THE IMPACT OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS’ PRACTICES, UNDERSTANDINGS AND BELIEFS

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by: Professor Mary O’Sullivan

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of a Community of Practice on Physical Education Teachers’ Practices and Beliefs

Marie Clonan

Research on teacher continuing professional development focuses on how it can contribute to teacher and pupil learning (Teaching Council 2016). Teachers are envisioned as reflective practitioners and members of school based professional learning communities (Teaching Council 2012).

This study examined how a community of practice (CoP), the Urban Schools Group (USG) changed their practices, understandings and beliefs. The USG is a CoP of physical education (PE) professionals who work in challenging circumstances.

The main theory underpinning the research is Social Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998) where learning, knowledge and context are mutually bound together. Knowledge from social learning takes two forms- knowing as practice and learning as a change in identity (Wenger 2009).

The research found that prior to engagement with the USG, the teachers’ negative experiences of continuing professional development caused them to question the validity of what they offered in school. Engagement with the USG helped them to articulate their priorities, clarify their goals and align practice changes with their priorities. It also led to improved teacher confidence as professionals that manifested itself in changed classroom practices and engagement with peers, both within the USG and in school. USG-teachers also brokered Irish access to a community of learners in the UK by successfully piloting a curriculum innovation- the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. Their conception of professional practice broadened beyond the classroom in acting as mentors and advocates for their profession.

Wenger (2009) stated that learning trajectories of individuals and social learning spaces are interconnected dynamics of learning in a ‘social weave’. Arising from teachers’ competent engagement with the USG, this translated into knowledgeable engagement and it moved them from a position of peripheral to active engagement and change agents in Irish and physical education landscapes of practice. It helped them to identify their position on the Landscapes of Practice and may even have changed the landscape itself.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

My submission as a whole is not substantially the same as any that I have previously made or am currently making, whether in published or unpublished form for a degree, diploma, or similar qualification at any university or similar institution. I am the author of this thesis.

Signature: ______________________________

Marie Clonan
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also indebted to Ger for having the humility and insight to convene and facilitate this incredible group. Along with Deborah, you brought us on this incredible journey. It would not have happened without you. May we continue to be inspired in and by this group.

I also want to thank the pupils in my school, who are the primary motivating reasons to try and be the best teacher I can be. You continue to teach me every day and help to bring the joy of learning to my classroom.

I also want to thank my school colleagues who are another part of my teaching family. You make the daily task of teaching, doable. You act as crutch, compass and mirror.

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I want to thank all my friends, especially Mairéad, who have been there for me through thick and thin. There is a big party to be had. I’m not even going to try and say how much you mean to me.

Finally, I want to thank my family- Gráinne, Mássy, Deedaw and Séamus. For putting up with me in good days and bad and helping me believe that I could do this study. You made it all possible.
DEDICATION

To my colleagues in the Urban Schools Group

To my family
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Athlete Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Curriculum Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoPE</td>
<td>Community of Practice of Physical Education professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Critical Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRP</td>
<td>Critically Reflective Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEIS</td>
<td>Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Irish Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESI</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETB</td>
<td>Education Training Board (renamed from VECs 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG1</td>
<td>Focus Group Interview 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCPE</td>
<td>Junior Cycle Physical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCSA</td>
<td>Junior Certificate Schools Award</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCSP</td>
<td>Junior Certificate Schools Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCA</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQT</td>
<td>Newly Qualified Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDST</td>
<td>Professional Development Service for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEAI</td>
<td>Physical Education Association of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPAYS</td>
<td>Physical Education Physical Activity and Youth Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETE</td>
<td>Physical Education Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Pupil Reflective Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Pre-Service Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJ</td>
<td>Reflective Journal (ranges from 1 to 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>School Colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSE</td>
<td>School Self Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSLFS</td>
<td>Sky Sports Living For Sports</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNA</td>
<td>Special Needs Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>School Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPSR</td>
<td>Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>USG</td>
<td>Urban Schools Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>USGSP</td>
<td>Urban Schools Group Sky Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>USI</td>
<td>Urban Schools Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>A Second Year Class Grouping in my School</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>Vocational Education Committee</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have a significant impact on pupil achievement (Darling-Hammond 2000; Hattie 2009; Wiliam 2011). It has been found that teachers matter and make a difference to pupil achievement, and making change in teachers’ practices that positively influence pupil learning over the teachers’ career-span is a complex, challenging and demanding task (Darling-Hammond 2000; Hattie 2011). In Ireland, the Teaching Council (TC) stresses the importance of quality continuing professional development (CPD) to support teachers to deliver on improving pupil achievement (TC 2016). As a result, teachers are envisioned as reflective practitioners and members of school based professional learning communities (TC 2012). There is little agreement however, on the definition of reflective practitioner, how that reflective practitioner might operate as part of school based communities, how the reflective practitioner manages the everyday challenges and possibilities of practice, and how reflective practitioners in turn influence pupil learning. Much research suggests that many ‘initiatives’ seeking to improve practice and pupil learning are short lived and ineffective (Hattie 2011). Change must be considered within the multiple contexts in which teaching and learning take place. Further research is needed that clarifies, challenges and/or validates what quality CPD can look like over a career span, and how it contributes to our understandings of teachers as reflective practitioners in a professional learning community. Research on the professional lives of teachers both in and outside the classroom is needed.

