‘Living the curriculum’: Integrating sport education into a physical education teacher education programme

Abstract

This study recognises the paucity of research regarding how pre-service teachers learn to use Sport Education (SE) in their physical education teacher education (PETE) programmes (Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010). This study provides an experience in PETE where pre-service teachers ‘live the curriculum’ (Oslin, Collier & Mitchell, 2001) and experienced a SE season (Siedentop, 1994) as participants. Data was collected through weekly observations, researcher and lecturer reflections and interviews and focus groups with the lecturer and pre-service teachers. The results provide support for the ‘live the curriculum’ experience from the perspective of the pre-service teachers. It was indicated however that there were occasions when the lecturer was compromised between teaching through SE while teaching pre-service teachers how to teach SE in schools. It was also observed that there was a diminishing awareness of SE towards the end of the module. Recommendations for the inclusion of SE in PETE are also provided.

Introduction

With the effectiveness of Sport Education (SE) clearly foregrounded in the literature (Wallhead & O’Sullivan, 2005; Kinchin, 2006), researchers have started
to call for research to be conducted on how pre-service teachers (PSTs) learn to use SE (McCaughtry, Sofo, Rovegno & Curtner-Smith, 2004; McMahon & MacPhail, 2007). One recommendation that arose in the literature is for PETE programmes to offer PSTs an opportunity to experience a SE season in which they are a participant (Collier, 1998; Kinchin, Penny & Clarke, 2005). However, few studies have provided an analysis of these experiences and have instead given a description of the methods used with limited or no presentation of the findings of the experience (Oslin, Collier & Mitchell, 2001; Jenkins, 2004; Kinchin, Penny & Clarke, 2005).

This study provides PSTs with an experience similar to those recommended in the research, and attempts to determine the effectiveness of the experience. The findings will help support the recommendations provided in the literature and identify potential problems which may arise as a result of PSTs experiencing SE through a ‘living the curriculum’ approach.

**Model-based instruction**

PETE programmes have started to encourage their PSTs to use a variety of curriculum and instructional models (IMs) while teaching (Gurvitch, Lund & Metzler, 2008) an approach that has been identified as Model Based Instruction (MBI). Gurvitch et al. (2008) believe that having knowledge of a variety of IMs will improve teacher effectiveness. MBI presents teachers with a range of IMs, including SE, Tactical Games and Cooperative Learning, from which to guide their
instruction. The selection of the IM they use is determined by a number of factors including the class group, content and goals of the module (Gurvitch, et al., 2008).

The application of MBI in one particular PETE programme is examined in detail in the Journal of Teaching Physical Education 2008 Monograph edited by Gurvitch, et al (2008). The editors stress that the development of MBI should be viewed as “new and different” rather than “new and better” as there is limited evidence to suggest the effectiveness of such an approach over other approaches. In light of such an admission, findings presented in the monograph need to be identified as early small-scale findings rather than significant concrete conclusions. The monograph has provided a starting point in which to pursue the concept of MBI further and initiated a number of encouraging findings.

The special edition provided initial evidence in support of MBI’s use from the perspective of both PST and their students. It was identified that the PSTs used MBI effectively on their teaching practice, that they appreciated and enjoyed using it, and that they saw the advantages to using MBI as opposed to traditional approaches (Gurvitch, Blankenship, Metzler & Lund, 2008). Research following these PSTs into their careers as initial teachers identified that direct instruction strategies were still favoured however. The majority of initial teachers admitted they would only sometimes use the more student centred and indirect IMs (Gurvitch & Tjeerdsma Blankenship, 2008). Gurvitch et al., (2008) proposed that research needs to be conducted to qualify the claim that PSTs who learn one IM well in PETE will be more likely to implement it in the future. One of the most
acknowledged IMs within MBI, and the most frequently taught in PETE programmes (Ayers & Housner, 2008) is SE. In the context of this study SE will be used to examine how one IM within MBI can be included into a PETE programme.

**Sport Education**

SE is an IM that provides students with positive and authentic sport experiences while developing students as “competent, literate and enthusiastic sportspeople” (Siedentop, 1994; pg 4). Students are encouraged to be (a) competent in that they are able to play the game with a required level of sport specific skill and tactical awareness, (b) literate in that they recognize and value the rules and traditions associated with the sport and, (c) enthusiastic in that they wish to develop and preserve the sporting culture through their participation. SE is defined by six key characteristics, (1) Sports are organised into seasons that are generally longer than traditional sporting units taught as part of a PE programme, (2) all students are members of a team and remain on that team for the duration of the season, (3) sport seasons are defined by practice and formal competition where the emphasis on affiliation and competition make the sport seasons more meaningful, (4) sport seasons usually end with a culminating event, which provides goals for the player to work toward throughout the season, (5) records are kept throughout the season and provide feedback for individuals and teams and, (6) festivity is encouraged and enhances the meaning for participants and adds an important social element to the experience (Siedentop, 1994).
Research has provided strong support for the SE model, with positive findings being observed in the areas of gender inclusion (MacPhail, Gorely, Kirk & Kinchin, 2008), student enjoyment of the model (MacPhail, Kinchin & Kirk, 2003), enjoyment of roles (Hastie & Sinelnikov, 2006), teamwork (Hastie & Curtner-Smith, 2006) game performance (Wallhead & Ntoumanis, 2004), the inclusion of lower skilled students (Pill, 2008) and fair play (Sinelnikov & Hastie, 2008). Research has examined the differing perceptions of boys (Kinchin, Wardle, Roderick & Sprosen, 2004), and girls (Hastie, 1998a) to the model. A variety of sports have been taught through the model including netball, gymnastics, athletics (Clarke & Quill, 2003), rugby (Kinchin et al., 2004), badminton (Brunton, 2003) and ultimate Frisbee (Hastie 1998b). SE has also been implemented among a range of age groups including primary (MacPhail, Kirk & Kinchin, 2004), secondary (Clarke & Quill, 2003), and collegiate physical activity courses (Bennett & Hastie, 1997).

