babbie 1990).

Surveys can be replicated since both their coding and reports are available to other researchers (Larrson 1993). The surveys used in this research replicated surveys used by the University of Queensland and the University of Loughborough. Survey research may also contribute to greater confidence in the generalising of results (Jick 1979).

3.3.1.1 Distribution of surveys

Surveys may be administered in many ways (Babbie 1990), and the survey in this study was delivered during class to a cohort of year one PSTs gathered at the same place. The surveys were administered at the start of the first semester of the PETE programme by two or three faculty members in 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Consistency was maintained by standardising the explanation of the procedure for completing the surveys. There was at least one faculty member consistent for each distribution. The number of surveys distributed each year can be seen in Table 3.1 below and it is anticipated that the data across five years allows us to not only present patterns of findings across the year groups but also to compare the different cohorts of PSTs. Surveys were not distributed in 2004 or 2006. The five years of survey data was included to provide a picture of the homogeneity of the PSTs over the years and that the cohort you had worked with possessed similar characteristics.

Year of survey	No. of surveys distributed
2003	70
2005	84
2007	70
2008	70
2009	63
Total	357

Table 3.1 Number of surveys distributed

3.3.1.2 The 'Educational discourse in PE survey' and 'Student attitude towards PE' survey

The 'Educational discourse in PE survey' (appendix A) was devised by the University of Queensland, Australia. Questions 1-12 and question 14 are based on the demographics of the PSTs. These questions consist of both open and closed questions where open questions ask PSTs to formulate their own answers and closed questions involve a number of alternative answers being provided for the PSTs (De Vaus 1996). While closed questions are quick to answer and easier to code, closed questions can cause major problems because they may create false opinions (De Vaus 1996). Questions 13, 15 and 16 are Likert-style questions providing PSTs with statements and asking them to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree (De Vaus 1996). Different methods of numbering the Likert scales have been suggested (Vogt 2007) and for this survey 5 was used for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 uncertain, 2 disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. Further information on the 'educational discourse in PE survey' such as the reliability and validity can be accessed in Kirk, Macdonald, Penney and Braiuka (1997).

The 'Student attitude towards PE' survey (appendix B) was devised by researchers in the Ohio state University. Only the 2009 cohort responses to this survey will be reported. The first part of the survey established the demographics of the PSTs and the second part involved the PSTs answering 20 Likert style questions. Again, in scoring, 5 was assigned to strongly agree through to 1 being assigned to strongly disagree. The third section of the survey was a teaching scenario. This involved the PSTs reading through the scenario and answering three questions that prompted them to examine a classroom situation and respond to how they would react to such a situation. The scenario is the only data to be used from this survey as the demographics of the PSTs' was established in the first survey and the responses to the Likert scale questions would be the focus of another study. Further information on the 'Student attitude towards PE' survey such as the reliability and validity can be accessed in Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1993).

3.3.1.2.1 Scenario from the student attitude towards PE survey

Scenarios are very short stories in which certain circumstances are specified to provide at least some standardisation of the context (De Vaus 1996). Scenarios are short descriptions of situations that are usually shown to respondents followed by questions to elicit individual responses to these scenarios (De Vaus 1996; Stener, Atzmuller, Cook & Lomax-Cook 2006). Case scenarios ensure that all respondents are referring to the same event and eliminate the need for the respondent to decide whether an error has occurred (Mazor, et al. 2004). Scenario-based studies provide a means of efficiently and systematically examining multiple variables and allows manipulation of these variables (Gline, Haber & Weise 1999; Mazor, et al. 2004), acknowledging that scenarios are only one component of this study. The main purposes of scenarios has been to identify the sources of contextual variation that affects responses and that would largely go unexplored in traditional surveys when individuals are asked about abstract concepts (Stener, Atzmuller, Cook & Lomax-Cook 2006).

I decided to include scenarios as a means of collecting data because they are easy to repeat and you do not have to wait for certain events to occur (Gline, Haber & Weise 1999). Scenarios are effective for studies involving ‘intention to behave’ or attitudes (Gline, Haber & Weise 1999) and so will complement the study to explore the PSTs’ attitudes and beliefs towards teaching. If scenarios are properly constructed, they hold the participants’ interest while approximating realistic psychological and social situations (Kerlinger 1986). In this study the situation being replicated in the scenario is a physical education class and the PSTs have to respond to prompts related to the scenario, mindful of how they would approach such a class.

3.3.1.3 Survey data analysis

All data from the 357 ‘Educational discourse in PE survey’ was entered into statistical product and service solutions (SPSS version 16.0) software. Each variable or answer given by the PSTs for each question was assigned a number and entered into the data grid. Following the advice of Corston and Colman (2003), missing data or undefined

data was entered as '999'. All of the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and within this frequencies and one way frequency tables were used. First, the five year group cohorts of PSTs were entered into SPSS and analysed using frequencies and one way frequency tables. The 2009 cohort was analysed separately to allow for comparisons between the 2009 cohort and collective responses across the five year group cohorts. The surveys from the ten 2009 PSTs chosen to be interviewed were entered into another data grid and analysed against the frequencies and one way frequency tables from the other two databases, i.e., collective five year group cohort and 2009 year cohort. This information will be used to inform and triangulate the interviews. The three groups of PSTs were put into tables beside each other so they could be examined and analysed. The three tables were examined by the researcher and similarities and differences between the three databases were recorded.

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviewing can be defined as a conversation with the purpose to gather information (Berg 2009) and are the most widely used technique for conducting investigations (Holstein and Gabbrium 2003). Interviews involve a set of assumptions and understandings about a situation which are not normally associated with casual conversation (Denscombe 1998 cited in Wilkinson & Birmingham 2003). Interview data turns up rich and vivid material that one can see and understand more abstractly than other kinds of data, with direct quotations from interviews conveying more, and a greater, impact than general statements (Gillham 2000).

Interviews were chosen as a means of collecting data, allowing the researcher to achieve 100% response for the questions (Wilkinson & Birmingham 2003). This means that when using interviews you are guaranteed to obtain an answer from the PSTs, while in a survey the PSTs can decide not to answer some questions. Interviews allow the researcher to decide to follow up the interviewees' answers and to decide if a new direction for the question and subsequent conversation is needed (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). During interviews, the researcher can adjust the language used in the delivery of questions and can avail of the use of probes and explanations when

necessary (Gillham 2000; Berg 2009). In this study, interviews will aid the clarification of points established during the survey, timeline and scenario.

3.3.2.1 Interview Protocol

Ten year 1 PSTs were randomly selected from a pool of PSTs who stated on their surveys that they would be willing to contribute further to the study. All ten PSTs that were selected agreed to participate in the study. It is important to gain voluntary participation from the PSTs and to inform them of the right to withdraw, the purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). The PSTs were contacted by telephone and a time was set when they could participate in the interviews within their first two months of beginning the PETE programme. The beginning PST interviews took place in November 2009 and the PSTs were interviewed twice more during the year. Scenario interviews took place in February 2010 and the final interviews took place in April 2010. All interviews took place in a classroom on the university campus. All the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis and were recorded using a Dictaphone. The interviews were then transcribed by the researcher at a later date.

3.3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interview

All three interviews were semi-structured with an outline of topics to be covered with suggested questions to be asked (Berg 2009; Kvale & Brinkman 2009). The beginning PST interview (Nov 2009) questions (appendix C) was previously used by researchers within the university. The beginning PST interview was focused on PSTs' interests and motivations, their introduction to the programme and their relationship with the programme. The scenario interview (Feb 2010) protocol (appendix D) focused on the scenario which the PSTs had previously responded to at the start of the semester and contained the same set of questions, looking to establish if the views or opinions of the PSTs, with respect to responding to a particular teaching scenario, had changed and why changes had occurred. The final interview (April 2010) protocol (appendix E) clarified the findings from previous interviews and extended the understanding of

why changes in the PSTs' views or opinions had, or had not, occurred and to address issues that had arisen in the literature but had not arisen in the first interview.

3.3.2.3 Analysing Interviews

The interviews were transcribed and returned to the PSTs for verification before being analysed. Pseudonyms were given to each of the ten PSTs. Analysing the interviews was completed by the process of coding, involving breaking the text down into manageable sections and attaching a keyword to a text section in order to allow easy retrieval of the section later (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). The data was constantly compared for similarities and differences to establish patterns within the data (Berg 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). If a code was attached to one or more segments of text it enabled the researcher to think of these segments as related to each other (Wengraf 2001). For this research data driven coding was used, requiring the researcher to start without codes and then to develop the codes through reading the data (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Codes represented the crucial link between the textual material, such as interview transcripts, and the researcher's theoretical concepts (Seidel & Kelle 1995). To establish a physical means of maintaining and indexing coded data, and sorting data into coded classifications, a filing system to code data was established (Lofland & Lofand 1984).

3.3.3 Timelines

Schamber (2000) defined timelines as a naturalistic and relatively modest means of collecting data about respondents' cognitive perceptions, reporting that timelines have been successful at capturing users' cognitive perceptions in various situations. Timelines are an aspect of historical research acting as a method of discovering what happened during some past period (Berg 2009). Timelines are usually plots where the *x*-axis variable is time, being a very effective method of displaying trends, building on the human perception of time as linear (Morris, Yen, Wu & Asnake 2003). As a requirement for a first semester module, the PSTs were asked to devise a timeline (appendix F) from primary school to the present, focusing on the factors or influences that attracted them to apply for entry to the PETE programme. The timelines were

then revisited in the first interview to prompt PSTs' recall of what influenced their decision to apply to the PETE programme, providing triangulation between the timelines and interviews.

3.4 Limitations of the study

There are some limitations to my study that need to be considered. Acknowledging that the interpretive/ constructive paradigm was used as the framework for this study, the interview, scenario and timeline data is interpreted in one way and may be interpreted differently by other researchers. Secondly, during the scenario interviews the PSTs had the choice to write their answers to the scenario or have their answers recorded by Dictaphone. The PSTs were given a choice so they would feel comfortable in answering the questions their own way. This will result in some of the PSTs' answers not being as concise as their first written responses and thus presenting two ways data on the PSTs engagement with the scenario were examined. Also, it is important to acknowledge that I am a past graduate of the PETE programme and this may have created a bias in my analysis due to my own attitude and belief recollections.

A significant amount of data on PSTs' attitudes and beliefs towards PETE have been collected and analysed and include 357 education discourse surveys from five year group cohorts of PSTs, 10 student attitude surveys (including initial responses to the scenario), 10 initial interviews, 10 scenario interviews and 10 final interviews. Triangulation between all data sources can be used to improve the reliability and accuracy of my data. The results and discussions of my data are presented in the following chapters.

Chapter Four

Demographics of PETE PSTs

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents survey data collected from 357 year 1 PSTs across 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009. Data is presented in three ways; (1) full complement of the 357 responses over the five data collection years, (2) responses from the 2009 cohort and (3) responses from the ten PSTs from the 2009 cohort who are the focus of this study. The survey data sought to provide demographic data that would provide a context to understanding PSTs' interests and dispositions that motivated them to enrol in a PETE programme. Question 13, 15 and 16 are Likert type questions. For the purpose of this study, i.e., to provide generic baseline demographic data, I collapsed the 1 and 2 responses to convey no influence and the 4 and 5 responses to convey a significant influence. The score of 3 remains as moderate influence. The Likert scale was collapsed as our concern was to provide baseline data on the characteristics of PSTs over five cohorts rather than the detailed intricacies of their responses.

This chapter will focus on the data from the surveys. However some data from the interviews will be referenced in the chapter where appropriate. Although the interviews were used for a specific purpose other than necessarily having a link to the questions posed in the surveys, some interview questions were posed that allowed me to qualify some of the initial responses to the survey and to enhance the understanding of some of the responses.

4.2 Demographics for five year PST cohort

Demographics from the five year cohort (including 2009) compared to the 2009 cohort are similar (Table 4.1, appendix G). The gender mix of the PSTs has stayed balanced over the five year cohorts. This is in contrast to a study carried out in Spain which found the majority of the PETE students to be male (Cancela-Carral and Ayan-

Perez 2010). The majority of the PSTs are in the age group of 17-20 years old and are Irish. The most common occupations of the PSTs' mothers is homemaker and teacher and the most common occupation of the PSTs' fathers is farmer. The PSTs' parents' occupations have consistently been the same throughout the five year cohorts and the 2009 ten PSTs. The most popular electives chosen by the PSTs have been mathematics and geography. The CAO entry points for the PETE programme has varied from 475-500 points.

The drop from 83% of the five year cohort stating the physical education programme as their first choice to 73% of the 2009 cohort responding to the same prompt is interesting. Investigating the survey data further it is evidenced that there has been an increase in the number of PSTs who have chosen medicine or physiotherapy as their first preference. There is also evidence that the relatively recent availability of two other PETE programmes in Ireland may have reduced the monopoly that this particular university PETE programme had on attracting first preference candidates. This may be because of the geographically location of the universities or because these programmes are newer and offer different programme structures.

4.2.1 Demographics for 10 PSTs from 2009 cohort

The sex, age, nationality, mothers' and fathers' occupation demographics for the ten 2009 PSTs are similar to the demographics of the five year cohort and the 2009 cohort.. Two of the 2009 PSTs' mothers are teachers. Seven of the 2009 PSTs stated the PETE programme was their first choice and for those who had not chosen the PETE programme as their first choice, they noted their preference for primary teaching, psychology or physiotherapy. From the ten 2009 PSTs, seven were studying mathematics as their elective, two were studying Irish and one PST was studying geography.

4.3 Influences for deciding to pursue the PETE programme

In the following sections I will focus on the ten 2009 PSTs. There are minimal anomalies between the five year cohort and the ten PST. The main influences for deciding to pursue physical education are interest in sport/physical activity, interest in healthy lifestyles and interest in physical activity in society (see Table 4.3 below, for full table see appendix G), with each of these influences recording similar high percentages. The three main influences are focused on physical activity and sport, encouraging an assumption that the main influence on the PSTs is interest in sport/physical activity. Data reported in chapters five to seven further support the interest in sport emerging as a major deciding factor for the PSTs pursuing a PETE programme. There is a drop to the next most popular influence which is an interest in sport science, perhaps associated to the influence of interest in sport. The influence of family is similar to the level of influence recorded for an interest in sport science, and this is discussed below.

	All			10 PSTs		
	Influence	Moderate	No/little	Influence	Moderate	No/little
Q.13. a Friends	32.5	26.5	39.2	30	50	20
Q.13. b Family	52.5	28.6	16.8	70	20	10
Q.13. c Guidance counsellors	21.5	26.5	49.8	30	20	50
Q.13. d Physical education teachers	55.9	14.7	28	50	10	40
Q.13. e PESS advertising and promotion	12.9	18.6	65.5	30	40	30
Q.13. f Interest in sport/physical activity	97.3	1.2	0.3	100	0	0
Q.13. g Interest in healthy lifestyles	87.9	8.8	1.8	100	0	0
Q.13. h Interest in sports science	62.6	23.6	12.3	70	30	0
Q.13. i Interest in physical activity in society	82.9	11.8	2.1	90	10	0

Table 4.3 How influential individuals or reasons were on PSTs decision to enter PETE

Influences from family and physical education teachers were cited by over 50% of the PSTs as being influential in their decision to pursue physical education, with friends cited by a little over 30% and guidance councillors cited by a little over 20% (Table 4.3, appendix G). Again, the influence of these individuals on the PSTs' decision in pursuing physical education will emerge and be discussed later in the thesis. The PETE programmes advertising was cited by a minority of the PSTs as being influential to their decision to enter PETE.

There was one discrepancy between the ten 2009 PSTs and the five year cohort, with the ten 2009 PSTs citing a higher influence from their family. Just over half of the five year cohort cited family as an influence compared to just under three-quarters of the ten 2009 PSTs citing family as an influence. There is no clear explanation for this because a random sample of ten PSTs was picked from the 2009 cohort.