Learning can be defined as “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or aging” (Illeris 2007 cited in Illeris 2009 p.8). Illeris (2009) described the fundamental processes of learning to include interactions with the external environment and individual processes:
All learning implies the integration of two very different processes, namely an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural or material environment, and an internal psychological process of elaboration and acquisition. (Illeris 2009 p.8)

This study focuses on the external interaction processes of learners and their environment rather than internal psychological processes. The main theory underpinning this study is the Social Learning Theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998a). Lave (1993) asserted that “...theories of situated everyday practice insist that persons acting and the social world cannot be separated” (p.5) and learning, knowledge and context are mutually bound together (Lave and Wenger 1991). The smallest unit within Social Learning Theory is a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger 2010). A CoP is a group of people who interact regularly as they share a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better (Team BE 2011). There are a variety of participation levels in a CoP that produce different ways of learning as it may have different levels of relevance to them (Team BE 2015). These range from core (such as experienced members) to peripheral (such as newcomers) participants depending on the level of engagement with the community. The activity of the CoP (what they do) is their learning and there is no separation between what they produce (documents, innovations) and what they do (Lave and Wenger 1991). Thus learning can be assumed as a result of participation in a CoP. Similarly, Social Learning Theory suggests that knowing cannot be separated from participating, and learning from a change in identity (Lave and Wenger 1991). Arising from that, Wenger’s (1998a) description CoP practices as “…the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations” (p.45).

Knowledge takes two forms: knowing as practice, with reflections reified through, for example, stories of practice or documents and knowledge as identity, where learning also manifests as a change in identity, for novice or experienced teachers (Wenger 2009). Therefore, there must be a direct link between the participatory (learning) activities and change to practices, understandings and beliefs of a CoP or its individual members. I suggest that the talk that facilitates participation is reflection in and on the actions of the community (its CPD practices), which may influence teachers’ teaching practices. Wenger (2009) stated that learning trajectories of individuals and social learning spaces are interconnected dynamics of learning in a ‘social weave’. This learning can be as expert central players or as beginners at the periphery. Landscapes of
practice are “a complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between
them” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.13). Teacher learning behaviour
can affect the learning in a landscape of social learning spaces. These landscapes of
practice are increasingly defining the practices of professionals in education in Ireland.

Wenger-Trayner (2013) claims his theory is not the ‘truth’ but a perspective that
informs experience. Theories can offer conceptual perspectives that train the eye to see
and be adopted as tools. The other two theories informing this research are reflective
practitioner theory (Schön 1983) and critically reflective practitioner theory (Brookfield
1995). Many researchers write of the divide between theory and practice (Dewey 1938;
Stenhouse 1981; Schön 1983). Professional practice is messy, comprising
‘indeterminate zones of practice’ (Schön 1987a; 1987b), characterised by uncertainty,
confusion and even difficulty articulating the problems of practice. The challenge is to
bring theoretical perspectives to teachers’ practices and for researchers to offer theories
that are helpful to teachers in the everyday problems of their practices:

The final say has to be left to practitioners in the field who can see the terrain. May
theory give them good eyes to see; and may their seeing eyes rescue them from the
tyrrany of theory. (Wenger-Trayner 2013 p.116)

Likewise in education literature (including physical education), Greene (1987) stated
that teachers needed to pose their own questions and make inquiries to make sense of
their experiences. Teachers’ commitment was “…to try to find our own voices, to read
and in time to name our lived worlds” (ibid p.12). A challenge for teachers is to find
their voices and name their lived worlds. They need to develop a shared language that
enables them to understand and share their ‘lived worlds’ in a meaningful way to others
with an interest in their practices. Casey (2014) argued that there was a dearth of
knowledge on the reflections of PE teachers as the “process of self-enlightenment is not
traditionally part of a teacher’s habitual practice” (p.2). He called for ‘teachers-as-
researchers’ and their ‘colleagues-as-informants’ to shed new light on problems that the
research community continue to struggle with and who “tread in places we can only
write about” (ibid p.2). This is research written by a teacher within a community of
practice of PE professionals (CoPE) and it charts their learning journey in specific
landscapes of practice. Armour (2006) requested that teachers be assisted in articulating
their experiences to offer insight on the ‘unheard-of’ and ‘under-represented nature of
Research is needed by teachers as members of CoPEs, on teachers’ practices, reflections and participation ‘as-it-is’ rather than as it ‘ought-to-be’ (Vaughan 2007). This is practitioner research of teachers’ practices as professional colleagues. It fulfils a broader remit of practitioner research that is:

...grounded in the identification and empirical documentation of the daily dilemmas and contradictions of practice, which then become grist for the development of new conceptual frameworks and theories... guide new understandings and improvements in practice in the local site, as well as more broadly. (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009 p.95)

1.2. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research examined how a CoP reflected on its practice. Three research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent did USG-teachers perceive changes to their practices, understandings and beliefs?
2. To what extent did engagement with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ change USG-teachers’ practices, understandings and beliefs?
3. To what extent has engagement with the USG changed my practices, understandings and beliefs?

The USG is a CoP of physical education (PE) professionals and work in challenging circumstances (i.e. poor pupil behaviour in urban ‘Delivering Equality for Irish Schools’ (DEIS) schools with poor PE facilities). DEIS is a Department of Education and Skills (DES) initiative that provides funding for schools whose pupils come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and whose attainments are below national standards (DES 2000; Weir 2011; Weir et al 2014).