The primarily positive outcomes of SE identified in the literature, encourages teachers and PSTs to use the model. The importance of teachers in the effective delivery of SE cannot be underestimated (Hastie, 1998b, Kinchin, 2003, Kim, Penny, Cho & Choi, 2006) and teachers’ perceptions and uses of SE have received much attention in the literature (e.g. McMahon & MacPhail, 2007; Curtner-Smith, Hastie & Kinchin, 2008; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). There is a shortfall however of research regarding PSTs’ experiences of learning and using SE.
Teachers' and pre-service teachers experiences of SE

Teachers have commented that using SE provided them with more time to observe, correct and praise students (Brunton 2003), it made assessment easier (Clarke & Quill, 2003), and it resulted in students having a better understanding of the game, teamwork and tactics (Carlson, 1995). Some of the inhibitors to using SE have been found to be time (Clarke & Quill 2003), and students’ maturity levels to perform roles effectively (Curnrow & Macdonald, 1995). It is informative to examine these inhibitors in a PETE programme context, expecting maturity levels of PSTs to be higher than those of school students and hence an ability to perform roles related to SE more effectively.

There have been numerous attempts to analyse teachers’ uses of SE and understand further their perceptions of using SE. Curtner-Smith et al., (2008) observed ten beginning physical education teachers who were teaching SE. The authors found that the teachers delivered SE in one of three ways; ‘full version’, ‘cafeteria style’ or ‘watered down version’. Using SE in its ‘full version’ results in the user delivering seasons that are congruent with Siedentop’s (1994) characteristics, noted above. The ‘watered down version’ denotes that the user implements some elements of SE but omits many elements that transform traditional sporting units into SE, while the ‘cafeteria style’ incorporates ‘only parts of SE’ within traditional sporting units. They concluded that in order for teachers to teach SE in its ‘full version’, teachers must have a supportive working environment and a high quality introduction to SE in their PETE programme. When
these factors were not present SE was delivered in either a ‘watered down’ or ‘cafeteria style’ approach, and in one case it was not possible to identify any aspects of SE in the delivery of physical education. This study aims to attend to the requirement of high quality SE in PETE by providing a PETE experience similar to those recommended in the literature (e.g. Collier, 1998).

Some authors have noted the gap in the research literature regarding how teachers learn to teach and use the SE model and have conducted research to eliminate these omissions (e.g. McMahon & MacPhail, 2007; McCaughtry et al., 2004). McCaughtry and his colleagues (2004) reported findings from two groups of PSTs using SE for the first time. It was noticed that the PSTs left out vital aspects of the SE model, did not appreciate the model and they thought it was too much work. The authors reported that the majority of PSTs expressed that they would not use the model again. The authors believe that it was as a result of the PSTs’ initial misunderstanding of the SE model that hindered their learning most.

McMahon and MacPhail (2007) also reported negative experiences of one PST using the SE model. The PST struggled to teach tactical game play and struggled to create situations where students learned from each other. The PST reflects that the reasons for not delivering the SE model in its entirety was a result of not receiving effective SE-PETE and her lack of experience of SE in turn having to rely on her own sporting experiences to teach it. The PST had only attended a lecture
and a workshop on the model as well as readings she had undertaken independently.

Contrastingly more recently a study completed by Stran and Curtner-Smith (2009) observed two PSTs who attempted to use SE for the first time. Both teachers taught SE using the model in its ‘full version’ (Curtner-Smith et al, 2008). This was attributed not only to their orientation to teaching but to the high quality SE-PETE in which they received opportunities to experience and teach using SE. Similar results attributing the importance of high quality PETE and supportive working environments to the effective delivery of SE have been observed by Curtner-Smith and his colleagues (2008). However these PSTs were selected for observation as they had showed ‘superior potential’ in their PETE programme and it was believed that they would be likely candidates to use SE, it would be interesting to understand if other PSTs who had not shown 'superior potential' would have used SE to the same extent.

With evidence of teachers and PSTs using SE to varying extents, along with the importance of high quality PETE for the effective delivery of the model, it seems pertinent that research be conducted on the inclusion of SE in a PETE programme. This is one area of SE research that has received limited attention (McCaughtry et al., 2004; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010) and McCaughtry et al. (2004) believe such research offers fruitful extensions of, and a missing companion to, SE’s development.
SE and PETE programmes

It has been suggested that SE should be included as a principle component of any PETE programme (Alexander & Luckman, 2001; Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; Dyson, Griffin & Hastie, 2004). In a recent descriptive analysis of PETE programmes in the US (Ayers & Housner, 2008) SE was the most popular curricular model being taught, although corresponding research sharing the experiences gained in SE on such programmes is missing.