4.4 PSTs' career pursuit upon graduation from a PETE course

The most frequent response for selecting to study physical education (seven of the ten PSTs) was to pursue a career in physical education teaching.

Two PST cited their reason for choosing physical education as physical education being an interesting subject to study while they made up their mind about what career they wanted to pursue. It was not possible from the survey data to understand the reasoning behind this, so the two PSTs who had chosen this response were asked to qualify their response at a later date during the interviews. Ken stated *“Well I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do like I mean I went to do architecture last year and I hated it and I didn't have a clue what else to do so I thought this would be a good thing to do to figure out what I want to do. Yea that was the reason. Well I like PE as well”* (Interview, April 2010). Mark's reasoning was *“Yea well. Well as I said already I have, physical activity is probably the most dominant interest in my life so obviously its what I get the most enjoyment from and doing a course like this I mean like I, when I took up, when I started the course I wasn't sure about being a teacher, I'm still not 100% like I mean I don't know when I will find out whether I'm sure but at this time I'm not sure about being a teacher but I think the degree itself is an enjoyable degree. It's a brilliant degree from what I have experienced so far and from what my friend in second year said he, do you know, when he sold it to me he said it's just so enjoyable like and at the same time like it's not just PE teaching your confined to either like you know there's other stuff related to physical education or related to sport you can do too like post-grads and stuff. So as I just basically, I wouldn't be so sure of teacher but the course or the line of work I want to do with my life involving sport like”* (Interview, April 2010). It would appear that these two PSTs chose to pursue physical

education because they believed it would be an enjoyable degree rather than through a conviction to be a teacher.

4.5 PSTs' recreational interests

The PSTs were asked to rate, on a five-point Likert-scale, the interest they had in each activity (see Table 4.5 below, to see the full table go to appendix G). The main activities the PSTs stated an interest in were competitive sport (all 10 2009 PSTs), recreational physical activity (7 out of the 10 PSTs) and spectating at sports events (8 out of the 10 PSTs), with no other activities (such as watching television, reading, etc) challenging the popularity of these three activities.

	10 PSTs		
	Regularly	Sometimes	No/little
Q.15. a Competitive sport	100	0	0
Q.15. b Recreational physical activity	70	30	0
Q.15. c Spectating at sports events	80	20	0
Q.15. d Computers	10	40	50
Q.15. e Going to the cinema	10	50	40
Q.15. f Having drinks with friends	30	60	10
Q.15. g Going to parties	20	60	20
Q.15. h Reading	10	20	70
Q.15. i Attending church	40	10	50
Q.15. j Youth group activities	20	10	70
Q.15. k Musical instrument/singing/choir	20	20	60
Q.15. l Eating out with friends/going to cafes	40	20	40
Q.15. m Watching television	30	40	30
Q.15. n Theatre company	0	0	100
Q.15. o Volunteer community organisation	10	10	80
Q.15. p Attending concerts	20	40	40
Q.15. q Attending theatre productions	0	10	90
Q.15. r Shopping	30	40	30
Q.15. s Family outings	20	60	20
Q.15. t Creative art work	0	0	100
Q.15. u Walking the dog	30	30	40

Table 4.5 What are your main recreational interests

In another phase of the study, PSTs were asked about pastimes they participated in other than physical activity to clarify the dominance of physical activity in the survey responses. Most of the PSTs found it hard to think of alternative activities they participated in. Mark did not have any pastimes outside of physical activity stating that he only watched sport on television, *“In college we’re in a dance club. Some of the lads in PE we joined a dance club for the craic. I work weekends and yea just hanging out with the lads back home. It’s mainly physical activity, like soccer and that up here you know (...) I wouldn’t watch that much TV shows just a soccer match or something”* (Interview, April 2010). Sean also supported the investment in physical activity, *“I could play a bit of cards maybe a bit of poker. I suppose I’d, socialising is a pastime getting together and chatting out. Other than that then everything has some, some sort of physical aspect to it”* (Interview, April 2010).

4.6 PSTs’ level of agreement with predetermined physical activity / sport-related statements

PSTs were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to physical activity and sport (see Table 4.6 below, for full table see Appendix G). The questions group around five different issues, (1) healthism (statements a, f, h, k), (2) subject knowledge (statements b, e, r), (3) gender and homophobia (statements c, d, j, s), (4) equity (statements g, l, m, o) and (5) ethics (statements i, n, p, q, t).

With respect to healthism, PSTs agreed that ‘leading a healthy lifestyle is a personal choice’ (6 of 10 PSTs) and disagreed that ‘performance enhancing drugs should be legalised’ (10 of 10 PSTs). The lack of positive responses for any of the subject knowledge statements is perhaps due to the survey being distributed at the beginning of the first semester when PSTs had not yet had an opportunity to be exposed to related subject knowledge. The one exception was where nine out of the ten PSTs strongly disagreed that ‘all PE students are good at sport’. With respect to the gender and homophobia statements, the majority of the PSTs agreed with the statement ‘sports women should receive the same prize money as sports men’ (7 of 10 PSTs) and disagreed with the statement ‘homosexuals should be banned from team sport’ (10 of 10 PSTs). The majority of the PSTs disagreed with the equity statement ‘verbal

abuse of the players by fans is acceptable at a sporting event’ (10 of 10 PSTs). The PSTs conveyed support for three of the ethics questions. The majority of the PSTs agreed with the statements, ‘team games build character’ (9 of 10 PSTs), ‘you learn more about sport by doing than by watching or reading about it’ (10 of 10 PSTs) and ‘I would be happy to have a gay person on my team’ (8 of 10 PSTs).

The above responses, while interesting in presenting PSTs’ patterns of responses to specific physical activity and sport statements, warrant further investigation outside of the study presented here.

	10 PSTs		
	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Q.16. a A slender body is a fit body	20	10	70
Q.16. b All PE students are good at sport	0	10	90
Q.16. c Sports women should receive the same prize money as sports men	70	20	10
Q.16. d Homosexuals should be banned from team sport	0	0	100
Q.16. e Participation in sport does not require a great deal of intellectual ability	30	30	40
Q.16. f Leading a healthy lifestyle is a personal choice	60	40	0
Q.16. g A muscular body is most attractive to me	40	20	40
Q.16. h Performance enhancing drugs should be legalised	0	0	100
Q.16. i Men will always be better at sport than women	10	30	60
Q.16. j Not everyone is capable of leading a healthy lifestyle	30	10	60
Q.16. k Sport is accessible for all people in Ireland	50	20	30
Q.16. l Becoming an elite sportsperson is more dependent on opportunity than ability	40	10	30
Q.16. m Verbal abuse of the players by fans is acceptable at a sporting event	0	0	100
Q.16. n Team games build character	90	10	0
Q.16. o Boxing is a violent sport and should be banned	0	20	80
Q.16. p You learn more about sport by doing than by watching or reading about it	100	0	0
Q.16. q I would be happy to have a gay person on my team	80	10	0
Q.16. r Sports people who use illegal drugs should be banned from competition for life	50	40	10
Q.16. s Children who play sport learn how to bend the rules	20	30	50
Q.16. t Exercise physiology is more important than sociology in understanding PE	0	60	40

Table 4.6 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the PSTs demographics and touched on the PSTs interests and motivations for entering a PETE programme. The survey data was similar across the

five cohorts of PSTs. Gender, parents occupation, nationality and age were almost identical. The main influences on the ten PSTs decision for entering the programme were interest in sport/physical activity, interest in healthy lifestyles and interest in physical activity in society. The highest career pursuit upon graduating was physical education teaching. The main activities the PSTs participated in were competitive sport, recreational activities and spectating at sports events. A pattern can be seen here between what influenced the PSTs to apply for the programme and their recreational interests. The PSTs have a significant interest in sport and physical activity. Chapter five allows deeper examination of the attractors to the PETE programme due to the nature of the data collection procedures. The demographics of the PSTs will be discussed together with the initial interviews in chapter five.

Chapter Five

PSTs' interests and dispositions towards enrolment on a PETE programme

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented survey data from 357 PSTs, establishing the demographics of the PSTs across five cohorts. The survey data contributed to my research question 'What are the interests and dispositions that motivated pre-service teachers' to enrol in a physical education teacher education programme?' establishing two main influences on the PSTs reasons for entering PETE, i.e., interest in sport and significant others.

This chapter will concentrate on the beginning and final interview data gathered from the ten 2009 PSTs. The interviews established the main influences on PSTs' reasons for entering PETE, the PSTs' interests and motivations related to their decision to enter PETE and their relationship with the programme. Data from the interviews allows triangulation with the survey data. The beginning interviews took place in November 2009 and the beginning interview protocol (appendix C) had been developed and used within the department for previous research. The final interviews took place at the end of April 2010, with the intent of clarifying the findings from previous interviews, extending the understanding of why changes in the PSTs' views or opinions had, or had not, occurred and examining any other related areas of interest that had arisen during the duration of the study. A set of twelve questions were designed (appendix E) and a time and date was set to interview the ten PSTs individually. The questions were constructed to validate the strength of responses in the first interview and to address issues that had arisen in the literature but had not arisen in the first interview, e.g., the lifestyle of PSTs and the extent to which they promote an appropriate lifestyle as a potential teacher of physical education. The beginning and final interviews were transcribed and then coded.

The ten interviews were coded into major themes, sub-themes and sub-categories (see Table 5.1 and Table 5.2). The beginning interviews were coded into three major themes of 'introduction to programme', 'interests and motivations' and 'relationship with the programme'. Related sub-themes matched the main areas of interest explored in the interviews. The final interviews were coded into the same three major themes as beginning interviews with the addition of one major theme 'lifestyle'. Working through an example of how the coding worked using the major theme, 'introduction to programme', the PSTs were prompted to explore responses through the sub-themes of 'supportive/challenging contexts of the PETE programme', 'expectations of the PETE programme' and 'what they know about the PE course'. From these sub-themes PSTs responses determined the related sub-categories. For example, the sub-theme of 'supportive/challenging contexts of the PETE programme' prompted the coding of PSTs responses into the sub-categories of 'significant others', 'interest in sport/PE', 'wanted to teach', etc. Comments that did not fit into any of the sub-categories are listed under 'other comments'. It should also be noted that the reason some of the codes noted in Table 5.1 and 5.2 have more than ten responses is due to PSTs referring to a specific topic more than once throughout the interview.

Timelines submitted at the beginning of the programme complemented the collection of interview data. Timelines completed by all first year PSTs in the first week to identify and acknowledge the interests and dispositions that motivated the PSTs to enrol in the PETE programme. During each beginning interview the PST was asked to narrate his/her timeline, aiding the triangulation between the interviews and the timelines. There is a section in the coding of the interviews (Table 5.1) dedicated to the timeline. This chapter is directed by the questions that were posed to the ten PSTs.

5.2 PSTs' introduction to the PETE programme

5.2.1 Beginning interviews

The major theme 'Introduction to programme' consisted of three sub categories, 'supportive/challenging context', 'expectations of the programme' and 'the PE programme'. Comments related to 'significant others' as a sub-category of 'supportive context' were the highest cited influence not only within the major theme of 'introduction to the programme' but also the highest frequency of comments for a sub-category from all major themes, making it an attractive starting point to unpack PSTs' responses.

5.2.1.1 The influence of significant others on PSTs' choice of programme of study

Significant others were frequently recorded as influencing PSTs' choice of programme of study and included family, guidance councillors, physical education teachers, friends, people on the programme and other school teachers. Family, guidance councillors and physical education teachers were the three highest cited individuals. There appears to be major influence of significant others on this Irish cohort. Family emerged as being a significant influence for these ten PSTs and this may reflect the high importance placed on the family within Irish society.

5.2.1.1.1 Family

Mary's family (and friends) conveyed their support for her pursuing the physical education programme, "*Another positive would have been a lot of support from my family and friends. They were always like you'd be very suited to the course (...) [said] you're good with children [and] always spurred [me] on*" (Interview, Nov 2009). The family appeared to be the starting point of the PSTs' introduction and interest in sport, and subsequently an interest in the physical education programme. The PSTs stated having sporting influences through the family and Sean stated that

his father taught him Gaelic football and soccer Marie stated that her mother's and brother's persistence in making her play camogie had a positive influence on her, "*I hated it [camogie] when I started it but my brother used to make me play with him because he's the only boy in our family and my mother kind of felt a bit guilty that he had no other boy to play with, but she used to make me go out and used to give me sweets and stuff if I would go out and play hurling with him so. Then I just kind of, I hated it at the start it used to be like a chore but then I got into it and then obviously I've, like I'm still playing now and I'm playing county and all the rest of it*" (Interview Nov 2009).

There were two PSTs who were significantly influenced by their brothers. Ben conveyed his brother as a very important part of deciding to apply for the PETE programme stating, "*My brother (...) did his Leaving Cert the year my father died (...) he wanted to go to college but he just couldn't concentrate (...) he would have loved to go to college and done PE teaching (...) he said that if I'm going to become a teacher to become a PE teacher*" (Ben, Interview Nov 2009). Shannon was also influenced by her brother who told her that if physical education teaching was what she wants to do to "*just do it*" (Shannon, Interview Nov 2009).

5.2.1.1.2 Guidance Councillors

Guidance councillors had introduced the majority of PSTs to the PETE programme and sown the seed of physical education teaching. Certain guidance councillors informed the PSTs that the physical education programme would be a good programme and that it would suit them and talked through the different places that they could study physical education. Ann's guidance councillor guided her away from primary teaching and toward physical education teaching, "*It was always going to go on my CAO [application for college] or whatever. And then when I filled out my CAO the first time I put down primary teaching and I went to a career guidance guy and he kind of pushed me more towards PE. He said you know it would be more suitable for me or whatever so I changed then and that's how I ended up here*" (Interview Nov 2009). Mark's career guidance councillor was the person who introduced him to the idea of physical education teaching, "*Through my guidance councillor he, he was*

kind of pushing me towards (...) I qualify for Access [Access programme of study] do you know, the access program, he was kind of pushing towards a good course in that like. I was always aiming for business but it was mainly through him do you know and he kind of set the ball rolling I suppose” (Interview Nov 2009).

5.2.1.1.3 Physical education teachers

Physical education teachers influenced PSTs’ perception of the PETE programme and subsequently their decision to apply. Many of the PSTs had asked their physical education teachers about the programme and so had an idea of what the programme would entail, as well as seeking advice on what subjects they should study for their Leaving Certificate. Barry noted, *“the reason I choose it really is because one of my teachers, my teachers I was doing, do you know teaching us hurling there last year, he was a PE teacher and he really seemed to enjoy his job and he was very good at it and I wanted to follow on to actually be able to teach as good as him” (interview Nov 2009).* Marie was inspired by her physical education teachers’ personality, *“I suppose just the PE teachers in school were always really sound and nice and stuff, I suppose that kind of gave a good image of them” (interview Nov 2009).*

5.2.1.1.4 Other significant others

In some instances, friends of PSTs had commented that physical education would be perfect for them and that they would be good teachers. Shannon had friends that were already enrolled on the programme and this is where she found out what the programme was about, as well as having her friends investigate other ways that she could study physical education teaching if she was unsuccessful in securing a place on the programme. Shannon acknowledged the supportive influence of friends, *“When you know you have friends like that to help you through, that was really kind of having it good I suppose, support was key to kind of having the I suppose, just to apply and to say that this is something I could do” (interview Nov 2009).* Mark appreciated the support he got from his friends, *“a lot of my friends I was telling you there when I said business they were “oh yea, yea”, but when I said PE (...) I really know a lot of them said it would be the perfect course for me and it really, its nice to*

hear like, like you don't know like but its nice to hear. There was a nice few of them that said it" (Interview Nov 2009).