The study of the community foregrounds the CoP as the unit of analysis with reflection as the prime focus within the community. The CoP is not homogenous, as it consists of teachers of different school types, length of service, and professional school contexts. It examined how they reflected on their practice - what the reflections looked like, what their priorities were, how they went about trying new ideas, and how they learned about overcoming problems of practice and shared that learning.
All three questions examine the extent of reported changes from USG participation to teachers’ practices, understandings and beliefs but from increasingly detailed perspective. The first question examined how the community engaged in their every-day activities that served to function as the part of their practice of engaging in CPD for its members. It studies their perceived changes that arose from such engagement. It was a broad overview of their work within the community and offered details of their activities. The second question delved into how they piloted an initiative the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ (‘Sky Sports Living For Sports’ (SSLFS)), a new curriculum to the Republic of Ireland. It described the activities in which the USG-teachers engaged within the wider landscape of the PE profession and examined the reported changes to pupil engagement with PE lessons. The third question examined the extent of self-reported changes to my practice arising from membership with the USG. It focused on the changes to my interactions in school (colleagues, parents, the principal and pupils) and beyond (the professional and research communities).

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teacher learning is influenced by the multiplicity of stakeholders with whom teachers must engage as part of their professional practices. Their CPD needs ought to reflect the myriad professional accountabilities and demands placed on them which are linked to the differing contexts they face with these stakeholders. Within school it includes pupils, colleagues, parents, and the principal. They must adhere to Department of Education and Skills’ (DES) teaching requirements such as school planning, literacy, numeracy, and subject specifications. They must liaise with other professionals such as social workers, special needs assistants (SNAs), psychologists, research, CPD, as well as the imperative to be up-to-date with developments in their subject areas. Teachers must engage collaboratively with each other and as reflective practitioners both within school and with their peers outside school. Yet the research is limited on how these multiple requirements (as well as their teaching imperatives in the classroom) can be combined effectively, what it might look like, and how their learning needs can be supported through CPD over the career span.

This research expands our understanding of how a CoP contributes to meaningful CPD
across different career stages of teachers. It explores both the learning trajectory of the community as a whole and other ‘parts’ of that community (individuals and a small special interest group). It focuses on the ‘everyday’ activities and problems of practice. It yields insights as to how teachers manage their relationships to a multiplicity of practices across the landscape and how they impact on their practices within schools, including their perceptions of pupil learning. In this case pupil learning is focussed on the affective domain. It is significant because it has focussed on teacher experiences of quality CPD from teachers’ perspectives. It is written as a case study using multiple methods with the teacher-as-researcher as its author. It includes the research from a CoP and their perceptions of pupil learning arising from the CPD. It offers insight on the role of technology and how it can inhibit and enhance CoP participation and participation in the landscape of PE practices. It provides a unique opportunity for a sustained study of teachers engaging with their CPD needs as participators in a CoP. It examines how their reflections arising from such participation impacted on their practices within the CoP, their schools and into the wider professional landscape.

This research highlights the importance of reflective practice, especially in a CoP. With respect to the changing expectations of schools and teachers, it offers us one conceptualisation of meaningful CPD that is teacher centred, and focussed on their specific needs (Patton and Parker 2015).

1.4. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The outline of the chapters is as follows:

- **CHAPTER TWO** reviews what is known about communities of practice, the approaches taken to study CoPs as well as key findings and gaps in the literature. It reviews PE research within the three theoretical perspectives informing this study and research in the Irish context.

- **CHAPTER THREE** discusses my methodologies for addressing the research questions. It includes the theoretical stance behind the methodology approach taken, the setting (context) in which the research took place, the data collection phases, the nature of the data collected (who, what, where, when and how). It also sets out the data analysis approach, and includes a biographical piece that
indicates my stance as a researcher in this thesis.

- **CHAPTERS FOUR, FIVE AND SIX** present the findings from the three research questions. These key findings are presented to the reader as a set of themes about the practice of the USG. Each theme is described in turn and the key warrants of each theme are outlined with supporting evidence from the data that elucidate that theme.

- **CHAPTER SEVEN** uses Wenger’s (2009) ‘landscapes of practice’ (LoP) as a theoretical ‘hook’ to structure the discussion of the findings. It crafts a story around the key findings from my understanding of what the data has revealed to me about the development of the USG as a reflective practice. This is followed by conclusions and recommendations derived from the research.

**Note:**

Re: Specific use of the terms ‘pupil’ and ‘student’

- ‘Pupils’ refer to children attending schools and are under the age of 18 years
- ‘Students’ are adults, such as pre-service teachers who are in initial teacher education.

Re: Use of the term ‘practice’ and ‘practices’

- Teachers’ practice can be seen to comprise multiple aspects of the same practice (working with colleagues, parents, pupils, engaging in research on practice etc). These could also be considered to be the practices that make up a professional practice. In the context of teachers’ professional practice in this thesis, practice or practices can be used interchangeably.

The next chapter focuses on the theoretical and literature challenges surrounding this research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the review of literature and is structured into three main themes from the literature review based on the foci of this research:

1. CPD Policy and Practice
2. Communities of Practice (CoPs)
3. Reflective Practice and PE

Fig 2.1 identifies where this research project relates to the three themes from the existing literature. The two major theoretical pillars informing the research questions (Social Learning Theory and reflection theories) are broadly set within research on CPD. The chapter then examines CPD research in the Irish context (second-level education- pupils from 12 to 18 years), PE and sport pedagogy research conducted internationally and in Ireland and finally research on PE communities of practice. This schematic shows how the different literature bases relate to each other (Hart 1998; Creswell 2008).