A number of researchers have attempted to provide recommendations as how to teach SE in a PETE programme. Collier (1998) provided suggestions in which SE could be introduced to PETE. Firstly, she proposed to include SE through faculty modelling, where faculty would teach a performance/practical course through SE while PSTs experience the course as participants (supported by Kinchin, 2003). Secondly, she encouraged the use of focused observations, where PSTs would be provided with an opportunity to observe SE being done well in practice. And finally, she advised PSTs to teach in clinical and field settings, allowing the PSTs the opportunity to teach using the model to their classmates and eventually in their teaching practice placements.

Stran and Curtner-Smith (2009) similarly believe that the core of any PETE programme where SE is included should adhere to a number of recommendations. They believe programmes should promote the teaching of a
series of faculty-presented mini seasons within early field experiences as well as PST designed seasons on teaching practice. They believe that faculty member credibility, their commitment to training teachers and their preparation to do so, and their understanding and appreciation of the PSTs’ acculturation, are significant factors in preparing PSTs to use SE. They further believe that their willingness to contrast effective and ineffective pedagogies, supervise early field experiences and teaching practice closely and their ability to develop a technical language through which they and PSTs can discuss teaching also play a considerable role in encouraging PSTs to use SE and facilitating their competence to do so.

Some authors have identified a number of pertinent implications for the effective inclusion of SE in PETE, McCaughtry et al. (2004) outlines some of these after experiencing failings of SE in their study. First, they emphasise that teacher educators have to be aware of the possible tendency for PSTs to retreat from tactical instruction when problems arise; such a retreat may be avoided by showing PSTs adaptations of SE or alerting them to the need to re-teach something. Second, teacher educators must reinforce the similarities, and most important the contrasts, between SE and traditional sport pedagogies. Third, this study highlights the relatively short retention of learning and the need to re-teach or reinforce SE at multiple times during the PSTs’ development. Fourth, there must be a balance between helping beginning teachers prepare for the realities of induction to new schools and enacting challenging and complex curriculum. Fifth, it is critical that teacher educators help PSTs to see the importance of the other
types of learning involved in SE. Finally, teacher educators must be aware of PSTs’ initial scepticism and possible self-fulfilling, or rather defeating, tendencies. Such implications were recognised by the authors when the SE experience in PETE used for this study was being developed.

Few studies have provided a detailed insight into how SE has been included in PETE programmes, Kinchin et al., (2005) address this gap in the literature where they reflect on examples of SE in PETE and describe how they include SE in their PETE programme. They recognise that many studies reporting the positive findings of SE are delivered by experienced teachers, suggesting that these successes highlight the importance of quality programmes in PETE. They recommend that PETE programmes include the following experiences within their programme. Firstly an initial lecture outlining the main aims and features of SE should be provided followed by an opportunity for PSTs to experience the module as a participant. They further recommend that lecturers planning and teaching in partnership with secondary teachers using SE, and observing SE being taught in schools, would give PSTs a sense of the reality of using SE in a school.

It has been identified that the majority of PETE programmes teach content and pedagogy in isolation of each other (Oslin, 2002). Oslin (2002) believes that such PETE programmes should allow their students to experience the curriculum firsthand, supporting Kinchin’s (2003) recommendation of delivering practical subject matter knowledge components using SE. Oslin et al., (2001) identify such experience as ‘living the curriculum’, advocating for the link to be made between
pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge (SMK) by delivering the two together in a PETE programme. In light of these recommendations the activity courses described by Oslin et al. (2001), Kinchin (2003) and Jenkins (2004) were taught through instructional models such as SE. Such courses allowed the PSTs to experience the curriculum as students and gain an enhanced appreciation and understanding for the model. Each study reported that the PSTs were successful at teaching SE during their field experiences and student teaching as a result of their SE experiences in their PETE programme.

While PETE SE research has focused on various methods and recommendations for including SE in PETE programmes, few studies have presented findings of the effectiveness of these recommendations. Further research is needed to provide support for the findings of Oslin et al. (2001), Kinchin (2003) and Jenkins (2004) that were among the few researchers who provided a description of how SE was included in PETE and the findings of such approaches. Further research is also needed to determine the effectiveness of the recommendations related to the delivery of SE in PETE programmes outlined in the research. This paper aims to examine the effectiveness of popular recommendations made for SE’s inclusion in PETE by practically including SE in a PETE programme.

**Theoretical Framework and Purpose**

Along with MBI (Gurvitch et al., 2008), ‘living the curriculum’ as described by Oslin et al. (2001) provides a theoretical framework for the study. Oslin and her
colleagues identify the importance of research focusing on enhancing pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) by integrating instructional models into the PETE programme. They endeavoured to enhance the PCK of their PSTs by integrating IMs into their physical activity courses, encouraging students to ‘live the curriculum’. PSTs need to be aware that teaching is more than knowing the subject matter and that it is essential to understand how students learn and what IMs would achieve their desired goals. It is anticipated that this can be addressed through allowing PSTs to ‘live the curriculum’.