PSTs already on the programme, teachers other than physical education teachers and neighbours were other groups who had an influence on PSTs' introduction to the programme.

5.2.1.2 The influence of interest in sport and physical education on PSTs' choice of programme of study

Interest in sport and/or physical education were frequently cited as influencing PSTs' decision when choosing their preferred programme of study. Four PSTs reported having an interest in physical education. These students stated that they always wanted to study physical education. Shannon reported, *"working for a year and then I was like I know what I want to do physical education is where I want to go, it wasn't really sports science although I'd be quite interested in that as well"* (Interview Nov 2009), while Sean admitted, *"Then PE, in PE like I always enjoyed that class and it was kinda you know I always wanted to do PE"* (Interview Nov 2009).

Most of the PSTs stated an interest in sport as the main reason for choosing to enter the PETE programme. Having a passion for sport from a young age and participating in a variety of sports were commonly reported by the PSTs. Mary reported that she had a passion for sport from primary school and Ben started participating in sport when he was five and loved it straight away. This is in contrast to Marie who initially disliked camogie before investing in the sport and now playing for her county. Some of the PSTs stated it was their sporting background and / or interest in sport as the main reasons for choosing the programme, *"I just I suppose I love sport so I really just, I'd like to teach it, you know to kids"* (Mary, interview Nov 2009). In talking through his timeline, Barry centred his attention on sport. He had a picture of when he competed in a team that won a hurling final and reported it as one of his best moments in sport. All his positive influences were when he was doing well in sport and participating a lot in sport, while his negative influences were attributed to not participating in sport or being injured.

Mark was not alone in admitting that he entered the programme because of the sport nature of physical education. Elaine stated, *“I was always interested in sports as well so I said I would do PE teaching”* (Interview Nov 2009). Sean reported, *“You know just I was always into sports as far, as long as I can remember and then I suppose in, as soon as we went into secondary school, me and a friend of mine decided to join rugby and it was one of the best decisions I think I ever made and I’ve made so many friends from that and just love the game, love playing and I just really like sports”* (Interview Nov 2009). Barry stated he would have loved, *“to have actually been doing physio [physiotherapy] do you know. Like actually with a sporting team or whatever [...] it was heads or tails really whether, which one I’d prefer”* (Interview Nov 2009). Barry admitted that his main concern was to do a programme that would satisfy his interest in sport, making no distinction between favouring physical education or physiotherapy.

5.2.2 Final interviews

From the final interviews the major theme of ‘introduction to the programme’ was split into one sub theme, ‘influences on the PST decision’. Under the sub theme of ‘influences on the PST decision’ I unpack the sub-categories ‘significant others’ and ‘interest in sport/PE’. To clarify the extent that the influence of significant others and sport had on PSTs’ entry to the PETE programme I re-visited these sub-categories in the final interviews.

5.2.2.1 The influence of significant others

The PSTs were asked to recall the influence that significant others had on their decision to study physical education. As in the initial interviews family emerged as the highest cited, including parents, brother, grandmother, uncles and aunts. Three of the PSTs reported that there were teachers in their family. Elaine reported that her mother and grandmother went through the pros and cons of teaching with her. Mary’s aunt suggested the programme would suit her, and after completing work experience

in her aunt's school Mary made up her mind to pursue teaching. Two PSTs had been influenced by their parents, "*my parents influenced me in a big way. They knew that I always wanted to do teaching, because always when I was at home when I was younger I was always pretending to be a teacher and I always wanted to do it and they saw I always had a keen interest in sport too so kind of combined. They had a big influenced because they knew like I wanted to do it so they kind of pushed me to do it*" (Ann, Interview April 2010). Two of the PSTs reported influences from their brothers, with Ben commenting, "*my brother definitely he never went to college or anything and he's kind of stuck with it now and he doesn't like it at all and he was like, he always tells me, well in leaving cert do you know work hard and do physical education teaching because he has a few friends who are physical education teachers and they say they love it so he's the one who advised me to do it. My mother as well was influential*" (Interview April 2010).

Physical education teachers were not as influential as the family but they did influence four of the PSTs. Sean was influenced by two of his physical education teachers, "*yea definitely one of them was my physical education teacher. Well I had two, one of them was very lazy like he, if you didn't have your gear with you he would say grand go and do your homework or something. People would just think ah I'll get my homework done in PE class so I wouldn't have to do it later. He was definitely one of the people who influenced me to do it, to become a better PE teacher. Then one of the other PE teachers we had he was very good and you know he had a good job and I just thought it would be a good job to have*" (Interview April 2010). Sean was influenced by his 'lazy' physical education teacher because he wished to change this practice by qualifying as a teacher. Marie was inspired by her physical education teacher and her teacher influenced her to apply for the programme, "*the teachers really like my PE teacher in school she really talked up the course and said that you know it was good and it was fun and all the rest of it and she got a good degree out of it, you know good for jobs and stuff like that. Like I always liked what she did as well like and stuff she used to do with us so*" (Interview April 2010). Ann stated that her teacher was very good and made everyone feel included in the class, influencing her to apply for the physical education programme. Barry was influenced by his physical education teachers because they came across very well and talked to him about the physical education programme.

Guidance councillors, friends, other teachers and a coach were also cited as influences. Guidance councillors were cited as recommending the programme to two of the PSTs. Friends were those who saw physical education teaching as a great job for the PSTs and supported their decision. Other teachers who were seen as really good teachers and provided support were an English and a mathematics teacher. Barry mentioned how becoming friendly with his hurling coach who was also a physical education teacher influenced him to apply for the programme.

5.2.2.2 Interest in sport or physical education

The PSTs were asked to what extent interest in sport or physical education influenced them to apply for the programme. All of the PSTs reported some influence from sport in applying for the programme. Five of the PSTs reported that sport was their main influence in applying for the programme, *“yea as I said early on it’s one of them, I see myself being involved in sport some how like being a teacher or something else but being involved in sport. I suppose what I want to do with my life so you can’t do much better than a PE course so yea that’s my main reason for choosing it as well as like my friend and teachers and that you know”* (Mark, interview 2010). Elaine stated that she did want to teach but that sport was a big part of her decision, *“I always wanted to be a teacher anyway and I’ve always had a big interest in sport so it was, I defiantly wanted to do teaching and I liked sport an awful lot so...Yea it was a big part of it”* (interview 2010). Sean stated that sport was his main influence in applying for the programme and he thought it would be a great way to stay physically fit.

Four of the PSTs reported interest in sport as a slight influence on their decision. Mary reported it was not solely sport that influenced her as she wanted to teach but it did have an influence on her decision. Ben stated that it was interest in sport and his past experiences that had an influence on his decision, *“well obviously I love sport that had a big, a big kind of a influence on me but at the same time my past experience kind of influenced me as well because of my negative, my negative view on PE when I was coming in here”* (Interview April 2010). Shannon admitted her love for sport but stated that she also had a love for the outdoors. Interest in sport was not

the main factor for Shannon, “*yea I suppose I can't deny my love for sport and just being active and stuff like that but I knew the sports that I love like wouldn't be a common factor, like I love rugby and football but it doesn't mean like that I'm going to go in and its going to be rugby and football the whole time. Like I love outdoor I love being outside and just like from hiking to surfing to even snowboarding and stuff like that. There's, I think there's so much stuff that you can do with kids and to really just get them interested. Like I suppose that would be the main thing like I do you know if you told me I could never teach rugby I probably wouldn't have had a problem with that like I wouldn't. There's so much there, so many different things you can, so that I suppose would have been it. But it would have been a big, big factor to me but it wasn't the main one, not at all*” (Interview April 2010).

Barry stated that it was interest in physical education that influenced him to apply for the programme, “*Yea that was probably 100% really because I loved PE in school do you know all the different things you did and I wanted to do more of it and when I was actually doing it I wasn't really thinking about teaching. Do you know what I would be doing later on in life because do you know it was first to third year you just are enjoying yourself really and we didn't have senior cycle PE so it wasn't, I wasn't thinking about it then but I can definitely remember the all the fun that everyone had not just the lads and there was a load of girls sitting down or what ever or even some lads but whenever there was, I was thinking why don't they like this do you know because everyone was having a ball really. But it was the way the PE teachers did it that, that they actually involved everyone so. And even if they didn't want to play or couldn't play they could go out for a walk around the school or something*” (Interview April 2010).

5.3 Interests and motivations of PSTs

5.3.1 Beginning interviews

Five sub-themes arose from the major theme ‘interests and motivations’ each matching the areas of questioning under the major theme. These were ‘post-primary school’ (which is secondary school, in Ireland), ‘competitive sport’ (playing sport for

competition), 'the university' (the status of the university and the facilities within the university), 'key issues/addressing' (the issues PSTs believed were currently related to physical education) and 'other programmes' (programmes the PSTs considered other than physical education teaching),. The most frequent comments made with respect to PSTs' interest and motivation to studying physical education related to what PSTs disliked about post-primary school physical education when they were a student at school, and subsequently their interest in changing physical education practices.

5.3.1.1 Dislikes of post-primary school physical education

Physical education teachers were reported as the most frequent reasons for disliking school physical education. Two PSTs stated their awareness of, and dislike for, their physical education teachers who were not qualified to teach physical education. Ann stated the physical education teacher in her school had too many hours, so her class was taught by a teacher who was not a qualified physical education teacher but a teacher of another subject area. Ann reported not having a qualified teacher in second or third year in school reporting that, "*Obviously if they weren't qualified they didn't really know what they were doing you know it was just kinda typical games that they thought were associated with PE*" (Interview Nov 2009). Other PSTs recalled that their physical education teachers forgot to mention that physical education is, "*an everyday thing you know that it's not just competitive*" (Elaine, Interview Nov 2009) and that, "*teachers just stick to the things that are close to them (...) they don't move out further a field because it's a lot of hassle I suppose*" (Mary, Interview Nov 2009). Ken conveyed a lack of respect for his physical education teacher, calling him, "*your man*" and noting that he did not appreciate his, "*roll out the ball*" mentality to teaching physical education, noting that his teacher, "*would just walk around and make [sure] nobody was killing themselves or sitting down doing nothing and that was about it*" (Interview Nov 2009).

Four of the PSTs reported a lack of variety in their student experience of physical education, having only played soccer throughout their school physical education classes, "*The only sports we ever did was basketball for a few weeks in first year and*

then for the rest five years it was soccer” (Ken, Interview Nov 2009). PSTs reflected that they would have appreciated the opportunity to have experienced other sports, with Shannon noting that physical education was, “very just GAA orientated for the double classes (...) for girls who didn’t do [GAA], who didn’t play or didn’t want to play or maybe weren’t that good at it, they didn’t get much out of the class” (Interview Nov 2009).

Two PSTs reported their dismay at not having the opportunity to participate in physical education in their senior cycle years. Barry stated that he would have loved to have done physical education instead of having religion class. Marie reported that although her class was timetabled for a single physical education class, her physical education teacher informed her class they were to have a study class instead. The complement of students that were prepared to take part in physical education in the senior cycle years was greatly reduced, with Ben reporting that there could be as few as six people taking part. Favouring soccer in senior cycle physical education was reported as disengaging a significant number of students from attending physical education.

Other issues that PSTs noted as contributing to their frustration with physical education was no provision for changing the activities they were offered, classes being shared with other year groups and the duration of physical education lessons being too short.

5.3.1.2 Likes of post-primary school physical education

The most frequently noted reason for PSTs liking school physical education was that their ‘teacher was good fun’. Mary stated, *“well the teacher was really enthusiastic so I really liked that. Do you know she really put everything into it, so then like it made it more enjoyable for us to like because she got involved. You know when we were doing aerobics like she demonstrated it whereas the other teacher in the school just put on a video for them to watch, whereas my teacher got active and did it with us so it made it easier for us to do it”* (Interview Nov 2009). Two of the PSTs stated it was a chance to get away from the classroom and that is what they liked about physical education.

Mark and Sean liked their physical education classes because they played soccer. Mark reported soccer was his main sport and he enjoyed playing soccer the whole time. Sean stated he likes soccer and enjoyed that they played a lot of soccer in his physical education class. Marie enjoyed her physical education class because it concentrated on competitive sport, *“[it was all] competitive games as well rather than, like it wasn’t so much you know like her doing stuff like check mate or anything it was just like a game of dodge ball or something, we used to have great craic doing it”* (Interview Nov 2009). Other reasons the PSTs gave for liking physical education at school were that it was a great way to relax or burn off steam, they got to express themselves and do exercise.

5.3.1.3 Issues in physical education in Irish schools

There was a wide variety of issues put forward by the PSTs in response to key issues they perceived in school physical education. This may be because they were just two months into the programme and perhaps they did not know what issues were currently pertinent in teaching physical education. The first issue that arose from the PSTs was the need for a wider variety of activities in physical education classes. Four PSTs stated a wider variety of activities would make physical education better, with Marie stating that teachers should put more thought into the variety of activities, *“just about the whole games and stuff, do you know like if teachers even put even like half a thought into what they’re going to do, just look at the stuff we’re doing now and just how we never ever did any of that in school”* (Interview Nov 2009).

Three of the PSTs stated physical education needs higher status in post-primary schools in Ireland. Barry argued physical education is an important subject, *“that its not the lowest subject do you know. It, it should be more relevant really it should be compulsory because do you know it’s a way to relieve stress and everything and release endorphins. It should be about, it should be one of your main subjects rather than like do you know maths and all them. And rather than just been thrown out the bottom of the pile like”* (Interview Nov 2009). Mark was horrified with the lack of status physical education has, *“Oh its huge like you probably know yourself like PE teachers are probably at the bottom, the very, very bottom of the ladder do you know*

in terms of they're not real teachers and that and do you know. I was actually talking to three lads about two weeks ago they all, the three of them did business and they did their Hdip I think and they all became business teachers. They're teaching in schools around the country and they fill in as PE teachers five or six hours a week and like the principal has just said to them have you any sport background and they said we did Gaelic up until eighteen and we stopped seven years ago like and they goes so will you do a couple of PE classes a week, because they didn't want to hire a PE teacher. That's sum, that's a joke like. So that really is but I know there's, there's nothing really I obviously completely rule out that like given us equal, equal level as other teachers like not being called a real teacher like and having business teachers who played sport seven years ago come in and do your hours like. It's a joke like, absolute joke" (Interview Nov 2009).

Mark stated a major issue is the competitiveness of school physical education, *"well in my school anyway its, I can only talk about my own experience, it was encouraged do you know PE was to go out and be competitive and that's, nothing I haven't heard that word in college yet. Do you know its all about introducing kids to be physically active and stuff do you know, your teaching them the importance of having a healthy active life. But even when we were doing different sports in first year [in school] we done handball and Gaelic and it was still very competitive we were encouraged to be extra aggressive and I mean looking back now your thinking where did these fellas get their degrees and who taught them like it's a joke. I'd just get all these fellas and just sent them off to college again for another couple of years and just tell them your actually meant to encourage kids to be physically active not encouraging them to be like elite athletics do you know. That's what I think anyway" (Interview Nov 2009).*

Other issues that arose were students giving excuses for non-participation, girls not liking physical education, poor facilities, funding cut backs, being able to involve everyone in physical education, making physical education compulsory and unqualified teachers teaching physical education.

5.3.2 Final interviews

Within the final interviews the major theme ‘interests and motivations’ was split into six sub themes; ‘role of a physical education teacher’, ‘daily tasks’, ‘planning’, ‘issues in PE’, ‘is the course addressing the issues’ and ‘where did they get the issues’. Out of the six sub themes I will be looking at the ‘role of a physical education teacher’ because this is the sub theme that provided the most valuable information and quotes to answer my research questions and to link this study to previous research. Under this sub theme I will be concentrating on the sub category ‘promoting physical activity’. I will also unpack the sub category ‘issues in PE’. I am unpacking these two sub categories because they were the sub categories with the most responses.