Fig 2.1 Schematic of the Literature Review
Table 2.1 presents the types and frequency of studies conducted from the 68 (PE) journal articles accessed for this literature review. It specifically refers to empirical inquiry on the related topics, and excluded are the theoretical and conceptual articles discussing relevant areas. It physically shows the ‘gap’ in the PE literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH FOCUS</th>
<th>CoP</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>CRP/CP</th>
<th>CPD GENERAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical studies</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based in Ireland</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on experienced teachers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP, RP and CRP</td>
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<td>Combination of all above</td>
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Table 2.1 Types And Frequency of Research Topics from Articles Reviewed

The review contains peer-reviewed articles published in English, and books and frequently cited chapters related to research on CoPs, Reflective Practice (RP), and Critically Reflective Practice (CRP). Six databases were identified as most relevant to searching for literature on the research topic:

1. Sportdiscus’
2. ‘ERIC’
3. ‘Academic Search Complete’
4. ‘British Education Index’
5. ‘Web of Science’
6. ‘Wilson Omnifile’

The following search terms were entered into each database: “community of practice”; “physical education”; “reflective practice”. The 303 articles were then screened for relevance and duplication, resulting in a total of 20 articles of direct interest, not all were PE related. ‘Reflect*’, ‘Critical’ and ‘Community’ were the terms entered in an effort to identify articles in academic journals that were most relevant for PE teacher education (Tannehill et al 2013):

1. European Physical Education Research (EPER)
2. Journal of School Health (JSH)
3. Journal of Teaching in Physical Education (JTPE)
4. Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESP)
5. Quest
6. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport
7. Sport Education and Society
8. The Physical Educator

The same research terms were used in the ‘Irish Educational Studies’ journal. This resulted in a further 40 articles. The disparity between the searches can be explained by slightly different search commands as the second search focussed on Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) journals. A further nine articles that were frequently referenced in the literature and deemed relevant were also added. No journal articles were identified that included all three categories. This resulted in a total of 68 articles.

The review focuses specifically on practising teachers because this is the context of the research participants. The review focussed on practising PE professionals rather than pre-service teachers (PSTs), or PETE as their CPD needs and provisions are different from participants in this study (Coolahan 2002, 2003; Bolam and McMahon 2004; TC 2011).

2.2. THEME ONE: CPD POLICY AND PRACTICE

This section examines CPD from the following perspectives: clarifying the concept of CPD; CPD within the context of Education in Ireland and PE in Ireland; and CPD provision for high need urban schools.

2.2.1 Defining quality CPD

Day and Sachs (2004) define CPD as:

All the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designed to enhance their work (p.3)

The purposes of CPD include aligning of teachers’ practices with educational policies, improving the performance of teachers to improve pupil learning outcomes and enhancing the teaching profession status and profile (Day and Sachs 2004).
This includes organised activities for improving what teachers do, and the unplanned and incidental activities which are also important to improve their work. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) conceptualised three types of knowledge associated with teachers’ learning and development:

1. Knowledge-for-practice (formal knowledge generated outside school such as pedagogical models)
2. knowledge-of-practice (teacher knowledge generated from critical evaluation of classroom practices)
3. knowledge-in-practice (teachers’ practical knowledge generated through inquiry on effective practices)

The challenge is to integrate them for a coherent knowledge-base that is accessible to those involved in education. Teaching/learning is not solely a solitary or cognitive activity and researchers acknowledge the importance of emotions (Palmer 1998) and social interactions (Lave and Wenger 1991; Borko 2004). Wenger (2009) has noted change in the understanding of learning as being part of everyday life and “a capability inherent in social systems” (p.18) rather than solely a “…formal process caused by instruction” (ibid). For Tinning et al (1993) the experiences and beliefs of PE teachers impact on their communications, teaching and teaching strategies. Capel and Blair (2013) argued that the strong socialisation aspects often resulted in PE teachers being “entrenched and unquestioning” (p.132) and often unreflective. Research may offer insight on how social interactions in a CoP can develop teachers’ knowledge in, of and for their practices and to what extent it can impact those practices and beliefs.

CPD experiences or opportunities are not necessarily organised. Fraser et al’s (2007) conceptual framework for CPD analysis includes a matrix for teacher learning opportunities: formal–informal and planned–incidental. Informal CPD opportunities are not external to the teacher, whereas formal CPD is. Planned CPD is prearranged while unplanned CPD is spontaneous and unpredictable. CPD occurs somewhere on these quadrants and it is important to find out what opportunities present themselves to facilitate (or hinder) reflective practices within CoPs.
The literature presents various priorities, purposes and formats for teacher CPD and this can be on courses, projects, improving schools, pupil outcomes or teacher learning (Guskey 2000). Focussing on one does not preclude learning in another (ibid). For example, CPD can prioritise teacher learning to improve pupil outcomes (New South Wales Institute of Teachers 2007) or teacher learning “to develop the ability and desire to learn throughout their career” (Makopoulou and Armour 2011 p.586) or to align teacher practices with state policies (Day and Sachs 2004). Guskey (2000) has argued that the central goal of CPD is improving pupil outcomes. Mujis et al (2004) suggested that evaluation of the effectiveness of CPD should be formative (improving the experience) and summative (evaluating outcomes). Effectiveness in CPD has different meanings for different people (Opfer and Pedder 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Linking CPD solely to improved pupil outcomes is problematic and not automatic as it is complex (Opfer and Pedder 2011).