The purpose of this study was to implement the recommendations in the literature and examine PSTs’ experiences of ‘living the curriculum’ in their PETE programme through SE. The research questions were, (1) Does a ‘living the curriculum’ focus provide PSTs with enhanced learning experiences? (2) What future intentions do the PSTs have for using SE? (3) What recommendations do the PSTs provide on how SE could be more effectively delivered through a PETE programme?

**Methodology**

**PETE programme context**

This study was conducted in a four-year undergraduate PETE programme in Ireland, which enrols approximately 80 students each academic year. During the
four years PSTs are introduced to all areas of the Irish post-primary PE curriculum which are Aquatics, Adventure Activities, Athletics, Dance, Games, Gymnastics, Health Related Activity and related areas such as sociology, psychology, youth sport, teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment, inclusive practice and philosophy and aesthetics. PSTs also complete generic education modules undertaken by all the university’s PSTs across all teacher education programmes, and have a choice of an elective subject area that qualifies them to teach PE and one classroom based subject. Two formalised teaching practice placements reside in the programme with the first in the second semester of the second year being six weeks long and the second placement in the first semester of the final year being ten weeks long. During both placements the PSTs teach a required number of classes of PE and their chosen elective subject.

Participants

The first author was a graduate student in the same university the PETE programme resides. The first author worked with the second and third author to devise a SE net games module and assisted in the delivery of the module, developing additional handouts and resources for the PSTs. The third author was in her first year of university lecturing. She was a qualified PE teacher and had taught PE for ten years prior to taking the position in the university. She was familiar with the SE model from her own practice and had a strong interest in contributing to research in PETE practices.
The 20 PSTs followed throughout this study were one group among 75 year 3 PSTs. The group consisted of seven males and thirteen females with an age range from 19 to 30 years. This group of PSTs was randomly selected and observed by the first author during a practical module of net games that was a mandatory part of the PETE programme.

**Structure of the SE net games module**

SE was incorporated into a 12-week net-games module that focused on tennis, badminton and volleyball. The module included two 1-hour practical classes a week. The module was purposely structured to include all key aspects of SE and inform the PSTs of SE-related effective teaching practices to be used in school. The lecturer taught the PSTs through SE similar to how a teacher in a school would teach SE. For the purpose of “living the curriculum” the PSTs were required to select teams and remain on that team for the entire module. They also completed team sheets, picked team colours and names and participated in practices and competitions as part of their team. Consistent with SE, within their team the PSTs were required to take roles such as warm-up officer, coach, equipment manager, and referee, further roles of statistician, timekeeper etc. were not emphasised within the season due to time constrictions. Throughout the module, practices were organised in such a way that allowed the coach of each team to deliver the lecturer’s content to the rest of their team. The season consisted of 3 mini seasons of Tennis, Badminton and Volleyball, in an attempt to incorporate an adequate number of sports to compliment the net games focus of
the module. The PSTs stayed within their team throughout the three mini seasons
and completed in culminating events for the Tennis and Badminton seasons, each
of these culminating events were preceded by a pre-season and season phase. For
the purpose of assessment PSTs were required to teach their peers for a short
lesson and each team were required to design a SE season which they would be
able to use on their future teaching practice placement. The structure of the
module is outlined in Table 1.

Data Collection

Multiple methods of data collection were employed throughout the module. The
researcher conducted independent observations of the PSTs and the lecturer,
 focusing particularly on critical incidents, the reactions of students to the teaching
style and the lecturer’s use of the model. From these observations he also kept
reflective log diaries (Bell, 1993) of each of the classes. The lecturer of the module
also kept reflective log diaries on her perceptions of the module, including her
thoughts on what worked effectively/ineffectively and the PSTs’ reactions to the
content.

On completion of the module, focus groups (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) were
conducted with ten of the PSTs. The participants volunteered to take part in the
focus groups after an expression of interest was offered to all PSTs in the class
group, all participants read participant information sheets outlining the purpose
of the focus groups and signed informed consent forms. The 10 PSTs were
randomly selected to form two groups of 5 PSTs each. These focus groups
followed a semi-structured format, which granted freedom for the participants
and the interviewer to follow other lines of discussion if relevant. The focus
groups were aimed at evaluating the PSTs’ experiences of the module and how
they perceived the value of the learning experiences they received. They were
also encouraged to express their future intentions for using SE. The lecturer was
also interviewed (Greenfield, 2002) in order to gather her reflections of how she
evaluated the PSTs’ learning experiences through “living the curriculum” and her
own experiences of delivering a SE net games module.

PSTs’ peer teaching assessments were observed to determine the aspects of SE
that they favoured in their pedagogy. The PSTs’ SE seasons that they designed in
teams as an assessment requirement were also gathered and analysed with a
view to inform the researcher of their depth of understanding and potential
application of SE.