5.3.2.1 Role of a physical education teacher

The majority of the PSTs stated that promoting physical activity was the main role of a physical education teacher, *“promote physical activity really try and give them an experience that they will actually enjoy for, that they will actually do for the rest of their lives do you know. Maybe even orienteering or swimming aquatics or even Olympic handball or soccer or something different like. So because hurling I suppose or football yea football you might only have that till your 30, late 30’s if you’re very lucky like. So you want to pick something else that they will keep carrying on after that rather than when they are just playing”* (Barry, Interview April 2010). Sean perceived his role as someone who is there to, *“talk to about sports or taking up a new sport or getting interested in sport out of school as well or just being physically active like organising something like going for a run with, like organising a group of people who want to stay fit and just organise times to go running or do some sort of activity along with just the teaching aspect”* (Interview April 2010). Marie felt that her role was to promote life long activity, *“I think they should like encourage life long activity, rather than just be there for the hour a week or whatever. Yea they should definitely do you know kind of get the students to be interested in like for the rest of their lives rather than as I said an hour a week or what ever”* (Interview April 2010). Most of

the PSTs believed their job as a physical education teacher was to increase their students' participation and to get their students interested in physical activity.

5.3.2.2 *Issues in physical education in Irish schools*

Most of the issues that arose in the final interviews had arisen in the initial interviews but in the final interviews the PSTs were stronger in their responses and provided more informed answers. In the 'issues in physical education' sub theme participation emerged as the issue the PSTs found to be most significant. Five of the PSTs believe this issue needs to be addressed when it comes to physical education, "*I suppose one of the main issues is getting children to partake in PE because a lot of them aren't partaking these days, to encourage them to partake*" (Mary, Interview April 2010). Shannon believed participation is a big issue and that it is central for parents to know how important it is for their child to participate in physical education, "*I suppose participation levels maybe and just trying to get kids to just be involved and be active and like I just hear from my friends who are PE teachers basically talking about people not wearing like, coming in and no one understanding what a proper pair of runners are and how they have had to put it on the book list so parents know the importance of just, I suppose to get people to know that PE is not just something you run about or not just playing soccer and football but for students to be learning at the same time*" (Interview April 2010). Other PSTs stated students not attending, or not participating in, classes was an issue. Marie felt that it is important for teachers to make their classes interesting and to involve everyone to increase participation, "*I think definitely like a lot of people in PE just they hate it because it's just kind of a big match playing for the hour or whatever. It's like what 11 v 11 or whatever so definitely I think that's one of the big key issues. To actually make it interesting as well like when I came here I didn't realise that PE could be all these trust games and all that, there fun like and its stuff you'd not do in PE when I was in school, do you know if you'd kind of do it messing or whatever. So definitely think things like that would, will involve every student rather than just the competitive ones*" (Interview April 2010).

Ann and Ben stated that varying the activities within the physical education classroom was an issue that needs to be addressed, *“I suppose broadening the course getting the course done, you know a lot of schools don’t do everything. Swimming is one of the main things I suppose because you don’t have the facilities in the school so it involves getting the bus or walking to the pool and there’s a cost involved. Em a lot of I suppose PE teachers then as well they stick to what they know best or if you have a teacher that’s good at hurling there going to teach hurling rather than, that’s what you find happens in schools”* (Ann, Interview April 2010).

Again other issues arose such as physical education not being in every school, physical education as an exam subject, increasing the status of physical education, lack of facilities and equipment, and unqualified teachers teaching physical education.

5.4 Relationship with the programme

5.4.1 Beginning interviews

The three sub-themes related to the major theme ‘relationship with the programme’ were ‘relevant/irrelevant modules’, ‘shaped interest in PE’ and ‘similarities/differences to school PE’, again matching the questions posed in the interview. The most frequently cited comments related to what PSTs considered to be relevant modules in the PETE programme.

5.4.1.1 Relevance of the PETE programme

Conscious of only having completed two months of classes and experienced a total of three physical education related modules, PSTs unanimously reported the module ‘Foundations of Teaching and Learning Physical Education’ as relevant to their programme of study, appreciating that it gave a lot of good ideas for teaching and of what the PSTs will be doing once they finish college. Ken felt that, *“‘foundations of teaching’ is a good one [module]. It gives a lot of good ideas for teaching. I wouldn’t*

have a clue how to teach before it” (Interview Nov 2009). The primary school experience component of the module requires PSTs to teach a physical education lesson in a primary school once a week over five weeks was well received, *“you need to start small and build it up like. You’ll be able to take some of that into the secondary school”* (Mary, Interview Nov 2009). There was an appreciation that the module also allowed PSTs to consider the interests and abilities of the students they would be teaching, allowing them to *“see where kids are coming from and (...) what type of activities they have and what they are capable of like”* (Shannon, Interview Nov 2009).

Five of the PSTs believed every module within the programme was relevant, *“god I suppose all of it I can’t really say that there’s anything that’s not relevant like”* (Shannon, interview Nov 2009). Other PSTs suggested that due to having only been a few weeks into the programme they were not in a position to comment on what modules were not relevant. There was an appreciation of the relevance of having people work together in the first few weeks of the programme, *“because all the activities are about building trust and (...) cooperation and they’re kinda doing so everyone can (...) be together and (...) interlink with each other and get to know each other”* (Barry, Interview Nov 2009). On further prompting, some PSTs narrowed down their answer and discussed elements of the programme that they considered relevant, such as the ‘Foundations of Teaching and Learning Physical Education’.

The different physical activities within the physical education programme were noted as relevant, even though there was a belief that not all schools would implement aquatics, and less so adventure and outdoor education. In articulating the relevance of the activities they were learning in outdoor education Marie commented, *“you’re going to be teaching them [students in their classes] games that they’re [lecturers] teaching us now”* (Interview Now 2009). There was also an appreciation that the content being covered in the programme was relevant to what physical education should strive to be in schools and not necessarily duplicate the limited physical education programmes PSTs had experienced at school. PSTs noted that they had never had an opportunity to participate in aquatics, dance, gymnastics and / or HRA in school physical education.

5.4.2 Final interviews

5.4.2.1 Relevance of the PETE programme

Towards the end of the second semester the PSTs had experienced three more physical education modules and had more informed opinions on which modules were relevant and irrelevant. The majority of PSTs reported the games module as most relevant, providing exposure to different games, *“the games module was good it kind of showed you like, you learned how to do different games like hockey I never played before and that and then it showed you how to do it and then we were shown how to teach it as well and you were learning how to teach it rather than the rules of the game do you know”* (Mary, Interview April 2010). Shannon believed the games module to be very important but was concerned at the lack of time they spent in the module, *“you can’t ignore the practical stuff they’re very, very important because like if you can’t do that then and if you can’t understand games or teach the games that’s what you’re going to be doing the whole time so I suppose that was probably the most important but I kinda think that we didn’t get enough time with all the games because like obviously I was competent in like football and camogie because that’s what I have been brought up with and like the likes of hockey now if I was to go into a school and teach hockey, we have only had six weeks so I suppose it’s just going to be from my own outside work and learning more about hockey but like really six weeks and I’d say the rest of my classmates we really felt like that we didn’t have enough of that kind of practical. Or even just basically if we sat down we could watch a video and break it down before we ever touched a like hockey stick so that we just understood what we were doing rather than just learning the skills and not seeing it first in use. If you get my meaning? But I think that’s important”* (Interview April 2010). Ann reported the games module as relevant as it provided an opportunity to teach, *“then in games as well we got to do some teaching (...) Any of the ones really we got to participate as the teacher you know that was kind of the main thing for me”* (Interview April 2010).

The ‘Foundations of Teaching’ module from semester one was still being recalled by PSTs as providing a worthwhile experience, *“well in the first semester we did the*

PY4031 where we went out to the schools teaching. So I suppose it was real life for us you know we got to go and teach and we got feedback then each week. So at least when we went out we were getting feedback on ourselves as opposed to just being told what you should do and why. You know we got to experience it” (Ann, Interview April 2010). Most of the PSTs reported this module as providing experience in how to teach, *“the first one I suppose foundations of teaching. Well like we got experience in doing actual teaching and it was the only one we really picked up any pedagogy skills the rest of them were all kind of just practice and picking up subject knowledge like”* (Ken, Interview April 2010). Mark was impressed with the pedagogy that was introduced by the physical education components of his programme compared to his elective, *“in the first semester we did pedagogy. Like the pedagogy of teaching PE that was fantastic like because we’re really learning how to teach PE whereas in all of our electives and we all have the same problem like mine is [maths]. I know that [geography] lads are the same we have never had one class on how to teach [maths] or [geography] and we think like it’s a disgrace like. We don’t see how the course is like that at all. So obviously the pedagogy in PE it’s huge we’ve taken so much from that”* (Interview April 2010).

5.4.2.2 Least relevant aspects of the PETE programme

Five of the PSTs reported the physiology and anatomy module as least relevant, commenting that the module went into too much detail, *“I suppose it’s kind of hard to see you know physiology and anatomy at the moment. You know it’s kind of, we do go into quite a lot of detail. I know you need it to a certain extent but you know really you need the anatomy because you need to understand the muscles and bones and to be able to help people with injury and whatever. But the physiology side of it I don’t see, you know we go into an awful lot of detail. I don’t know how relevant that is really for the level we’d be working at you know”* (Ann, Interview April 2010). Sean and Marie could not see the relevance of the module to teaching, *“something like the anatomy and physiology or the physiology especially like it was just kind of, well I don’t really see how if your teaching in a secondary school, if your going to be a teacher how that would be relevant really”* (Sean, Interview April 2010).

5.5 PSTs Lifestyle

The major theme of 'PSTs lifestyle' was only relevant to the final interviews as some questions in the final interviews were included to address issues that had arisen in the literature but had not arisen in the first interview. The major theme of 'PSTs lifestyle' consisted of four sub themes, 'physical activity levels', 'dietary habits', 'other pastimes' and 'promoting a healthy lifestyle', the latter being the focus of attention here. as it was the highest cited sub-theme.

5.5.1 Providing knowledge to students

Collectively the PSTs believed it was important for them to become confident in promoting a healthy lifestyle in young people, *"like as everyone knows there is a problem in schools at the moment with you know obese kids. So I think it's very important for me to like promote how to be physically active and the benefits of it to you (...) I suppose just like show the changes that could occur if you started being more active and start eating more healthy, yea the main thing would be to show them how it could change you and show how the benefits would be to you. Illustrate these to the children"* (Marie, Interview April 2010). Ben reported that he was never educated about a healthy lifestyle and believes it is his duty to educate the students in his class, *"its important because before I came here I was never shown anything like that and when I was in school I never, my PE teacher never told me why it was important to do, to be physically active and why it's important to be healthy and I think that for me to do it for young people it might influence their lives and just maybe hopefully make them healthier and have a better attitude and perspective on physical activity"* (Interview April 2010).

Most of the PSTs reported how important it is to educate their students on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle with Shannon suggesting that students do not realise the damage they are doing to their bodies, *"God I don't know I suppose kind of just making them aware and making them realise, because I think maybe ignorance is maybe most of it like. They just don't understand the foods they are putting into their bodies or what"*

that's doing to them and just by sitting and constantly playing computer games and stuff like that, that's not getting exercise. Just giving them the knowledge and hopefully with that knowledge they will be able to realise for themselves how important it is" (Interview April 2010). Mary was conscious of the effects that over indulgence can have on children, *"Well just I work in a shop like and just to see people, children coming in and buying stuff like red bull and stuff the whole time its sick like as in I've been working there for three years and I've seen some like young people like coming in normal size and stuff but now like there just like obese like practically and I just think its so important now that, its actually made me realise how much a healthy lifestyle means to some people so hopefully I'll have something to do with that"* (Interview April 2010).

5.5.2 Participation important in promoting a healthy lifestyle

PSTs viewed participation as important to promoting a healthy lifestyle, *"I don't think you can do it directly. You can't say "Ok come on guys everyone's going to do gymnastics today because you'll be fit you know". I don't think you can do it directly you just try get everyone involved so you try to do activities that everyone will like and then hopefully everyone will enjoy them and then after a while they will see the benefits it has on their own body and do you know the physical benefits and stuff"* (Mark, Interview April 2010). Barry stated he would try to improve the students' self-esteem, *"give them something they will enjoy so they will actually keep active for the rest of their lives and they will actually be, it will be better for them they're actually, some how I think we can say you can keep a bit of, I don't know, you'd know your self you helped them to have a healthier lifestyle so it's a nice thing to have"* (Interview April 2010). Sean suggested increasing participation by getting the students interested in physical activity, *"It's very important because you know you see some people who can't function as well as they could if they had a good physical education. I suppose fat is a bad word but like you can see how it disables people like they don't get a good chance at life and you know it's just not healthy. Its part of what I want to kind of stop as a PE teacher, get them interested in something that they want to do other than watching TV and playing the play station"* (Interview April 2010). The majority of the PSTs suggest that introducing students to new, fun and interesting activities will

help them to lead a healthy lifestyle, by wanting to participate more and continue participation outside of the school.

5.5.3 PSTs personal lifestyles

After accessing literature investigating PSTs' lifestyles (La Vine and Cortney 2006; Blum 2007) it was felt to be appropriate to ask the ten PSTs about their levels of physical activity and dietary habits. All PSTs reported participating in regular physical activity with Mary stating, *"well I'd have high physical activity at home I'd play a lot of sport. I do a lot of athletics and play a lot of football. So I'd be quite physically active most evenings"* (Interview April 2010). Barry's high physical activity levels are attributed to playing on four teams, *"well I do a lot of physical activity because I play with about three or four teams; minor, u21, junior and I'm a county minor as well. And I play soccer so basically about three or four times a week at least"* (Interview April 2010). Shannon stated she participates in physical activity everyday, *"I suppose I'd be very, very active. I'd train once everyday like outside of the stuff you do here. I think I live a very healthy lifestyle as well, just from my participation in sports like I play an awful lot of sports"* (Interview April 2010). Mark stated other commitments have affected the amount of physical activity he participates in, *"In terms of physical activity it has been better at stages like but that's because like when you're in school and all that you don't need to pay your way through school you know but in college you kind of need a job so. But I'd still be fairly active you know. I'd say about three days a week like but I mean I'd like to do more but I just got to work too you know"* (Interview April 2010).

Most of the PSTs reported having a healthy diet, *"I'd be kind of strict on my diet too. I'd eat healthy enough and I wouldn't eat much sweets because of all the physical activity I do really"* (Marie, Interview April 2010) and, *"I suppose it comes from home really, that you know I'd try to eat a balanced diet, try and eat as much fruit and veg as I can. I wouldn't really eat much of the bad foods you know like chips or the basic student food"* (Ann, Interview April 2010). Shannon and Sean stated eating homemade food and a lot of fruit and vegetables. Marie stated she was not too conscious of what she ate because she was active everyday, *"I eat healthy enough"*

like. I have a breakfast a lunch and a dinner and probably something after just for, like something sweet maybe before I go to bed or whatever but like other than that I don't really eat, I would really be too worried about diet or what ever because I am active for about an hour everyday” (Interview April 2010). Elaine and Barry were the only two PSTs that reported having bad dietary habits.

5.6 Discussion

Within this cohort of Irish PSTs there seems to be two major influences on their decision to enter a PETE programme. These two influences are interest in sport and the influence of significant others. In support of the literature, PSTs reported amaintenance of their interest in sport or physical education as being influential to their decision in choosing a career in physical education, characteristic of the continuation theme (Lortie 1975). The continuation theme, i.e., maintaining an interest in sport, is a significant influence across the related literature (Placek et al 1991; O' Bryant et al 2000; Matanim and Collier 2003; Zounhia et al 2006; O' Sullivan et al. 2009). Results from the survey data (chapter four) verify interest in sport as a major factor in the PSTs' decision to choose physical education. Data from the interviews and surveys support PSTs' enjoyment in participating in competitive sport and recreational activities, with the majority of the PSTs reporting participating in sport both in and outside of school. Family, guidance councillors and physical education teachers were the three highest cited individuals, supporting the pattern of responses from the survey data (chapter four). The influence of some significant others such as physical education teachers and friends has been noted in other studies (Bullough and Gitlin 1995; Matanim and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006; O' Sullivan et al 2009) but not to the extent that significant others have affected this Irish cohort.