There is much consistency on what constitutes quality and poor CPD (Guskey 2000; Armour 2010). A large-scale survey of teacher experiences of CPD in the UK found that the evidence for teacher experiences of quality CPD was ‘bleak’ (Opfer and Pedder 2010). The majority of teachers experienced lecture-type, one-off, off site, generic, passive, learning-as-individuals CPD (Armour 2006, 2010; Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006; Opfer and Pedder 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Although this type of CPD may be necessary depending on its purpose, a variety of types of CPD experiences were important to support teacher learning (Guskey 2000; Armour 2010).

Based on research, Patton and Parker (2015) formulated a series of guideposts for effective CPD in PE, emphasising that it is a social process and based on teachers’ needs thus requiring careful facilitation. Patton and Parker suggested that teachers need to be active in their learning and include collaborative opportunities within learning communities (ibid). Patton and Parker also suggested that teachers ought to have opportunities to lead and have some control over the substance of the CPD and this is supported by Armour and Yelling 2004, 2007 and Armour 2006. Patton and Parker (2015) also suggested that teachers be provided with opportunities for critical dialogue as “a vital aspect of quality professional development” (O’Sullivan and Deglau 2006 p.447). Desimone (2009) also postulated that the core features of CPD including collective participation, coherence and active learning, led to an increase in teacher
knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes. She also suggested that specific contexts influenced teachers’ pedagogy and/or instructional content and this in turn influenced pupil learning. These contexts included the teacher (such as career stage, subject area), the pupils (and their characteristics), the curriculum, school and policy environment (such as national policies) and the specific subject matter content. Desimone (2009) also acknowledged the effects of the interactive relationships between CPD features and teachers’ beliefs, practices and pupils learning outcomes.

Beliefs are acknowledged to have an important role in teachers’ practices (Pajares 1992) and “serve as filters through which their learning takes place” (Tsangaridou 2006 p.486). As teaching involves evaluation, judgement and choice, teaching is “embedded in implicit and explicit beliefs” (ibid p.487) and this affects teaching practices. Noting that researchers link but distinguish between knowledge and beliefs, Pajares (1992) defined beliefs as being “based on evaluation and judgement; knowledge is based on objective fact” (p.313). Beliefs are firmly held convictions of the veracity of something (Merriam-Webster 2014). Leading to beliefs are individuals’ understandings, interpretations or comprehensions of their experiences (ibid). Teachers’ understandings of pupil learning influence what and how teachers teach (Tsangaridou 2006) and their teaching goals. In the relationship of beliefs to teaching practices, research has found mixed results in the alignment of teacher beliefs and practices (Pajares 1992; Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan 2003). Tsangaridou (2006) recommended that the context of teachers work needs to be described when considering their beliefs. She argued that there was “no easy distinction between beliefs and actions” (p.498) and much research was needed to enhance understandings on teachers’ beliefs on their practices.

Ennis (1992, 1994) found that PE teacher’s beliefs and values have a direct influence on their choice of content and the nature of their instructional and assessment methods. She also found, that teacher values and beliefs influence what pupils learn in class. These ‘value orientations’ are divided broadly into two categories. Academic goals are associated with the “body of knowledge in the discipline” (Ennis 1994 p.165), and include a demonstration of proficiency in various sports and fitness. Affective goals are associated with “the learner’s needs and interests and the social context” (ibid p.167) and for “enhancing student success and personal feelings of self-esteem and self-concept” (ibid p.167).
Within PE, Hellison and Templin (1991) described curriculum as the “what and why of teaching” (p.44) (the purposes of the PE programmes), and instruction as the “how” of teaching (ibid). Hellison and Templin (1991) organised curriculum models into a number of categories including: motor skills and games models (such as sport-education, multi-activity model); fitness models; personal-social development models (such as responsibility models, adventure education). Personal-social development models focus on affective learning (Hellison and Templin 1991) that focus on motivation, co-operation and personal responsibility. They provide a framework for the subject matter of the PE programme. Subject matter such as gymnastics, athletics are selected but are used to “facilitate the development of certain personal and social qualities” (ibid p.48). In her research, Ennis (1994) found urban PE teachers’ values and curricula emphasised affective goals of co-operation and respect. Teachers provided opportunities for pupils to interact positively and experience the results of responsible actions and feelings of success. Urban PE teachers justified their curricular goals of social responsibility by arguing that this was part of their job, to facilitate pupils to be ready to learn, listen, respect each other and follow directions (especially when the urban pupils lived in communities where there was much violence) (ibid).

Mujis et al (2004) state that the relationship between teacher learning and pupil learning and achievement as “difficult (and possibly intractable)” (p.295). Research on pupil learning outcomes arising from CPD is limited (Little (2004), who also stated that “developments in practice and research have developed largely independently of each other” (p.111). She concluded that research and practice were weakly attentive to one another to capitalise on developments in each area. CPD research found little evidence of changes in pupil learning (Armour and Yelling 2004; Ko et al 2006), with the exception of Hunuk et al (2012) (referred to later in the review). They suggest that better support is needed to address the complex contexts of implementing changes in teacher practices. Ward and O’Sullivan (2006) urged this support was needed particularly in urban schools. Armour (2010) stated that CPD suits the providers and policymakers who are rarely held accountable. She argued that CPD providers offer identical courses for teachers in different schools at different career stages and as a consequence teachers are “effectively deskilled” (p.6) over their careers with teachers colluding in “passive negativity” (p.6). Everyone in the profession shares responsibility
for quality CPD (Brookfield 1995). CPD providers have a responsibility to listen to teachers’ ‘voice’ for insights into the design and structure of CPD (Makopoulou and Armour 2011). This needs to be balanced between teachers’ needs and the theoretical focus of the content provider (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006; Patton et al 2013; Patton and Parker 2014; Tannehill 2014). It should attend to teachers’ contexts and “catalogue what they do in practice” (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006, p.378).