Data Analysis

All recordings from the interview and focus groups were transcribed and analysed
using thematic coding (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The data was analysed to identify
any reoccurring themes or themes which were consistent or conflicting with the
literature on PSTs’ experiences with SE. The reflective log diaries from both the
researcher and the lecturer were also analysed using thematic coding where
comparing or contrasting themes where identified. Peer teaching assessments and PSTs’ SE season plans were analysed in a similar manner.

**Results**

Two main themes, (1) the delivery of a net games module through SE and (2) recommendations for the inclusion of SE in PETE programmes, were identified from analysis of the data. Those themes and the accompanying sub-themes will be presented herein.

**(1) Delivery of a net games module through SE**

**Diminishing awareness of SE**

One of the most noticeable features from the observations of the module and analysis of the PSTs’ focus groups was that the SE theme faded as the weeks went on;

“I don’t know did the whole Sport Education team role kind of go out the window in volleyball a bit, do you know and a little bit towards the end of badminton whereas the other weeks we were all working in our groups all the time and then I didn’t really find in volleyball that Sport
Education was really in it so much it was more like getting the drills done and stuff.”

(Ciara, Focus Group #2)

Other PSTs noticed similar trends when asked to describe the module;

“it was tennis and badminton and volleyball and then we were taught it through Sport Education … for tennis and badminton we were, and volleyball just kind of dropped off to the more traditional”

(Sarah, Focus Group #1)

One PST reported enjoying the tennis section of the module more as it was delivered through SE, “I thought tennis was good as well because we were really in our teams for that so we were working with the same people all this time and it was just good fun that way” (Cathy, Focus Group #1).

On numerous occasions during the middle and latter stages of the module, the SE theme was noted by the researcher to have been omitted. Extracts from the researchers observations include “the class were not in their SE teams at all” (Researcher’s Log: Week 5, Session 2) “this lesson contained little emphasis on the teams or their roles” (Researcher’s Log: Week 9, Session 1), “throughout the session they were in groups but these were not their SE groups. The SE atmosphere also seems to have been lost slightly” (Researcher’s Log: Week 9, Session 2) and “this session again failed to implement SE in a few occasions when
it would have been appropriate, however the students enjoyed the session greatly and learned a lot” (Researcher’s Log: Week 10, Session 2).

Aware of this diminishing awareness of SE one of the PSTs recommended to “keep it going the whole way through so you get the full experience of it and get the three competitions and see how they work (Sarah, Focus Group #1). In response to PSTs’ diminishing awareness of SE as the module progressed the lecturer commented that “I felt that after 8 weeks of 2 lessons a week so that’s 16 hours …. I felt that was appropriate enough to develop for them to understand the Sport Education model” (Lecturer, Interview).

The lecturer expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the PSTs’ student coaches (Lecturer’s Log: Week 2, Session 1 & 2; Week 4, Session 1 & 2; Week 5, Session 1) and this may have lead to her not prioritising SE towards the end of the module. In later sessions she decided to deliver some of the lesson content herself as opposed to the student coaches (Lecturer’s Log: Week 7, session 2). She also “noticed that the enthusiasm of the group [towards the SE concept] decreased significantly” (Lecturer’s Log: Week 8, Session 2) where she identified that SE worked really well at the start of the module but she believed their interest for SE reduced towards the end of the module. The lecturer appeared to consciously move away from the SE model believing the PSTs “did understand the concept fully and I just felt that I was repeating myself because we had already done two sports and to do another sport through it might have been overkill” (Lecturer, Interview). McCaughtry et al., (2004) conversely believe that there is a
need to re-teach or reinforce SE at multiple occasions during the PSTs PETE programme. This recommendation is consistent with the PSTs’ desires for other modules and activities to be delivered through SE. The lecturer’s opinion in this study questions whether there is a conflict between including SE while maintaining a teacher education focus.

Conflict between teacher education and SE

There were some instances where the inclusion of SE in the module appeared to have a negative effect on the PSTs’ teacher education. The lecturer believed “what Sport Education lacks is the skill development aspect” (Lecturer, Interview) and experienced “from having thought it myself in a school situation I found the skill levels have dropped significantly by using a full Sport Education model delivery” (Lecturer, Interview).

The researcher had observed during one session that the SE focus was lost due to a stronger focus towards teacher education. The researcher wrote that he “felt that this session was orientated towards teacher education much more than usual. Because of this the SE aspect was lost slightly” (Researchers Log: Week 5, Session 2). It was evident that the lecturer had spent additional time improving their ability to teach the skills rather than participating in a SE season where they would be taught by their peers. A similar situation occurred later in the module where the researcher observed that the “lesson contained little emphasis on the
teams or their roles but this was a result of [the name of lecturer] introducing volleyball for the first time” (Researchers Log: Week 9, Session 1).

The lecturer also expressed a conflict between her efforts to educate the PSTs as effective teachers while also integrating SE to the extent intended;

“it was hard in a way sometimes delivering it to [PSTs] because they weren’t buying into it all the time and it was hard to keep the momentum going because I was trying to teach them so many different things, I couldn’t do that just through Sport Education because then it would have been a disservice to them so sometimes I found myself coming away from Sport Education to be able to deliver it effectively”

(Lecturer, Interview)

The lecturer appeared over-critical with respect to the effect her staying true to the teaching of SE was having on the PSTs’ ability to deliver SE in schools, perhaps finding it difficult to have faith in the learning that PSTs would encounter from their peers rather than from her instruction.