These PSTs want to continue their participation with something they enjoy, i.e., sport. It is likely that they had positive experiences in sport and therefore it became an important factor in choosing to study PETE (Cancela-Carral and Ayan-Perez 2010). It is obvious from the survey and interview data that this cohort of PSTs have a significant interest in sport. The majority of the survey data reported the PSTs main

interests are participating in competitive sport and recreational physical activity and spectating at sporting events. This is supported further when some of the PSTs were unable to provide pastimes outside of physical activity or sport.

It is apparent that the male PSTs had a stronger influence from their interest in sport and wanting to continue an association with sport in enrolling on the programme. All five of the male PSTs stated some link to a sporting influence with no mention of a desire to teach. This contradicts the findings of a study carried out on Spanish PSTs, where male PSTs preferred to opt for teaching more than female PSTs (Cancela-Carral and Ayan-Perez 2010). Ann, Elaine and Mary conveyed more obvious dispositions towards teaching, *“I wanted to do some form of teaching and to be honest in the end it was a toss up between this and primary teaching and I found that in PE I kind of got to express myself more and you know I’d enjoy myself more and as well there’s more of, there’s more of a push to it, you know it primary teaching it’s a bit monotonous whereas PE there’s a lot more to it and that’s how I kind of felt in the end”* (who? interview Nov 2009). Mary stated she always had an interest in sport as well as an interest in teaching, *“I suppose like, I don’t know, I just always had an interest from a very small age of being a teacher. And I don’t know why it was always just PE like. I suppose I was interested in sport like and then I really wanted to become a teacher at the same time so the two of them went hand in hand (...) I always played teacher games when I was younger with my sister, always, like everyday”* (interview Nov 2009). Elaine also reported a disposition for teaching and sport, *“I always wanted to be a teacher anyway and I didn’t really know what I wanted to teach, but I was always interested in sport as well so I said I would do PE teaching”* (interview Nov 2009). Further inquiry is warranted to explore the extent to which female PSTs may have a stronger disposition towards teaching than their male counterparts.

The influence of significant others appears to have had a major influence on the PSTs entrance into PETE. Significant others has been noted by other researchers (Lawson 1983; Dewar and Lawson 1984; Placek et al 1991; Schempp and Graber 1992; Doolittle et al 1993; Bullough and Gitlin 1995; O’ Bryant et al., 2000; Matanim and Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006; O’ Sullivan et al 2009), however it seems that in other studies significant others influenced the PSTs choice to enter PETE to a lesser extent than this study’s cohort of ten PSTs. Significant others was in some cases just

as significant a reason for enrolling on the programme as an interest in sport. The main groups who had an impact on PSTs were their family, guidance councillors and physical education teachers.

There were some similarities between what the PSTs disliked about their school physical education class and the issues they believed needed to be addressed in physical education. Perhaps they drew on their own experiences within physical education and stated issues that needed to be addressed from their own experience. The issues the PSTs stated needed to be addressed were the variety of activities, the status of the subject, unqualified physical education teachers, lack of facilities and participation. Within the literature PSTs stated their physical education classes were focused around game play (Curtner-Smith 2001) and that physical education was just another chance to play sports (Hutchinson 1993). Shannon complained about her physical education classes being focused around GAA because her school participated in competitive GAA games. Other studies have found physical education teachers used physical education classes for the training of sports teams (Curtner-Smith 1997; Curtner-Smith 2001; Matanim and Collier 2003). Mark believed physical education should not be competitive and this was also the belief of Doolittle et al.'s (1993) PSTs who believed students should physically learn about themselves and learn about a healthy lifestyle.

While some of the PSTs were vague in their responses to what the role of a physical education teacher should be, others listed such responsibilities as promoting physical activity, introducing students to new activities, promoting life long physical activity and improving self-esteem. Other researchers reported PSTs have similar views (Doolittle et al. 1993; Matanim and Collier 2003; O'Bryant et al. 2000). There was some evidence that the cohort of ten PSTs in this study did not fully understand the role of a physical education teacher and believed they had a lot more to learn.

PSTs own healthy lifestyle was examined with the PSTs asked about their participation in regular physical activity and dietary habits. The PSTs reported participating in regular physical activity with some reporting they were physically active every day. The PSTs reported having a healthy diet, eating fruit and vegetables and not eating any 'junk' food. Blum's (2007) PSTs also reported having a healthy

diet, but on investigation was found that the PSTs were not as healthy as they had thought. This prompts further investigation into the reality of the lifestyle patterns reported by the ten PSTs in this study.

This chapter discussed the initial and final interviews with the PSTs and their interests and motivations for enrolling on a PETE programme. The next chapter will investigate the PSTs' responses to a particular teaching scenario and will determine if their views or opinions change throughout their first year of the programme.

Chapter Six

PSTs' responses to a particular teaching scenario

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the results from the initial and final interviews with the PSTs was presented and discussed, focusing on the PSTs' interests and motivations for entering a PETE programme. In this chapter the responses of PSTs to the set teaching scenario will be presented and discussed, focusing on PSTs' changing perceptions about the teaching of physical education. This chapter contributes to my second research question, 'What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of the field and are changing perceptions attributed to their PETE experiences and opportunities?'

The PSTs answered three questions on a particular teaching scenario at the start of their first semester. At the beginning of the second semester the same scenario was revisited with the same questions and some additional questions (appendix D). This chapter presents the findings from both the initial and revisited scenario responses.

In administering the 'Student attitude towards PE' survey (appendix B) to year 1 PSTs in their first week on the programme, the PSTs were asked to read through the following teaching scenario and write their response to the three associated questions;

The class is playing two full games of basketball. The boys and girls are divided among the teams in such a way that the four teams are of similar ability level. During the games, the highly skilled players appear to dominate both games. They pass to each other more often, tend to hold the ball in their possession for longer periods of time, and attempt more individual efforts or shots. Although a few assertive, skilled girls do take their fair part in the games, most of them defer to the boys who are not always better than they are.

Sean Lyons, the physical education teacher, observes that the less skilled players do not have as many opportunities to participate in the games. He stops the games and reorganises the teams. Now there are two games going on, one between boys and one between girls.

- 1. What do you think is happening in this scenario and what are the implications for what students are learning about physical education?*
- 2. If you were the teacher in this scenario, what would you do and why?*
- 3. What implications do you believe your decisions have on student learning in this class?*

In February 2010, at the beginning of the second semester, the ten PSTs were asked to read the same scenario. The same three questions were posed at the end of the scenario and PSTs were given the choice to write or verbalise their responses. The PSTs were also asked three qualifying questions in an attempt to address the second research question investigating if PSTs' conceptions of physical education were changing as they progressed through the programme, perhaps attributed to experiences and opportunities that had arisen through the programme;

1. Is there anything you have learned in your modules up to this point that has informed your answer? If so, which modules?
2. Are there any changes between your first response and second response?
3. Why do you think changes have/ have not occurred within your answers?

For those PSTs who chose to verbalise their responses, less concise responses were noted than from when they had provided a written response. The initial and revisited scenario responses were typed up and any oral responses to the scenario were transcribed. All of the data was coded and analysed. In the following sections I discuss the PSTs' responses to the scenario, indicating with the revisited responses if they were written or oral. Where I present PSTs' written responses they are reproduced as they were presented with no changes made to the spelling or grammar.

6.2 PSTs' reading of the scenario and associated implications for students: initial response

The first question posed to the PSTs was 'What do you think is happening in this scenario and what are the implications for what students are learning about physical education?' The majority of the PSTs' initial responses state that the dominating students, identified as the boys, were taking over the class, "*The boys are been treated as better on the teams because boys are assumed to be better at sport than girls. The girls and the players with less skill aren't learning as much because it's being made harder for them to interact*" (Elaine, initial scenario Sept 2009). Ben added, "*I think that the boys are taking the game too seriously. They are not involving everyone and this makes it less enjoyable for those trying to participate*" (initial scenario Sept 2009), and Marie stated, "*there are too many dominating students in the game which is not making the game a team effort. The less dominating students are missing out and hence, are not learning as much about physical education. I think the less skilled students may become discouraged to take part in P.E class as a result*" (initial scenario Sept 2009).

The second aspect that the PSTs discuss is the exclusion of some students in the class leading to the possibility of being discouraged to take part in physical education. The majority of the PSTs stated that the dominating students are excluding the less skilled players, "*in the original situation the players of less ability who are practically being excluded from the games may soon grow to dislike P.E. Sometimes this can put them off sport and activity completely so it is vital to restructure the way these games are being played*" (Mark, initial scenario Sept 2009). Barry agreed and stated that everyone in the class is not being involved, making it less enjoyable for the non-participants. Ann and Marie believe that learning is not occurring for some students because they are being excluded, "*There are too many dominating students in the game which is not making the game a team effort. The less dominating students are missing out and hence, are not learning as much about physical education*" (Marie, Initial scenario Sept 2009).

The PSTs discuss the physical education teacher's decision to separate the students into boys and girls, "*the teacher is separating the boys from the girls, to make the*

matches “fairer”. But the implications are he is re-enforcing the stereotype that all boys are better than girls at sports” (Ken, initial scenario Sept 2009) and “when the teacher notices the stronger players are dominating, he separates the strong from the weak and separates the sexes. He gives pupils the impression that it is the norm to be divided up and classified into groups, because of gender or skill” (Ann, initial scenario Sept 2009). Shannon believed the teacher has created a divide in the class, “By splitting into both boys and girls the teacher has created a divide in the class and has now shown 2 things: 1. Boys and girls can’t play properly together 2. Not making or showing them how to work as a team” (initial scenario Sept 2010). Sean contrasted Shannon’s view, “The students are learning that sport is not always fair. They also are learning that it is easier to play with other people of the same sex rather than mixing” (initial scenario Sept 2010).

6.3 Revisited responses

The PSTs were asked to respond to the same question on the same scenario five months later to determine if their conception of the teaching scenario had changed now that they had experienced modular content that may have informed their responses. The PSTs’ responses were again centred on separating by gender and / or skill, the dominating students taking over the class and, the exclusion of less skilled students. The PSTs’ responses concerning dominating students taking over the class focused on how the less skilled players in the class would be feeling *“The more dominant players are able to show off their skills without involving the other players who are less skilled which is not P.E for these students it might as well be a class they didn’t take part in. I do not think it was good to split the teams for boys and girls as the skilled girls will do exactly what the boys in the previous game” (Barry, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Ben stated the students would not enjoy or learn within a class like this, “I feel that clearly the skilled players are being very dominant and the lower ability students are not getting the opportunity to benefit, learn from and enjoy the lesson and this is a direct result of the highly skilled players dominating the game” (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).*

The PSTs' responses on separating the students were focused on equality and splitting the boys and girls, *"but then when the teacher kind of breaks it down into boys playing one game and girls playing the other it does I suppose it helps to some extent because maybe the weaker kids might have maybe been mainly the girls but that's just they mightn't have been weak basketball players but just against boys they might have been. But then by breaking it up its splitting the sexes and that isn't good either because it's not showing just equality I suppose"* (Shannon, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ann stated the boys and girls should be working together, *"Teacher is separating the genders saying that the boys and girls are of different levels as opposed to trying to get them all to work together as a unit and help some more of the students realise their potential instead of letting certain individuals take over and do all of the work"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Sean suggested that separating the sexes would benefit the students, *"Well yea there is because then it's kinda segregation, well yea segregation. I don't know it could be thought as sexist, but I think it would benefit the students more"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

The PSTs' responses on excluding the students were also focused on the implication for the students within the class. Within the PSTs' initial responses they stated that the students were being excluded and would not enjoy the class. In their revisited responses the PSTs went beyond enjoyment and stated the implications that could occur, *"Lots of the students will stand back and not participate-they won't see P.E as a class they are all willing to get involved in, also P.E will become more of a competitive divided setting with only a few individuals participating as opposed to a class that is inclusive and suits all abilities"* (Ann, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Ken stated that reorganising the teams by gender would result in the high skilled girls and the lower skilled boys not achieving much from the class. Ben stated that the physical education class would achieve the opposite of what is expected from a physical education lesson, *"The lower ability students would take very little from a P.E class such as this one and their perception of P.E would be negative, one of boredom and disappointment. And I think that students should see P.E as a worthwhile and enjoyably experience in every single class"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

6.4 PSTs' proposed action in response to scenario initial responses

Question two asked the PSTs 'If you were the teacher in this scenario, what would you do and why?' Three of the PSTs suggested that they would enforce a rule where the ball has to be passed to everyone on the team before a shot could be taken. Barry stated that he would enforce a rule to include a certain amount of passes before a shot could be taken, *"In my game I would apply a certain amount of passes before every score and that every player on each team has to contribute and this therefore brings everyone into the game and does not leave anyone feeling less important than any other student"* (initial scenario Sept 2009).

Three other PSTs stated they would separate the students by ability, *"Maybe separate the more elite players into separate matches, rather than segregate boys and girls. I'd do this to encourage elite girls to maximise their potential, and so the less elite players can participate more in the games"* (Ken, initial scenario Sept 2009). Mark had different reasons for separating the students by ability, *"I would maybe set up one match between the better players and one with the lesser players. I would give equal time to both matches. I think putting the lesser players in a match of their own would boost their confidence and maybe ability in sport because hopefully they would be a lot more involved. The better players may struggle to shine in a highly skilled game and that may tone down their arrogance on the ball"* (initial scenario Sept 2009).

Ben stated he would enforce a rule onto the game before a shot could be taken, *"I would not stop the game and make new teams as it states the four teams are of equal skill level. I would simply put in place a rule that there has to be five passes to a girl before you can score. And that every time a boy scores a girl must get the next score"* (initial scenario Sept 2009). Sean stated the girls would be better playing amongst themselves, *"I would probably do the same as the teacher did separate the boys from the girls because I think that the girls would play better with other girls and visa versa"* (initial scenario Sept 2009).

6.5 Revisited responses

The PSTs were asked the same question five months later. Some PSTs suggested the same responses while twice as many PSTs suggested that they would enforce a rule to pass to everyone on the team before they could shoot. Four PST stated they would separate the teams by ability, one stated they would do the same as the teacher in the scenario and another stated they would enforce a rule that a girl must score every second basket.

Some PSTs provided different responses from their previous responses. Three of the PSTs suggested they would have smaller teams, *“Make the games smaller and make the teams more balanced so that if there’s maybe one skilled player on each team and may be three a side so you can’t really dominate the ball as much”* (Ken, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Shannon had the idea of making the games 3v2 to reduce the number of passing options, *“ I suppose well if there doing basketball they could stay playing a game but maybe break it down into I suppose do you know just from what we are learning about is 3 v 2s or. Where at least they only have to options to pass to like its not as if there are five or six options and that if there playing five against five or something like that where there would be four options. Cutting down the options means people get more passes of the ball”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Elaine shared two options she would use, *“I would get the students to split into groups of four with the skilled and less skilled players mixed and have the teams have to pass it to each person on the team before a shot was taken, or I would put half the team as defenders and half as offenders so that the defenders would get the chance to try score and then switch defenders and offenders half way through the game”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

Two PSTs suggested they would set up different games so the students could choose which game they would like to participate in. Mark stated he would set up one recreational game and one competitive game, *“Maybe, maybe if that wasn’t working or something I could try like remember there in the first semester we were talking about you could have like one recreational game and one competitive game. So you*

could just say to the lads if you want to you know, this one will be competitive and if you just want to play for fun like you can play here. So therefore like you can have people playing for fun like” (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ann stated she would “*Set up three different courts, one that is competitive, one to develop skills (focus on a skill as opposed to scoring), one for recreation. This allows the students to decide which group they would be most comfortable in and therefore they will be more likely to enjoy the lesson*” (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

6.6 Proposed student learning with respect to PSTs’ reconfiguration of the scenario initial responses

The third question PSTs were asked was ‘What implications do you believe your decisions have on student learning in this class?’ Six of the PSTs believed that after enforcing the suggestions, from above, they would increase participation in their class, “*This ensures everyone’s inclusion in the game and discourages people from stepping back or taking over. People can participate without feeling like a nuisance and getting in the way*” (Ann, initial scenario Sept 2009). The PSTs stated there would be greater participation and enjoyment in the games, “*I think the decisions I made would allow everybody to take part and learn as a community in an enjoyable way. Nobody would feel left out and this is very important*” (Ben, initial scenario Sept 2009).