CPD is complex, challenging to provide, important to support and vital for teacher and pupil learning. Quality CPD includes supporting the teacher (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006, 2007) and the school (including management, colleagues and pupils) (Opfer and Pedder 2010, 2011a, 2011b). Pupils may inhibit teachers from making changes (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2007). Schools that are not supportive of teachers’ learning often are poor performing schools (Opfer and Pedder 2011a, 2011b). A system where PE CPD is systematically poorly supported serves neither the pupils nor the profession well.

2.2.2. Context of Post-Primary Education in Ireland

Much of recent European education policy has been informed by the Lisbon Strategy for Europe for the new millennium (Community Research and Development Information Services (CORDIS) 2005) and as a result performance indicators are now a part of education in Ireland (Gleeson and O’Donnabháin 2009). It envisions Europe as “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (Sahlberg 2010 p.1). Its priority is standardization in education, with a focus on core subjects of literacy and numeracy as the prime targets of education reform. International student assessment surveys such as the ‘performance indicators for student assessment’ (PISA) have become criteria of good educational performance and, as such “reading, mathematical and scientific literacy have now become the main determinants of perceived success or failure of pupils, teachers, schools, and entire educational systems” (Sahlberg 2010 p.11). This has led to an intensification of the education agenda along with increased accountability and performativity in standardised tests (Gleeson 2010). Performance in these tests increasingly act as a metric for ability and success for individuals, schools and nations (Kennedy and Power 2010; Sahlberg 2010). As a result, teacher PD is seen as one key to sustainable inclusive global development (McLennon and Thompson 2015).
Post-primary education in Ireland educates children from age 12 to 18 years. The dominating effect of standardized testing is through the Leaving Certificate exam (the terminal exam that serves as the route to tertiary education) and the ‘points’ system. ‘Points’ are used to calculate pupil attainment and grant access to university. This has a negative effect on the education of children where teaching to the exam, narrowing of curricula to that of examinations, and a didactic, transmission style of teaching (Gilleece et al 2009; Hennessy and McNamara 2011; Smyth et al 2011; Lynch et al 2013) is common. Teachers generally do not collaborate, team-teach, peer-observe (Gilleece et al 2009), engage in reflective practice, or engage with research (Kiely 2003 cited in Gleeson 2010). The main reasons cited are the traditional autonomy enjoyed by teachers in Ireland (Gilleece et al 2009), school culture and structures (such as timetabling and school leadership priorities) (McMillan et al 2014). Subjects (such as PE) that do not contribute to the accumulation of ‘points’ occupy low status positions in schools (Lynch and Lodge 2002). Teachers of high status subject have greater access to resources in schools (such as instructional time) (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2015a).

Teachers’ working conditions have intensified (Wall 2015) due to economic austerity measures. This has resulted in increased teacher productivity, extra supervision of pupils, substitution for absent colleagues, 33 (unpaid) hours per annum of other extra duties (such as school planning and CPD) within school (ibid). Other proposals included wide ranging curricular, pedagogical and examination reform (such as Junior Certificate Schools Award (JCSA)), a myriad of inspectorate demands and new policy initiatives (such as literacy and inclusion) (Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate (DESI) 2011a). This is offset against a substantial pay reduction, financial levies, reduced expenditure, staff, and CPD provision (Harford 2010, Sugrue 2011). The negative effect on teachers, a reduction of their ‘good will’ and willingness to provide unpaid extra work has been expressed by the teacher unions (Wall 2015) and includes PE teachers (Greene 2015).

This has resulted in tensions between individual teacher autonomy and system/school imperatives for performance that “squeeze out autonomy and …reward compliance and uniformity” (Kennedy 2014 p.691). However, non-examination subject areas within
schools (such as PE) are not subject to such relentless scrutiny, yet remain accountable
to the inspectorate and school management. However, PE teachers have greater
pedagogical autonomy to interpret the curriculum and adapt it to the needs of their
pupils, despite the difficulties of low status (Halbert and MacPhail 2010).

The practice of second-level teachers can be scrutinised and evaluated from the policies
of the Teaching Council (TC) and the DESI. Those who specifically reference CPD and
the reflective practice of teachers in their policy documents are the National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), DESI, and the TC. I focus on the latter two
because the former is non-regulatory.

The Teaching Council

In Ireland, since 2006, the Teaching Council (TC) is responsible for the regulation of
the teaching profession and implements policies (such as teacher education and training,
professional conduct) (TC 2011, 2012). Teacher practice in the 2012 code is described
in relation to school/classroom practices exclusively: “The role of a teacher is to
educate” (TC 2012 p.5). The TC states that “the State and the profession share a
responsibility for the continuing professional development of teachers” (2011 p.6) in its
role to support high quality teacher education for high quality teaching. CPD is defined
by the TC as:

... life-long teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences
designed to enrich a teachers’ professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities
throughout their careers. (TC 2011 p.19)

The framework for teachers’ learning under consideration by the TC (2016) (Cosán)
formally recognises and acknowledges teachers’ learning and includes activities such as
formalised courses, workshops that transmit knowledge, and less formal activities such
as reading academic literature. It also includes writing academic literature, mentoring,
collaborative professional inquiry and delivering workshops. The National induction
Programme for teachers forms the framework for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) of
which ‘Droichead’ is a part. ‘Droichead’ is a schools-based model of teacher induction
the emerging state’s professional standards’ CPD framework for teaching. Their research concluded that patterns of resistance or acceptance by teachers on policies that shaped visions of teacher performances could not be understood until the standards regimes were talked about in the discourses of power. With their accompanying surveillance and accountability imperatives, the authors suggested that teachers might become ‘constructed’, ‘docile’ and ‘codified’ through the CPD requirements and promote a normalising routine of teacher behaviour and beliefs. It remains to be seen how CPD activities (such as within a CoP) fare under new regulations.