(2) Recommendations for SE in PETE

Do more sports within a SE season / do a SE unit for longer
The most common suggestion made by the PSTs was for the module to have lasted for longer and incorporate other sports in a similar manner. One of the PSTs was keen for the module to be run for longer to get the full benefit of the experience;

“[Do it for] a longer time, don’t include as many activities into the one module like kind of split it up over the two semesters you can have 2 activities in one semester and 2 activities the next semester so you won’t be rushing everything into say two or three weeks the way we did volleyball”

(Martin, Focus Group #2)

Additionally, Martin suggested that in an effort to maximise the benefits of the module to “keep on doing it throughout the 4 years”. He was concerned that if it was only done once for one semester PSTs would forget it and that if it were done throughout the four years of the programme that “it will be on the top of your head straight away” (Martin, Focus Group #2). Ciara similarly suggested doing “another net games module like... have more time to expand maybe more time to spend on Sport Education” (Focus Group #2).

Another PST suggested if she could change the module she would “have more sports in it... I would have loved to have seen it done like through basketball or a sport I wouldn’t be confident” (Emma, Focus Group #1). Other PSTs echoed this preference and it was suggested to “do it with all the sports we did like instead of
just doing it through net games do it in soccer do it in rugby do it in Gaelic football” (Martin, Focus Group #2).

Do the module earlier in the programme

This module was the PSTs’ first significant exposure to the SE model. Many of the PSTs believed that the module should have been run earlier in their PETE programme rather than in their third year, “we are in third year now it’s a bit late, to be honest, should have kicked off straight away in first year” (Tim, Focus Group #1). Sarah suggested “to have it in second year in the first semester of second year so then you have it ready for your second year [teaching practice]” (Focus Group #1). Supporting Sarah’s comment another PST suggested that “it would have been nice if we had that before going on teaching practice last year we could have actually gone out and tried it for the 6 weeks” (Jacob, Focus Group #2).

Another benefit of an earlier exposure to SE was that they “would have time in second year to try it out and then fourth year refine it see what works and what doesn’t work” (Eve, Focus Group #1) with a concern that;

“When you have never tried something in a school before or you have never seen it been done in a school before you’re kind of a little bit more apprehensive about it, but if you [could use it] in second year
where [the accumulated grades] didn’t count towards [the final degree classification]"

(Sarah, Focus Group #1)

Using SE in a teaching practice placement is a recommendation shared by other researchers (e.g. Collier, 1998; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). Many studies have offered similar opportunities for their PSTs and it has been observed that these PSTs use SE positively in their future practice (e.g. Kinchin, 2003; Curtner-Smith, et al., 2008; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). Such opportunities give the PSTs a valuable opportunity to practice SE in a context where they have support and feedback from their university supervisors and co-operating teachers in the school.

University supervisors’ and co-operating teachers’ understanding and appreciation of SE

One concern that the PSTs had about using the SE model was the perception their allocated university supervisor would have if they used it on their future final year teaching practice placement. A number of PSTs expressed that their use of the SE model would depend on the supervisor that they have, expressing that “it really does depend on the tutor” (Emma, Focus Group #1). Tim felt that the university supervisor might be sceptical about the SE model;
“if the tutor is going to call on the third week and you have only had one week to set it up the second week problems are going to arise he is going to arrive on the third week you’re going to say hold on a minute cut the power with this a minute get the tutor out of the way and I’ll go back to it"

(Focus Group #1)

The PSTs felt that the university supervisor and cooperating teachers may not appreciate and understand the SE model. Martin was concerned with this possibility and wondered would “all tutors and lecturers 100% understand what Sport Education is” (Focus Group #2). In an attempt to resolve this issue it was suggested that the university supervisor would not call out to observe or assess the classes where SE was being used. Additionally the PSTs suggested to “give the tutor … a presentation on Sport Education” (Emma, Focus Group #1) so they would understand the SE concept.

Provide similar modules for other instructional models

The lecturer responsible for delivering this module suggested that other IMs should be taught in a similar way to teaching net games through SE, allowing PSTs to “live the curriculum” (Oslin et al, 2001) of other models;

“[PSTs] need to be taught a range of teaching strategies...they need to be aware of the different teaching methods available to them
whether it is Teaching Games for Understanding or Sport Education it should be done they should have the opportunity to live the actual teaching method” (Lecturer, Interview).

She further recommended “they [PSTs] do a number of [activity] modules throughout the course so the other teaching models can be addressed the way that Sport Education was addressed through net games” (Lecturer, Interview). She also identifies this in her reflective log, “it is beneficial to use a range of strategies” (Lecturer’s Log: Week 8, Session 2).

This recommendation is consistent with Dyson et al., (2004) who have suggested that SE, tactical games and cooperative learning should be mandatory models in any PETE programme. Furthermore, it has been suggested that PSTs learn by doing (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008) and Oslin (2002) cites the work of Graham (1995) who suggests that teacher education programmes should model the characteristics and qualities of the programmes we hope to see implemented in schools. PETE programmes are effective for preparing teachers to use curriculum and instructional models and PSTs should be given the opportunity to experience the model as both students and teachers (Gurvitch, Tjeerdsma Blankenship, Metzler & Lund, 2008; Metzler, et al., 2008).