Two PSTs stated the students in their class would be a lot happier and would enjoy physical education. Ken contemplated a negative implication from what he decided to do with the class, “*A feeling of tension or disappointment to the players in the less elite teams as they may feel they are better than what I’m giving them credit for*” (initial scenario Sept 2009). Marie believed the implication of her decisions would be increased learning in his class. Shannon stated her students would learn to work as a team and to respect each other. Sean was conscious of the message he would be sending to students if he chose not to mix the girls and boys, “*You would be teaching them that sometimes its better not to mix lads and girls and sometimes it is. You would be teaching them that they have a better chance of participation if they are with their own sexes*” (initial scenario Sept 2009).

6.7 Revisited responses

The second responses from the PSTs were focused on similar responses to the initial answers. The PSTs stated that their decisions would increase participation, *“all the less skilled players they wouldn’t be afraid, like they also would see more of the ball like I mean if you had ten people to say you weren’t great well they would see more of the ball and they would have more enjoyment out of it because they would be scoring more shots. They would be more important players (...) whereas other players would just drag them along (...) But like that situation going on there with five or six people having fun and no one else, like that’s wrong like. I think a lot more people would be interested in class and would turn up and be more physically educated like”* (Mark, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

The PSTs also stated their decisions would increase the enjoyment and interest within their classes, *“I think a lot more students would be interested like because as I said if they’re playing with people of their own level and that they would have a lot more interest and if they’re happier playing PE they’re going to want to come again do you know”* (Mark, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Shannon and Ann stated their students would learn to work as a team as a result of their decisions, *“ well I think that if there is two options and if they have to pass like if they want to succeed they will have to pass it or if you put something on that before you can score you must pass then if they are to succeed they have to work over all as a team”* (Shannon, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral) and *“They will learn that it is not all about winning-it is about working as an entire team to be successful in their task. Also when everybody is involved they will see the potential of students who would otherwise stand back from the action”* (Ann, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Ben and Sean suggested their students would have increased activity levels in their classes. Ann and Ken stated they would be teaching their students that gender and ability does not matter when splitting up teams, *“It shows students that ability doesn’t matter in P.E class, that everybody can enjoy the activity once they are willing to try and get involved. They will also be more relaxed and in turn become more efficient in the skill”* (Ann, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Shannon stated the initial situation in the scenario would not encourage student learning, *“I suppose if you were to let the first scenario go the way it was kids probably just, they’d learn from exactly what they would be learning in the*

play ground or they wouldn't really be learning. They would just be doing what they could do at a training session or anything else" (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

6.8 Modules that informed PSTs' answers

In asking the PSTs if there was anything they had learned in their modules that had informed their answers, one particular module was referenced, *"it was the foundations of becoming a PE teacher. I think it was PY4031, we talked a lot about that do you know, this exact situation and that is where I got it from. There was one kind of competitive game and one recreational game is what they said. I think that, obviously if you asked me this four or five months ago I would have said a different opinion completely like. I think that really, that's just true like. Makes sense... But like mainly just the PE modules like, the PY4031"* (Mark, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Mary found the teaching placement within the 'Foundations of Teaching' module to be very influential in her answers, *"yea I suppose like do you know when we went out on primary placement like you defiantly learn stuff... they were the two main modules, mainly the foundations of teaching though because we focused on more the teaching aspect and like especially when you went out on placement and applied it. You could defiantly see it, do you know that it was very important to mix up the, like the genders and the abilities"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Shannon stated she learned most of the information from the 'Foundation of Teaching' module, *"I suppose last semester in the, for the foundations of becoming a PE teacher that was where we got the, the first I suppose slice of it that the information we would be given and its primarily the same they're just building on it"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

Other PSTs stated the games module influenced their answers, *"I suppose everything like, like you remember been, were doing our games module and its kind of how to divide teams and its trying not to, different ways of dividing teams where you don't have the strong players all together and stuff like that and how important it is for every kid to have a touch of the ball and just to develop their own I suppose confidence in them selves but also their skill level as well"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ken had observed that in the games module different lecturers split teams

up in different ways, *“This semester I suppose were doing soccer and all that, depends really on the, who’s teaching us like. Like one person will say it’s ok to split us into girls go here and boys go here. Other teachers will insist on a girl and a boy and other people kind of just what ever way it is, just randomly do it. There’s all different methods for doing it but I don’t know which is the best really. I suppose the random is probably the best. But some teachers go girl boy and others go girls over here and boys over here”*. Elaine stated the games module influenced her because it introduced her to different skills and drills, *“well were doing games module now so were seeing different ways that you can teach games. You know you don’t have to teach them in the old traditional ways. Lots of different skills and drills you can do”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ben further supported the informative nature of the games module, *“in PY4032-Applied Studies in Games & Gymnastics I have been taught how to adapt lessons for varied abilities, we have been informed that you should never let captains choose teams to avoid humiliation. Lesson adaptations have been outlined in all modules though and how to choose an appropriate lesson with regard to the students’ abilities and their level of performance”* (Ben, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

Three PSTs stated that the outdoor education module influenced their responses, experiencing how to divide teams and the use of co-operation, *“yea there’s definitely like the, our PE em, our PE modules like outdoor education or what ever like they teach you all about what you’d do and stuff like in situations like that, like if say one student was struggling or what ever like, what to do basically. Everything really that I have learnt in them”* (Marie, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ken stated that his responses were informed by the HRA module.

6.9 Changes between initial and second responses

PSTs were asked to revisit their initial responses after responding to the scenario for a second time and identify any differences in their responses. The majority of the PSTs were able to identify differences. Ann noted that she did not say anything about teamwork in her initial answer, *“yea I didn’t say anything here [in first one] about how it’s about teamwork you know like your, in my second one I said it’s about you*

know its not all about winning, you know I just said here [in the first on] about, about the individual. But here [in the second one] I was kind of saying more about the team situation do you know that they will realise its not all about winning its about working together to achieve a common goal and how if they all work together they will be successful and they will become more competent and efficient in the skill when they're working together" (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ken reflected that he had suggested splitting the teams up by ability in his initial response and noted that in his revisited response he would mix the teams and would have fewer students on each team. Ann perceived her second responses as different from her initial answers, *"Well what I said, I kind of said this again but the way. What I said was here [in first on]I said that people can participate without feeling like a nuisance and getting in the way but here [in the second one] I was kind of more talking about how they kind of, you know, the stronger players would see that the so called weaker players. The people that were stepping back that they're actually better than they thought and as well people become more competent in the skill because you know they are more comfortable in the situation so they don't feel like they're getting in the way or that they're a nuisance. They're kind of you know they're helping the team and they're all working together as opposed to a few people taking over "* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ben noted that in his second response he, *"realised that not everyone is enjoying the game but I also said that their perception of P.E as a whole would be seriously affected and this is a problem"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

Four of the PSTs reflected that there was little or no change in their responses, *"my answers were fairly similar but I think that I have changed my ideas on how to adapt a lesson"* (Ben, revisited scenario Feb 2010 written). Marie stated that while her responses were not the exact same her ideas were similar. Mark and Shannon interpreted their responses as being identical in revisiting the scenario. Mark was shocked with the responses he had given to the initial scenario, *"Yea I didn't think that I would have said that now at all... No I said in the original situation said there would be hardly anyone in the class happy and a lot of the less, players with less ability would be excluded. Then I said I would set up one between more competitive players and one for just kind of fun and then the third point was a lot more students would be happier playing like"* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

6.10 PSTs' reasoning for why/why not changes have occurred in their responses

Four of the PSTs stated that their answers changed because they are applying what they have been taught in their modules, *“Yea it’s because, you see we got the option to do it in practical settings as well you know it’s not just we sat down and read it out of a book we get to actually go and do it and get to see how it’s done and what, what’s the outcomes of the different ways of doing it you know so I suppose just reading it you actually get to actually see it for yourself”* (Ann, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ken suggested, *“I don’t know maybe it’s just because we just done it so many times like. I’m just so used to putting them into small games and boys and girls mixed and all this kind of stuff”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Ben suggested the slight changes in his responses were as a result of peer teaching, *“I think that now that I have gone through first semester I am better equipped to handle this scenario as a result of peer teaching and receiving feedback on how to adapt a classroom better”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 written).

Other PSTs believed their answers have changed because they are now more familiar with the teaching of physical education, *“well I kinda thought there would be but you know sub concisely I thought of these answers I didn’t have to think about it I just , its more natural to me do you know because it’s just what were being taught over and over again so. Whereas here [in first one] I had to think about the answers and I was kind of just trying to make it up. Whereas this is [the second one] just I’ve been shown this is the right way to do it, you know this is one of the options you can use or what ever”* (Ann, revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Mary stated the change may be due to having learned a lot about teaching, *“yea I’d say definitely changed a lot probably because you know before I was only kind of, I was going, like I didn’t, like I was going into the course but I didn’t know exactly but now like when your in it you learn so much along the way about teaching”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral).

The four PSTs who stated there was little or no change in their responses provided other reasons to explain this. Mark suggested the 'Foundation of Teaching' module reinforced his beliefs, providing a theoretical base to what he already believed and so encouraged his beliefs to remain intact. Mark also stated his past experiences were

another reason his answers did not change, *“Yea yea I’d say because of a lot of like, a lot is your own experience like. PE was obviously like my favourite subject and so we know and as we know, as I said being good at sport and bad at sport do you know so you would know a lot from your own experience and what would work and what wouldn’t work like”* (revisited scenario Fen 2010 oral). Marie reported that the basic ideas behind the responses are always going to be related to your disposition, *“well I think that it’s kind of a basic idea like you know and whereas I did learn like different ways how to change it or what ever. I think that the idea behind it is, is pretty similar like”* (revisited scenario Feb 2010 oral). Shannon stated there was no change in her responses because of her experience in coaching, suggesting that her experience with children may have helped to formulate her answers.

6.11 Discussion

It is critical we prepare new teachers to move beyond their own personal views and experiences of teaching and learning to bring a wider body of knowledge and experiences to bear on how best to help students learn (O’ Sullivan, et al. 2009). Most studies have found that PSTs’ attitudes and beliefs did not change and if they did, it was only slightly (Doolittle et al 1993; Matanin & Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). Most of the PSTs in this study saw changes from their initial and revisited responses.

The PSTs’ responses to the first question were focused around the ideas of separating the students, dominating students taking over the class and the exclusion of the ‘weaker’ students. However, in the revisited responses, the PSTs were more focused on how the students in their class would be feeling and the implications that could occur within the class. The PSTs went beyond what was actually happening and concentrated on the students in the class. In the second question a few of the PSTs’ revisited responses were similar to their initial response. A few PSTs had changed their answers and stated they would organise the learning experience differently by making teams smaller, organising different game situations and letting the students decide which game they would prefer to participate in. PSTs implied that such ideas had arisen from their involvement in the programme’s modules. Again PSTs’

responses focused on their students, involving them in the decision making process and providing them with smaller teams so they would experience more time on the ball. The third question was very similar for both the initial and revisited responses with Shannon the only PST who had a different response discussing how the way the class is taught would affect student learning.

The PSTs were asked which modules, from the twelve modules they have studied across the two semesters (a total of six physical education related modules), helped inform their answers. Four modules emerged, 'Foundations of Teaching and Learning', 'Applied Studies in Games', 'Applied Studies in Outdoor Adventure Education' and 'Applied studies in Health Related Activity' (HRA). The two modules that seemed to have the biggest impact were the 'Foundations of Teaching and Learning' and 'Applied Studies in Games' modules, the same two modules that arose as the most relevant modules in the student interviews (chapter 5).

Six of the PSTs saw changes in their responses. These changes were: talking about teamwork and changing their whole second answer to mixing the teams and making the teams smaller. The PSTs answers also changed to realising the students in the class would not enjoy physical education and that their physical education would be affected. The four modules above had helped inform the PSTs responses and encouraged a change in their responses in revisiting the scenario. Four of the PSTs saw little or no change in their responses. While Ben read his answers as similar but stated his ideas on how to adapt a lesson had changed, Marie noted that her answers were not the exact same but her ideas were similar.

When asked why they think the changes had occurred, four of the PSTs stated they were applying what they had been taught in their physical education modules. Other PSTs reported being more familiar with the teaching of physical education. These PSTs have taken on board what they have learnt in their modules and applied it to a situation within a physical education class.

The PSTs whose responses did not change were asked why they thought they had not changed. Mark believed the foundation of teaching module had reinforced his beliefs and that his past experiences had informed his answers. Marie believed that the basic

ideas behind the responses were always going to be there. Shannon stated her experience of coaching and working with children helped to formulate her responses. According to Tsangaridou (2006), individuals' beliefs can be deeply ingrained and neither teacher education nor teaching experiences are believed to significantly alter them. Mark's and Shannon's past experiences seem to have been more influential than the PETE programme, perhaps due to the type and level of sport and physical activity engaged in by PSTs (Curther-Smith 1999). O' Sullivan, et al. (2009) believe it is important for teacher educators to design experiences and tasks that bring these beliefs to the surface and provide opportunities for PSTs to challenge and reflect on their beliefs.

Chapter six looked at the PSTs' responses to a teaching scenario and investigated if their responses changed throughout their first year on a PETE programme. The final chapter (chapter seven) will combine all six chapters and will provide conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from this study.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This study focused on examining ten first year PSTs' reasons for choosing to enter a PETE programme and their attitudes and beliefs about physical education and the PETE programme. The study sought to address the following research questions:

- (1) What are the interests and dispositions that motivated pre-service teachers to enrol in a physical education teacher education programme?
- (2) What are pre-service teachers' perception of the field and are changing perceptions attributed to their PETE experiences and opportunities?

This chapter presents conclusions from the analysed data and subsequent connections to related literature. A number of recommendations for those involved in PETE, and for significant others such as family, physical education teachers and guidance councillors involved with (potential) PSTs, are also presented.

7.2 The significant influence of interest in sport on PSTs' decision to enter PETE

PSTs' interest in sport has been reported to have significantly influenced their decision to enter PETE programmes (Placek et al 1991; Zounhia et al 2006; O' Sullivan et al. 2009), with PSTs wanting to continue an association with something they love. From this study's cohort of PSTs (evidenced across the five year survey data and from interviews with ten PSTs) most decisions to enter PETE have been influenced by interest in sport. The majority of the ten PSTs' timelines consisted of comments on sport and their interest and participation in sport with the PSTs participating in sport at a high-level. Participating in competitive sport and recreational physical activity, and spectating at sporting events, were the main

recreational interests of the PSTs. This was verified when the ten PSTs found it difficult to state other pastimes they were involved in outside of physical activity.