The TC perceives teachers and teacher educators as knowledge creators where there is a mutual dialogue and collegial culture within and between schools and universities (TC 2011). Opportunities for celebration and sharing of teacher practices are increasing:

1. The joint conference (invitation-only) of the TC, NCCA and the Centre for Effective Studies, ‘Research Alive!’ (NCCA 2013)
2. The TC’s (invitation-only) ‘Féilte’, begun in 2013 (TC 2014)
3. The proposed teacher research network site ‘Molfeasa’ (NCCA 2015b).

These represent steps towards systematic developing and sharing of a knowledge base of teachers.

While CPD is “a right and a responsibility” (TC 2011 p.19) for all teachers, they also acknowledge that teachers’ CPD needs may not be met (TC 2012). The focus of CPD is based “...on teachers’ identified needs within the school as a learning community” (TC 2011 p.19). While catering for teacher needs is articulated, it does not state who identifies these needs, or once identified, whose needs take priority or how these needs can be met. The challenge is to acquire government funding for these mandates. There is no precise definition of teachers’ practice. However the TC acknowledges the contribution of collegiate collaboration, research and so forth (TC 2016), teachers’ practices are conceptualised as being in the classroom.

Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate

The role of the inspectorate in schools in Ireland includes the inspection of schools and
school subjects for the quality of teaching and learning at primary and post-primary levels. It contributes to quality assurance for educational provision, produces data and assists in policy development for the government (DES 2011a, 2011b). The chief inspector’s vision is:

If we are to have really effective teachers and schools, then we have to cultivate truly reflective practitioners. Such teachers will recognise the need to reflect on the quality of their own practice; they will accept a responsibility to contribute to professional, collegial conversations about improvement in the school; they will be open to having their practice viewed and commented upon by colleagues; and they will accept routine observation and indeed appraisal of their work by principals. (Hislop, 2013 p.19)

No structural suggestions to facilitate these are provided, nor is it specifically referred to in the DES Inspectorate (DESI) School Self Evaluation (SSE) framework (DESI 2012). This gives a clear understanding that a teacher’s role also is that of a professional colleague in the school setting, but Hislop does not indicate to what use the peer observation and principal appraisal might be put. This statement requires further development for it to be used in schools. The inspectorate also encourages critical reflection as SSE:

...involves thinking critically about the aims and key priorities of the school and what needs to be done to bring about improvements in the students’ learning. (DESI 2012 p.10)

DESI links teacher appraisal and reflective practices with the performance of the educational system:

Our lack of teacher appraisal or teacher reflective practice and appraisal at present must also be viewed in the context of the capacity of our education system at this point in time. (Hislop 2013 p.19, original emphases)

While teacher reflection, collaboration, and critical thinking are considered important, Sugrue (2011) noted the “language of the inspectorate resonates more with compliance, control and prescription” (p.808). Despite having an internal regulatory structure, within this literature search no evidence of an external evaluation review process of the inspectorate was found (except where a chief inspector’s decision on an inspection review is appealed) (DESI 2015) – so who is inspecting the inspectors or the inspection system? As the role of the inspectorate is to ensure the quality of educational provision,
structures of the dialogue and power relations between inspectorate and schools is unclear.

**Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)**

There is recognition that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disadvantaged within the current education system in Ireland, despite efforts to redress this (Weir 2011, Weir et al 2014). DEIS is an action plan for educational inclusion to ensure that schools serving the most disadvantaged 3-18 year-old communities are given the best support available with prioritised funding to improve literacy, numeracy and educational attainment. The failure of system-wide attempts to reduce disadvantage is acknowledged, and education plays one part (DES 2011a, 2011b).

Differences in achievement between rural and urban DEIS schools at primary level have been established. Rural DEIS school achievements “...were greater than that of their urban counterparts, and closer to the national norm” (Weir 2011 p.9). Weir suggested it was linked to reduced school choice in rural areas giving a broader breadth of pupil intake in schools (no data exist on second level DEIS schools). They recorded a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in urban DEIS schools. Weir (2011) found that two thirds of urban school teachers identified a need for improvement in the provision of CPD for teachers in urban DEIS schools, in relation to “provision for students with emotional or behavioural difficulties” (p.14). These challenges were also raised in the second-level report (Weir et al 2014). Reduction of staff numbers (for example guidance counselling, psychological services) was also considered a major problem as it was felt to impact on the most disadvantaged pupils. Working in a DEIS school has many challenges and burnout has been a serious factor for some teachers:

> ...the implementation of DEIS brings additional challenges to staff and that there is no allowance made for the stress and difficulties that come with additional initiatives. (Weir et al 2014 p.29)

It is in this context that the Urban Schools Group (USG) PE teachers work. ‘Urban intensive schools’ (henceforth ‘urban schools’) are schools with pupils from predominantly socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, with proportionately higher numbers of ethnic minorities and single parent families living in urban
populations (Milner 2012a). The preparation and PD of teachers is considered to be the most important criteria for improving education in urban schools (Darling-Hammond 1994; Milner 2012b). In addition to a role in improving pupil performance in standardised tests, teachers in urban schools play a ‘pivotal role’ in the social, emotional, behavioural and cognitive development of their pupils (Milner 2012a). Teachers are also expected to be inclusive in their practices (DES 2011a, 2011b). This affects curricular decision-making, pedagogies and assessment in culturally and educationally diverse urban schools (Naraian and Ovler 2014). This is challenging and requires critically reflective practices (ibid).