Discussion
Consistent with recommendations provided by Darling-Hammond (2000) this study supports the notion that subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge being taught together can provide positive learning experiences for PSTs. It also supports the recommendation to provide a practical SE experience in PETE programmes (Collier, 1998; Kinchin et al., 2005), as the PSTs made reference to the effectiveness of the experience on numerous occasions.

Using Oslin et al’s (2001) concept to “live the curriculum” provided a useful framework in which to structure the experience, within this framework a number of implications were identified which should be addressed when developing similar experiences in the future. Firstly it is imperative that the SE experience is as similar as possible to what is to be expected in schools, while highlighting practices including various aspects of SE in disparate settings. The SE theme should be present throughout the module and efforts should be made not to let its focus diminish during the duration of the module. Secondly it should be ensured that all areas of a particular curriculum model are taught in detail so that PSTs have the required understanding of the model. And thirdly, participating in a SE season should provide the PSTs with a vital opportunity to observe SE being taught well, appreciate the pedagogical difficulties associated with using SE and understand methods of overcoming these difficulties.

It became evident that there was a conflict on some occasions between the inclusion of SE and the effectiveness of the PSTs’ teacher education. This conflict led the lecturer to retreat from teaching through SE towards the end of the
module, believing she was unable to complement both. Alexander and Penny (2005) shared this concern believing that SE restricts the ability of the teacher to introduce their expertise to the session. It is interesting that the lecturer was not confident in the PSTs’ ability to teach each other the skills they would need for their future profession. While similar concerns regarding the effectiveness of the student coaches has been recognised in the literature (Carlson & Hastie, 1997; Alexander & Luckman, 2001; Alexander & Penny, 2005), it would have been expected that PSTs would have had the required pedagogical and subject matter knowledge required to perform the role of student coach. The reality of preparing PSTs to effectively deliver SE in a school setting is a difficult process for a teacher educators and may not necessary be conducive in all contexts to producing effective teachers.

There was also a difference of perspectives over the appropriate length of the SE season. The lecturer believed that by eight weeks of SE the PSTs had received sufficient experience and she worried that there was a lack of enthusiasm from the PSTs. The PSTs however recommended that the SE theme should have been continued through to the end of the module (12 weeks). Perhaps this diminishing awareness of SE led one of the groups to omit the SE characteristics of record keeping from their SE unit plan, as it was not covered during the module. There are a number of reasons as to why the lecturer may have felt it was time to move away from SE. Firstly, she believed it was too difficult to convey content knowledge while maintaining a SE emphasis in her lesson. She believed the PSTs’ knowledge of volleyball was low and perhaps believed she needed to dedicate
more time to develop their content knowledge of the basic skills of volleyball.

Secondly, the lecturer acknowledged using SE previously during her teaching career and admitted being sceptical of the proposed benefits of SE. Perhaps this scepticism led to her never being fully confident of the benefit of the SE model to PSTs. However she later admitted a change in her opinion of the effectiveness of SE as an IM on completion of teaching the module. Thirdly, there could have also been a novelty factor for the PSTs associated with being part of a SE season for the first time.

It is possible that the lecturer’s previous experiences teaching SE and her perceptions of the effectiveness of student coaches led her to retreat to her ‘curricular zone of safety’ (Rovegno, 1994). Although the lecture would not have shared the same concerns of pedagogical content knowledge and capabilities as the teachers in Rovegno’s (1994) study, it is likely that her responsibility to develop the PSTs as effective teachers encouraged her to retreat from SE to teach in a style she was familiar with.

The study identified a number of recommendations as to how SE could be included in a PETE programme. First, and foremost, the study qualified the inclusion of SE in PETE programmes as a worthwhile venture, qualifying the effectiveness of PSTs experiencing SE as intended to be delivered in schools. This provides support for the recommendations to allow PSTs to become participants in a SE season similar to one that would be delivered in a school context (Collier, 1998; Oslin, et al., 2001; Kinchin, et al., 2005).
It was recommended from this study that if the module was being offered again that it would be available in the first or second year of the PETE programme. This would provide the PSTs with the opportunity to use the SE model on their first teaching practice where they could use SE with the aid of prescribed lessons provided by the PETE faculty, similar to a recommendation provided by Kinchin et al. (2005). Delivering SE during teaching practice placement is a recommendation shared by other researchers (e.g. Collier, 1998; Kinchin, et al., 2005; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). Many studies have offered similar opportunities for their PSTs and it has been observed that these PSTs use SE positively in future practice (Kinchin, 2003; Curtner-Smith, et al., 2008; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009). However, it is not clear that if this approach was adopted the extent to which the PSTs would be able to contextualise a curriculum model which is new to them without having been on teaching practice and experienced the reality of teaching PE. The lecturer was concerned regarding the lack of content knowledge that the year 3 PSTs had. If this module was delivered earlier in the PETE programme PSTs may have less content knowledge, perhaps compromising their development of SE.