Three of the female PSTs conveyed an evolving disposition towards teaching. Ann had always had a strong desire towards teaching and this was evident from the initial interview. During initial interviews, Mary and Elaine hinted at a disposition towards teaching and stated they were influenced by their interest in sport. Interestingly, at the end of their first year in the PETE programme, Mary and Elaine stated teaching as the main influence on their decision to enter PETE and interest in sport as a secondary influence.

7.3 The influence of significant others on PSTs' entrance into PETE

Related to Lortie's (1975) facilitators to teaching as an occupation, the 'influence of significant others' (parents, other family members, coaches, teachers and friends) emerges most often as a PST's reason for choosing to enter PETE (Dodds et al 1993; O' Bryant et al., 2000; Matanim & Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). Internationally, the influence of significant others does not appear to be as prominent as Lortie's (1975) 'continuation theme' (Hutchinson 1993; O' Bryant et al 2000; Matanim & Collier 2003; Zounhia et al 2006; O' Sullivan et al. 2009), 'interpersonal theme' (Placek et al 1991; Darling-Hammond & Sclan 1996; Curtner-Smith 1997; O Bryant, et al. 2000; Clarke 2009) or 'service theme' (Mulling et al 1982; Richardson 1996; Clarke 2009). From this study's cohort of PSTs the influence of significant others appears to be as influential as the continuation theme and more influential than the interpersonal and service theme. O' Sullivan, et al. (2009) found the influence of significant others to have a major impact on a cohort of Irish PSTs, acknowledging that in an Irish context significant others have a major impact on the PSTs' decision to enter the programme.

The significant others who had consistently influenced the 2009 cohort of ten PSTs' decision to enrol on a PETE programme were family, physical education teachers and guidance councillors. PSTs reported that they had been influenced through significant others being responsible for developing their interest in physical activity or teaching,

informing them that teaching was something they would enjoy and could do well, introducing them to the idea of physical education teaching, and inspiring them as role models.

7.4 Occupational choice

As reported in chapter 2, Ginzberg et al. (1951) stated three stages in an individual's decision to choosing an occupation, the 'fantasy period', 'tentative period' and 'realistic period'. There is evidence of the three stages being experienced by the ten PSTs but it is not evident if they were experienced in a linear fashion. Some PSTs stated interest in sport as their only influence for choosing to enter PETE and conveyed no reality of what a career in physical education would entail. Some of these PSTs admitted to entering the programme because it would be an easy job or because they wanted to be outdoors and not in an office, both expectations that align with the fantasy period.

Some PSTs realised that they had entered a teaching profession and that interest in sport was not sufficient for their choice of career. There were three PSTs who were influenced by teaching from the beginning and it is clear that they experienced the tentative period. By the end of the first year of the programme, other PSTs' comments implied they had experienced the tentative period, gaining a strong commitment to their career choice and stating that they wanted to change the way physical education was being taught in schools.

Some PSTs had decided that they wanted to be physical education teachers and had chosen the correct career pathway (realistic period), while others were "not sure" if they wanted to be physical education teachers and had realised, as the programme progressed, that they had chosen the right career path. While some PSTs were conscious to some extent of what was ahead of them as practicing teachers, other PSTs were unsure if they wanted to be physical education teachers, having not engaged with what their role as a qualified physical education teacher would entail.

7.5 PSTs' perspectives on the PETE programme

It is not yet clear the extent to which PSTs value or understand the learning experiences they undertook during the first year of the programme. Any differences in the beliefs of the PSTs may have little to do with the programme and may be the entering beliefs of the PSTs (Doolittle et al 1993; Matanin & Collier 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). As expected, the PSTs initial responses to the teaching scenarios presented in the first week were brief yet informative. In revisiting the same teaching scenarios three months later, PSTs provided richer responses, with some evidence that they had understood content covered or at least recalled content shared in modules.

7.6 Recommendations

7.6.1 Recruitment of suitable PETE candidates

It is important to inform potential PETE candidates that more than an interest in sport is required to be an effective physical education teacher, with an interest in teaching being imperative. PETE candidates need to have an interest in working with young people and in promoting a healthy lifestyle and lifelong physical activity. It is important for those involved in PETE, such as lecturers and programme administrators, to disseminate appropriate information that will realistically inform the choices made by potential PETE candidates. I am not implying that these PSTs will not be effective physical education teachers but it is important for the PSTs to realise they are entering a teaching profession and that a desire to teach is sought-after.

If interviews are used to assess the beliefs and attitudes of potential candidates, those involved in PETE can recruit candidates who not only have a commitment to becoming a physical education teacher but also support the beliefs and philosophical orientations of the PETE programme (Collier 2006). The Irish medical profession have introduced aptitude tests to recruit suitable candidates into the profession. The aptitude test allows those candidates, who may not have received sufficient Leaving Certificate points, to enter the profession. It has also prevented candidates who have

achieved the high points, but may not have the required disposition for the profession, from entering. The introduction of an aptitude test to the teaching profession would allow some form of screening to identify those most likely to have, or develop, a disposition towards effective teaching. There are some barriers in implementing such interviews or aptitude tests. They will be expensive to run and will require more administration on the PETE staff. Interviews or tests may not suit all PSTs and so may be seen as biased toward certain PSTs.

7.6.2 The acknowledgement and accommodation of PSTs' likely interests and strengths

Acknowledging the dominance of sport in influencing PSTs' decision to become a physical education teacher, it may be prudent for PETE programmes to accommodate this interest in the very first semester, drawing on PSTs' expertise in particular sports and their exposure to coaching. This could help gain the PSTs' interests and introduce them on how best to incorporate their interest in sport to teaching physical education. Acknowledging and using the PSTs' energy and interest in physical activity to connect directly and immediately with these candidates and acknowledge these interests formally in early modules has been alluded to previously (O'Sullivan et al. 2009), incorporating Loughran's (2006) idea of learning first about subject content and then learning how best to teach it to others in their PETE programme. Acknowledging the sporting influence from the beginning of the PETE programme may also encourage PSTs to consider the links between schools, clubs and the community in striving to promote active lifestyles.

7.6.3 Relationship between school physical education teachers and PETE programmes

Physical education teachers had a significant influence on some of the PSTs in this study and it is imperative that physical education teachers realise they are role models for some of their students who choose to embark on a PETE programme. The relationship between school physical education teachers and the PETE programme needs to be such that physical education teachers are familiar with the PETE programme of study and what is expected from PSTs. Physical education teachers should also be encouraged to feed back to programmes on evolving areas of

knowledge / expertise that the PETE programme should be pursuing in the hope of preparing PSTs for the reality of teaching in schools.

7.6.4 Application and relevance of the PETE programme

PSTs need to be made aware of the application of the learning experiences they undertake during the programme. It is important to reinforce the relevance of what PSTs are experiencing as they may not always pay due attention to information if they do not understand its relevance to the practice of teaching. It is important to inform and qualify for the PSTs in their entry to the programme the aims and philosophy of the programme, along with what they will be experiencing over the four years, focusing particularly on their first year of study. This should be revisited at the start of every academic year to dissolve any disillusion of the programme.

Perhaps a formalised teaching practice in first year would allow the PSTs to experience teaching to clarify or disband a PST's uncertainty about their decision to become a physical education teacher. The early teaching practice may also provide evidence to those involved in delivering the PETE programme on the extent to which the PSTs understand what they have learned during their PETE programme by putting it into practice.

PSTs' enter the programme with a limited exposure to the intent of the programme and related content and as early as the end of the first semester are beginning to be inspired and incorporating knowledge into their responses to teaching physical education. Not all PSTs appreciate the programme or they do not remit or remain partial to the intent of the programme. There was a consistency of interest in sport and the influence of significant others on the PSTs' to entering a PETE programme.

Epilogue

In investigating a group of ten first year PSTs, I looked back to my undergraduate experience and, if I am being honest, from what these ten first year PSTs are reporting I do not remember my first year being so inspiring. These PSTs seem to have been inspired by their 'foundations of teaching' module and their 'games' module. In my first semester I only remember the swimming module and HRA module having an impact on me because they were fun and I had never experienced either activity before. The 'foundations of teaching' module was not part of the programme at that time and from interviewing the students I wish it had been as they had clearly gained a lot of knowledge and understanding from this module.

We did have a games module during our second semester of first year but I remember it being forced and uninspiring rather what appears now to be an experience that informs PSTs on how to teach the games rather than learning only the rules and the skills. It appears that the focus of all the modules has changed to how to teach rather than just doing the activities which makes sense as PSTs are learning to be teachers. I think it does have a lot to do with the teaching of the module and, as the literature reports, it has a lot to do with the beliefs of the lecturers. It is their decision at the end of the day how and what they teach in their modules. I do not believe that after my first year I was set up for teaching. I did not know how to teach after my first year, I was not confident being in front of people and my content knowledge was not the best.

There were some modules later on in the programme that did impact on me. The module on adaptations had an influence on me because it made sense to be able to make an activity easier or harder depending on the students. The practical modules did have an impact on me but I do wish some of them were more focused on how you teach than on me perfecting my skills.

My fourth year teaching practice was when everything came together. I had learnt from my second year teaching practice and I was also out there on my own. My confidence grew a lot in my fourth year and I had matured, but I do not think I really

knew what I was doing and how confident I was until I entered my first year teaching. Entering the real world I realised how tough teaching was and how little respect there is in some schools for physical education. I was teaching PLC students for my first year while there were other teachers teaching physical education in the school who were not qualified physical education teachers. All the students played were handball and soccer and all the teachers did was stand there and look at them. I experienced one of the teacher's 'athletics day' for first and second years. It was a disgrace, it was all over the place and students were standing around for ages doing nothing, making me realise there are terrible teachers out there and they are ruining the perception of physical education. No wonder many students hate physical education. We cannot expect the status of physical education to increase when physical education is not being taught properly.

This year has been very worthwhile. I have matured a great deal and my interest and passion for physical education has grown. I have learnt more about physical education and especially PSTs and physical education teachers. From my review of literature I have learnt that some PSTs go through their four years of teacher education and they pick and choose what they learn from their modules. They take on board the information that coincides with their beliefs and ignore the information that does not. When I was reading this I could not help but wonder did I block out some parts of the programme because it did not agree with my beliefs or attitudes about physical education and how much did I really take on board. It is important for PSTs to talk and think about what their ideal of physical education is. They could go through their four years of teacher education and not really understand what they believe about physical education. This experience has really enlightened me as to what my beliefs and attitudes about physical education are. I would recommend any PETE graduate to undertake a research masters in physical education. It is a very insightful and useful year. This year has helped me to realise that it is important for all students to get the most out of their physical education class. It has opened my eyes and I will be a better teacher for doing this year.

I have secured a teaching job and have returned to the classroom. I enjoy teaching and I find it very rewarding. I believe that my year of research helped me to secure the job

and it has also prepared me for the return to the classroom. It has helped me to be a lot more organised and I know that teaching is where I want to be.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Educational Discourse Survey

Appendix B

Attitudes about Physical Education Survey

Appendix C

Initial Interview Protocol

Student interview schedule – UL Year 1 students (2009-2010)

Expectations about studying physical education prior to coming to UL

How did you find out about the PE course at UL?

What did you think the PE course would be about?

Is it meeting your expectations? Why / why not?

Interests / motivations

Did you do PE at school? Did you do it every year?

Were you given the option to do PE at school?

What did you like / dislike about school PE?

Were you involved in competitive sport at school? Are you now? Which sports?

What attracted you to the PE course at UL?

What attracted you to UL as an institution?

Why did you choose to enter the BSc PE course? (Prompts: interest / ability in sport; career interests; teaching / coaching)

Relationships

What do you see as relevant / irrelevant in PE at UL?

How does this shape your interest in PE?

What do you see as the key issues to be addressed in PE in schools?

To what extent is the PE course addressing these?

How are your experiences in the PE course at UL matching or following on from your experience of PE at school? (Prompts: similarities / differences / conflicts in emphasis or content)

Timeline

Take a moment to refamiliarise yourself with your timeline. Please talk me through what your timeline conveys about how you came to be studying PE at UL.

Is there anything else related to what we have discussed that you feel is relevant to note?

Appendix D

Scenario Interview Protocol

Scenario Interview Protocol with first year PSTs 2010

- 1) What do you think is happening in this scenario and what are the implications for what students are learning about physical education?

- 2) If you were the teacher in this scenario, what would you do and why?

- 3) What implications do you believe your decisions have on student learning in this class?

- 4) Is there anything you have learned in your modules up to this point that has informed your answer? Which modules?

- 5) What has changed within your answers?

- 6) Why do you think your answers have or have not changed?

Appendix E

Final Interview Protocol

Final year Interview with first year PST (2010)

1. How would you explain your own lifestyle with respect to your levels of physical activity and dietary habits?
2. What other pastimes do you have outside of physical activity?
3. How important is it that you become confident in promoting a physically active and healthy lifestyle to young people?
4. I was interested in the previous comments relating to the extent to which family and significant others influenced your decision to study physical education. Can I ask you to recall the individuals who influenced you to apply for this programme?
5. **Only Ken and Mark-** When you were asked in the surveys at the start of the year you were asked why you had selected an undergraduate physical education course. You chose “I thought it would be an interesting subject to study while I make up my mind about what career I would like to pursue”. What prompted you to choose this answer? What is your reasoning?
6. What modules have been most relevant/ least relevant to your understanding of teaching physical education and why?
7. What were your expectations of the course? What do you believe are the personal and educational attributes required to become an effective physical education teacher?
8. What do you perceive the role of a physical education teacher to be today in schools?
9. To what extent has this course shaped your interest in physical education?
10. What do you see as the key issues to be addressed in PE in schools?
11. To what extent is the PE course addressing these?
12. To what extent did interest in sport/PE influence you to apply for this programme more or less so than other influences?

Appendix F

Layout of Timeline

Appendix G

Survey Data

	All 5 year groups	2003	2005	2007	2008	2009
Sex	Female (52%) Male (48%)	Female (55%) Male (45%)	Female (51%) Male (49%)	Female (51%) Male (49%)	Female (55%) Male (45%)	Female (49%) Male (51%)
Age	17-20 (87%) 21-24 (9%) 25-28 (3%) Over 28 (1%)	17-20 (87%) 21-24 (9%) 25-28 (4%)	17-20 (89%) 21-24 (8%) 25-28 (2%)	17-20 (81%) 21-24 (14%) 25-28 (3%) Over 28 (1%)	17-20 (88%) 21-24 (6%) 25-28 (4%) Over 28 (2%)	17-20 (89%) 21-24 (6%) 25-28 (2%) Over 28 (3%)
Nationality	Irish (98%)	Irish (100%)	Irish (100%)	Irish (96%)	Irish (90%) American (4%)	Irish (100%)
Mothers occupation	Homemaker (23%) Teacher (14%) Secretary (8%)	Homemaker (36%) Nurse (12%) Teacher (8%)	Homemaker (24%) Teacher (15%) Nurse (9%)	Homemaker (13%) Teacher (13%) Secretary (10%)	Homemaker (22%) Teacher (20%)	Homemaker (16%) Teacher (16%)
Fathers occupation	Farmer (19%)	Farmer (13%)	Farmer (21%) Teacher (8%)	Farmer (13%)	Farmer (24%)	Farmer (23%)
Electives	Maths (37%) Geography (28%) Irish (18%) English (10%) Chemistry (8%)	Maths (33%) Geography (30%) Irish (16%) English (13%) Chemistry (7%)	Geography (30%) Maths (27%) Irish (25%) Chemistry (11%) English (7%)	Maths (44%) Geography (31%) Irish (14%) English (9%) Chemistry (1%)	Maths (46%) English (18%) Geography (18%) Irish (10%) Chemistry (8%)	Maths (40%) Geography (27%) Irish (19%) Chemistry (11%) English (3%)
First preference	Yes (83%) No (17%)	Yes (80%) No (20%)	Yes (87%) No (13%)	Yes (84%) No (16%)	Yes (90%) No (10%)	Yes (73%) No (27%)
CAO entry points	-----	480	480	475	475	500
CAO points Average	480	485	480	485	485	500
Highest	590	550	590	575	575	575
Lowest	225	330	325	395	395	340

Table 4.1 Demographics of all five year surveys

	All 10 PSTs	Ann	Mary	Ken	Barry	Mark	Ben	Sean	Shannon	Marie	Elaine
Sex	Female (5) Male (5)	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	17-20 (9) 21-24 (1)	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20	17-20	21-24	17-20	17-20
Nationality	Irish (10)	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish	Irish
Mothers Occupation	Homemaker (3) Teacher (2)	Homemaker	Homemaker	Accounts assistant	n/a	Unemployed	SNA	Homemaker	Teacher	Secretary	Teacher
Fathers Occupation	Farmer (3)	Insurance broker	Farmer	Accounts manager	Farmer	n/a	Deceased	Sea fisheries protection officer	Self-employed	Farmer	Garda
Elective	Maths (7) Irish (2) Geography (1)	Irish	Irish	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Geography	Maths	Maths
First Preference	Yes (7) No (3)	No Primary with Psychology	Yes	Yes	No Physiotherapy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No Physiotherapy	Yes
CAO points	490	520	520	540	515	425 (Access)	475 (Transfer)	520	340 (Mature student)	530	500

Table 4.2 Demographics of the ten pre-service teachers

	All			2009			10 PSTs		
	Influence	Moderate	No/little	Influence	Moderate	No/little	Influence	Moderate	No/little
Q.13. a Friends	32.5	26.5	39.2	30.1	30.2	36.5	30	50	20
Q.13. b Family	52.5	28.6	16.8	66.6	22.2	7.9	70	20	10
Q.13. c Guidance counsellors	21.5	26.5	49.8	28.6	25.4	42.8	30	20	50
Q.13. d Physical education teachers	55.9	14.7	28	60.3	11.1	25.4	50	10	40
Q.13. e PESS advertising and promotion	12.9	18.6	65.5	14.3	23.8	58.7	30	40	30
Q.13. f Interest in sport/physical activity	97.3	1.2	0.3	98.4	0	0	100	0	0
Q.13. g Interest in healthy lifestyles	87.9	8.8	1.8	97.3	3.2	1.6	100	0	0
Q.13. h Interest in sports science	62.6	23.6	12.3	66.6	23.8	7.9	70	30	0
Q.13. i Interest in physical activity in society	82.9	11.8	2.1	88.9	9.5	0	90	10	0

Table 4.3 Please indicate how influential individuals or reasons were in your decision to pursue physical education.

	All	2009	10 PSTs
Q.14. a Physical education teaching	80.8	81	70
Q.14. b Health and fitness industry	4.1	1.6	10
Q.14. c Exercise and sports psychology	2.1	3.2	0
Q.14. d postgraduate work or second degree	3.5	1.6	0
Q.14. e Interesting to study while make up mind	5	9.5	20

Table 4.4 I have selected an undergraduate physical education course because I would like to pursue a career in:

	All			2009			10 PSTs		
	Regularly	Sometimes	No/little	Regularly	Sometimes	No/little	Regularly	Sometimes	No/little
Q.15. a Competitive sport	93.2	5	1.2	98.4	0	0	100	0	0
Q.15. b Recreational physical activity	81.4	15.6	0.6	80.9	12.7	1.6	70	30	0
Q.15. c Spectating at sports events	73.5	19.8	5.6	76.2	17.5	4.8	80	20	0
Q.15. d Computers	8.3	29.5	60.5	6.3	36.5	55.6	10	40	50
Q.15. e Going to the cinema	20.9	42.8	35.1	17.5	44.4	36.5	10	50	40
Q.15. f Having drinks with friends	55.2	28	16.2	47.6	39.7	11.1	30	60	10
Q.15. g Going to parties	42.4	38.1	18.6	34.9	47.6	15.9	20	60	20
Q.15. h Reading	28.1	32.2	38.6	17.6	34.9	46.1	10	20	70
Q.15. i Attending church	36.3	24.5	38	31.8	23.8	42.8	40	10	50
Q.15. j Youth group activities	13.8	21.5	62.8	15.9	22.2	57.2	20	10	70
Q.15. k Musical instrument/singing/choir	18.9	10.6	69.6	15.8	12.7	69.9	20	20	60
Q.15. l Eating out with friends/going to cafes	31.5	32.4	34.8	28.6	31.7	38.1	40	20	40
Q.15. m Watching television	49	30.4	19.7	68.3	39.7	17.5	30	40	30
Q.15. n Theatre company	3	7.4	87.3	1.6	1.6	93.7	0	0	100
Q.15. o Volunteer community organisation	16.8	18	63.7	15.9	23.8	58.7	10	10	80
Q.15. p Attending concerts	18.6	33.9	46.3	9.5	31.7	57.2	20	40	40
Q.15. q Attending theatre productions	3.9	12.4	82	0	3.2	95.2	0	10	90
Q.15. r Shopping	41.9	30.1	26.8	28.6	41.3	28.5	30	40	30
Q.15. s Family outings	36.9	36.9	24.8	32.7	39.7	27	20	60	20
Q.15. t Creative art work	7.4	9.4	81.7	11.1	3.2	84.1	0	0	100
Q.15. u Walking the dog	18.9	18	61.6	17.4	23.8	57.1	30	30	40

Table 4.5 What are your main recreational interests?

	All			2009			10 PSTs		
	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
Q.16. a A slender body is a fit body	9.8	21.2	68.4	14.3	27	57.2	20	10	70
Q.16. b All PE students are good at sport	12.7	20.9	65.7	11.1	19	69.8	0	10	90
Q.16. c Sports women should receive the same prize money as sports men	85.2	8.3	5.9	82.6	14.3	3.2	70	20	10
Q.16. d Homosexuals should be banned from team sport	1.5	3.8	94.4	0	6.3	93.7	0	0	100
Q.16. e Participation in sport does not require a great deal of intellectual ability	30.1	17.8	49.5	36.5	22.2	41.2	30	30	40
Q.16. f Leading a healthy lifestyle is a personal choice	86.1	8.6	5	85.7	11.1	3.2	60	40	0
Q.16. g A muscular body is most attractive to me	23	36.6	39.8	23.8	39.7	36.5	40	20	40
Q.16. h Performance enhancing drugs should be legalised	2.1	5.3	92.3	1.6	1.6	96.9	0	0	100
Q.16. i Men will always be better at sport than women	25.4	20.1	54.6	23.8	23.8	52.4	10	30	60
Q.16. j Not everyone is capable of leading a healthy lifestyle	35.7	17.4	46.9	27	14.3	58.7	30	10	60
Q.16. k Sport is accessible for all people in Ireland	48.6	23.9	26.8	46	25.4	28.6	50	20	30
Q.16. l Becoming an elite sports person is more dependent on opportunity than ability	35.7	33.6	30.1	36.5	36.5	27	40	10	30
Q.16. m Verbal abuse of the players by fans is acceptable at a sporting event	3.3	4.7	91.8	1.6	1.6	96.8	0	0	100
Q.16. n Team games build character	94.4	2.7	2.4	95.3	1.6	3.2	90	10	0
Q.16. o Boxing is a violent sport and should be banned	7.7	25.7	65.5	3.2	20.6	76.2	0	20	80
Q.16. p You learn more about sport by doing than by watching or reading about it	85.6	7.7	5.6	87.3	6.3	6.3	100	0	0
Q.16. q I would be happy to have a gay person on my team	78.4	16.5	3.9	80.9	14.3	1.6	80	10	0
Q.16. r Sports people who use illegal drugs should be banned from competition for life	44.2	28.9	26.6	49.2	28.6	22.2	50	40	10
Q.16. s Children who play sport learn how to bend the rules	20	29.2	50.1	17.4	30.2	52.4	20	30	50
Q.16. t Exercise physiology is more important than sociology in understanding PE	13.2	65.2	20.7	7.9	74.6	15.9	0	60	40

Table 4.6 Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Appendix H

Initial interviews coding

Major Theme	Sub-Themes	Sub-Categories	Other comments
Introduction to programme	Supportive/challenging contents	Supportive contexts	Supportive contexts
		Significant others (40)	Life experiences (12)
		Family (9)	Information on programme (8)
		Guidance councillor (7)	Interests (7)
		PE teacher (7)	Like working with children/people (5)
		Friends (6)	History of teaching in family (3)
		People on programme (4)	Give back to society (2)
		Teachers (3)	
		Neighbour (3)	
		Other (1)	
		Interest in sport/physical education (23)	
		Wanted to teach (14)	
		Coaching (9)	
		Change things (7)	
		Challenging contexts	Challenging contexts

		Significant others (8)	Life experiences (4)
			Presumed for boys (1)
			Didn't want to teach (1)
	Expectations	Meeting expectations	Meeting expectations
		Meeting expectations (9)	Getting to know/meet people (2)
		Programme and content (8)	
		Not meeting expectations	Not meeting expectations
		Didn't anticipate (4)	Thought be more work (1)
		Nothing (4)	
	Programme about	Knew what to expect (5)	Improving ability (2)
		Sport (4)	Different activities (2)
		Didn't know about (4)	Different than thought would be (2)
		How to teach (3)	Sport and teaching (1)
			Didn't think much about it (1)
			Not like PE in school (1)
			More biology (1)

Interests and motivations	Post-primary school	Disliked (21)	Didn't have PE in school (3)
		PE teacher (8)	
		No variety (5)	
		Senior cycle (3)	
		Would have liked a change (2)	
		Shared PE with 3 rd years (1)	
		Wasn't long enough (1)	
		Badminton (1)	
		Liked (17)	Theory (3)
		Teacher good and fun (3)	
		Get away from classroom (2)	
		Variety of activities (2)	
		Soccer (2)	
		Burn off steam (1)	
		Junior cycle (1)	
		Great way to relax (1)	
		Interacting with friends (1)	
		Express myself (1)	

		Get exercise (1)	
		Fun (1)	
		Competitive sport (1)	
		Participating in PE (14)	Negative experience (2)
		Concentration on sport (9)	
		PE allocation (9)	
	Competitive sport	Still involved (10)	Didn't play in school (1)
		In school (9)	
		Outside school (4)	
	UL	Facilities (9)	Open day (3)
		Well established/reputation (6)	Wanted to go to UL (2)
		Campus/like a town (5)	Close to home (2)
			Friends (2)
			Access course (1)
			Central (1)
			Class bond (1)
			Wanted to do a sporty programme (1)

			Get away from Donegal (1)
			Enthusiasm of lecturers (1)
			Brother in UL (1)
	Key issues/addressing	Key issues	Key issues
		More variety (4)	Issues in school (6)
		More status (3)	PE should be about (3)
		Girls not liking PE (2)	Education system (3)
		PE is sport (2)	
		Involving everyone (2)	
		Compulsory (2)	
		Unqualified teachers (2)	
		Addressing	Addressing
		Everyone involved/fun/not competitive (5)	Stay active after school (1)
		Not yet (4)	Showing how to teach (1)
		Doing different activities/PE isn't sport (4)	Lessons on food pyramid (1)
		Adapting lessons/going to peoples levels (3)	
		Every extent (3)	

	Other programme	Primary (4)	
		Other PE programme (4)	
		Physiotherapy (2)	
		Engineering (1)	
Relationship with the program	Relevant/Irrelevant	Relevant (20)	
		Foundations of teaching (8)	
		All (5)	
		Different activities/modules (5)	
		Some games/warm ups (1)	
		Teacher education (1)	
		Irrelevant (12)	
		Nothing (6)	
		Primary school based at the start (2)	
		Dance/aquatics (2)	
		Education lectures (2)	
	Shaped interest	Changed thinking (6)	Different activities/sports (2)
		Increased interest (4)	Orienteering (2)
		More to PE (3)	

	Similarities/differences	Similarities	Similarities
		No similarities (5)	Lecturers like teachers (1)
		Same activities (2)	Some competitive games in labs (1)
		Warm-ups (2)	
		Differences	Differences
		Activities/games (6)	Unqualified teachers (2)
		Content (4)	Structure/lesson plans (2)
			Developing the student (1)
		No conflicts (2)	
Timeline	Primary school	Sport and games (2)	
		Mixed/single sex (1)	
	Changed programme	Hated it (3)	
		PE less hard work (1)	

	After choosing PE	Right choice (3)	
		Unsure (2)	
		Happy got PE (1)	

Table 5.1 Codes for beginning PST interview

Appendix I

Final interviews coding

Major theme	Sub themes	Sub categories	Other comments	
Lifestyle	Physical activity levels	Fairly active (7)		
		Very active (3)		
	Dietary habits	Healthy (6)		
		Fairly Healthy (3)		
		Bad habits (1)		
	Other pastimes	TV/films (8)	Cards (1)	
		Music (7)	Photos (1)	
		Socialising (5)		
		Reading (3)		
		Internet (3)		
	Promoting healthy lifestyle	Knowledge (7)	HRA (1)	
Participation (7)		Confidant (1)		
Job (3)				
Introduction to programme	Influences	Significant others (22)		
		Family (11)	Coach (1)	
		PE teacher (4)		
		Guidance councillor (2)		
		Friends (2)		
		Other teachers (2)		
		Interest in sport/PE (13)		
		Sport Main influence (5)	Interest in PE (1)	
		Sport slight influence (4)	Interest in PE/sport (1)	
			Sport (2)	
		Teaching (5)		
		Teaching main influence (3)		
		Teaching slight influence (2)		
			Work with children (1)	
			Change things (1)	
	Outdoors (1)			
	Study while make up my mind (2)			
Relationship with the programme	Relevant modules	Games (7)	Aquatics (2)	
		Foundations of teaching (6)	Anatomy and physiology labs (2)	
		HRA (2)		
		Outdoor education (2)		

			Education (2)
			PE modules (1)
	Least relevant modules	Physiology and anatomy (5)	Outdoor education (1)
		Sport psychology (2)	Education (1)
			Nothing (1)
	Course expectations	Sport (2)	Games and teaching (1)
		Easy course (2)	Friends and teaching (1)
			Not so much teaching (1)
			Not as hands on (1)
	Personal attributes	Aware (3)	Compassionate (1)
		Ability to teach (3)	Leader (1)
		Build trust (2)	Confidant (1)
		Role model (2)	Mentally tough (1)
		Physically fit (2)	Talkative (1)
		Communication (2)	Link (1)
		Enthusiastic (2)	Dedicated (1)
	Educational attributes	Content knowledge (2)	Pedagogy (1)
		Learning styles (2)	
	CAO points	Not all about points (5)	Not demanding (1)
		Both points and attributes (3)	Achieve certain marks (1)
	Shaped interest	Modules (6)	Inclusive (1)
		Increased interest (3)	Fell in love with course (1)
			Learn as much as can (1)
			Not shaped interest (1)
Interests and motivations	Role of PE teacher	Promote physical activity (6)	Organising (1)
		Provide opportunities (4)	Encourage students (1)
		First aid (2)	Role model (1)
		Seek more status (2)	
	Daily tasks	Teaching (6)	Status (1)
		Extra curricular (5)	First aid (1)
		Organising (4)	
	Planning	Schemes of work (2)	Sports days (1)
		Extra curricular (2)	Plan their time (1)
		Lesson plans (2)	
	Issues in PE	Participation (5)	PE in every school (1)
		Variety of activities (2)	Increase status (1)

		Exam (2)	Learning (1)
		PE teachers (2)	
		Facilities/equipment (2)	
	Course addressing issues	Providing examples (5)	Talking about it (1)
		Different modules/activities (4)	Giving PSTs knowledge (1)
	Where got issues	Course (5)	Personal experience (1)
		Course and personal (2)	

Table 5.2 Codes for final PST interviews