It is also recommended that the PSTs’ university supervisors and co-operating teachers have a knowledge and understanding of the SE model so they are equipped to offer support and feedback to PSTs using the SE model. It may be unrealistic to presume that all university supervisors and co-operating teachers will have an appropriate level of understanding and appreciation for the model.
Similar findings were observed by Lund, Gurvitch and Metzler (2008) who while examining the influences of cooperating teachers adoption of MBI, found that some cooperating teachers confused MBI and the spectrum of teaching styles. Similarly it was noted that cooperating teacher's lack of knowledge of MBI acted as an inhibitor to the PSTs using MBI (Gurvitch, Tjeerdsma Blankenship, Metzler & Lund, 2008). Methods of overcoming this obstacle must be explored and in-service training could be offered to all university supervisors and cooperating teachers on various curriculum models and IMs. While on teaching practice PSTs could be granted one or two classes which, while still observed by the university supervisor, are exempt from formal/external assessment where the PSTs could use them as an opportunity to gain experience using curriculum and instructional models. These opportunities would potentially encourage PSTs to try new and innovative teaching strategies and IMs with an increased confidence that such trials would not necessarily have a detrimental effect to the physical education lesson.

It has also been recommended that other curricular activities or IMs should be presented in a similar manner during the PSTs’ PETE programme. This recommendation mirrors efforts made by Georgia State University, where PSTs are exposed to a variety of Instructional Models during their PETE programme through ‘immersion’ (Gurvitch et al., 2008), similar to the ‘live the curriculum’ approach in this study. Teacher educators would be required to possess considerable expertise in both the areas of the content they are teaching and the curriculum or instructional model that they are teaching through. Such expertise
may not be a reality among many teacher educators who have knowledge in a particular subject area.

Worryingly there was little reference to the aims of SE at developing competent, literate and enthusiastic sportspeople during the focus groups with the PSTs. They did not appear to appreciate these three factors as being SE’s foundational aims.

While the research on the area of living the curriculum and the inclusion of SE within PETE programmes is at an early stage, the findings presented here support further investigation into this area. A number of areas for further research have been identified through the process of this research. Research where PSTs have the opportunity to use the SE model on their teaching practice placement and where opportunities have been offered allowing the PSTs to refine their use of the SE model would offer an extension to the discussion on how best to include the model in a PETE programme. Longitudinal studies, which examine the PSTs use of the SE model as beginning and experienced teachers, would provide valuable feedback on the supports and constraints within contexts that impact on the extent to which SE is a permanent feature of the school PE programme, and how teachers pursue and promote the SE model in their practice.
References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Practical aspect</th>
<th>SE aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Introduction to basic racket skills through short-tennis/pickleball.</td>
<td>Introduction to SE, nomination of team coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Introduction to groundstrokes. Basic tactics: utilising court space to best advantage</td>
<td>Team selection methods, team affiliation methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Development of attacking and defending principles. Doubles play – basics of playing with a partner. Evaluation and Analysis of techniques</td>
<td>Introduction of roles, task card teaching methods, student led warm up and skill practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Adapting and modifying games Mini-Tournaments – Singles and Doubles.</td>
<td>Introduction to competition organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Transfer of learning, basic racket skills and underhand strokes. Forehand overhead clear and service. Court Familiarisation: singles and doubles.</td>
<td>Continuation of SE from tennis to badminton, creation of task cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Forehand overhead drop shot/smash. Backhand overhead drop and smash strokes. Attacking and defending principles.</td>
<td>Importance of festivity, student lead practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Singles strategies, knowledge of rules and officiating. Doubles play – basics of playing with a partner. Evaluation and analysis of techniques.</td>
<td>Introduction of formal competition and culminating event organisation, students modified games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>Adapting and modifying games. Mini-Tournaments – Singles and Doubles</td>
<td>Competition day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>Transfer of learning/skill transfer. The volley (setting)/Dig (forearm pass), progressions.</td>
<td>Introduction of modified games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>The serve: Underarm and Over arm serve. Development of game play – 2v2.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>Adapting and modifying games. Mini-Tournaments – 2v2 and 6v6.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Title: ‘Living the curriculum’: Integrating sport education into a physical education teacher education programme education.

Date: 16th December 2010

Word Count (excluding references): 7951
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Abstract:

This study recognises the paucity of research regarding how pre-service teachers learn to use Sport Education (SE) in their physical education teacher education (PETE) programmes (Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2010). This study provides an experience in PETE where pre-service teachers ‘live the curriculum’ (Oslin, Collier & Mitchell, 2001) and experienced a SE season (Siedentop, 1994) as participants. Data was collected through weekly observations, researcher and lecturer reflections and interviews and focus groups with the lecturer and pre-service teachers. The results provide support for the ‘live the curriculum’ experience from the perspective of the pre-service teachers. It was indicated however that there were occasions when the lecturer was compromised between teaching through SE while teaching pre-service teachers how to teach SE in schools. It was also observed that there was a diminishing awareness of SE towards the end of the module. Recommendations for the inclusion of SE in PETE are also provided.
Keywords:

Model Based Instruction, Sport Education, Living the Curriculum, Pre-service Teachers, Physical Education Teacher Education
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