**Continuing Professional Development in Ireland**

Since 2010 the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) was established as a generic, multi-disciplinary and integrated cross-sectoral support service for teachers in Ireland (DES 2011b). The PDST oversees the teaching of specific subject areas as well as programme support such as ‘Leaving Cert Applied’, and the planning support service for overall school planning (DES 2011b). Personnel employed within the PDST are usually seconded teachers and principals (Sugrue 2011). Other providers of CPD (not PDST) include national PD initiatives such as Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century (Hogan et al 2007), Project Maths (NCCA 2008), award bearing courses in universities and colleges (Sugrue 2011), as well as private providers.

CPD structures influence teachers’ experiences of CPD. An international survey of teachers and principals examined how policies impact conditions for effective schooling (The Teaching and Learning In Schools programme (TALIS 2009; Gilleece et al 2009). TALIS perspectives of quality CPD involved PD ‘days’ during scheduled or non-scheduled hours, mentoring, peer support and peer evaluation, CoPs, attending conferences and informal activities such as reading papers and engaging in dialogue with peers. Researchers found that teachers in Ireland did 5.6 days of PD on average in an 18 month period, the lowest average in the OECD, and that 94% of these PD events took place during scheduled hours. Teachers rarely mentored or were observed for peer evaluation and many teachers felt that barriers to CPD were the inappropriate and lack of availability of PD (Gilleece et al 2009).
TALIS data were collected prior to the economic collapse of 2008 and therefore do not necessarily reflect PD provision in 2013/4 (the time of data collection). Austerity measures had reduced the already limited availability of CPD (Sugrue 2011). There are few opportunities for teacher-led CPD, and little or no culture of teachers sharing their practice experiences. For many teachers, PD is ‘received development’, something ‘done to’ teachers rather than with or by them (Gilleece et al 2009 p.48). The report noted a lack of opportunities for teachers to engage in collegiality and partnership (Gilleece et al 2009). Limited opportunities exist to engage in critical education debate (Gleeson 2010) or challenging ideologies (Kennedy and Power 2010).

Research on the experiences of CPD by teachers in Ireland (Kiely 2003 cited by Gleeson 2010; Gilleece et al 2009; Fitzpatrick 2013; McMillan et al 2014) found that CPD was mostly training days away from the school context with a focus on the transmission of and technical adjustments to practice (Gleeson 2010). CPD was focussed on examinations and curricular change (Harford 2010, Gleeson 2010), rather than on developing pedagogy or reflective practice (Harford 2010). Linked to this is PE’s lower status and reduced opportunities for suitable CPD which are challenges to both teacher and CPD provider/facilitator. Despite the increasing requirement for teacher professionalism:

Teachers’ experience of continuous professional development is fragmented and often ad hoc, and CPD itself is often narrowly defined, lacking in theoretical basis, and rolled out in stops and starts rather than in any coherent or sustainable way. (Harford 2010 p.355)

Teachers accessed CPD because it was compulsory and during school time (Gilleece et al 2009). Award based CPD was accessed for personal growth, career advancement and the potential to improve teaching (McMillan et al 2014). Barriers to engaging in CPD were lack of time (Fitzpatrick 2013), work schedules, cost and lack of employer support (Gilleece et al 2009). CPD ought to be available throughout a teacher’s career (TC 2011, 2012) and is described as ‘policy-as-discourse’ rather than ‘policy-as-practice’ (Green 2002 cited in Harford 2010 p.355).

Much educational policy in Ireland urged teachers to make efforts to improve their practice based on research (for example TC 2011, 2012) yet there is no recognition for
teachers who engage in research, publish, or engage in collaborative professional inquiry (Lynch et al 2013). Teacher experiences, beliefs, classroom practices and the influence of school culture has not been the subject of research (ibid). The evaluations of various CPD measures by governments do not normally prioritise the experience of the teacher over the results of the pupils (Sahlberg 2010). Teachers’ experiences of quality CPD need to be researched and shared.

**Physical Education in Ireland**

PE is not compulsory in Ireland nor is it an examinable subject (NCCA 2003; MacPhail et al 2005) as is current practice. Beginning September 2017 PE will be part of the ‘Wellbeing’ programme, compulsory for all Junior Cycle pupils in all schools – “students must study Physical Education” (DES circular 0015/2017 p.8). This research was conducted prior to the proposed change and all references are made to the present system. There is a priority in Ireland of standardised tests (Quinn 2011) and Leaving Certificate ‘points’ (Gleeson 2010; Kennedy and Power 2010; Sugrue 2011; Lynch et al 2013). Considering these priorities are set against reduced expenditure in education in general (Sugrue 2011), the low status of PE in Ireland (MacPhail et al 2005; O’Sullivan 2006; Halbert and MacPhail 2010) is even more pronounced.

PE ought to be allocated two hours of teaching time per week per pupil with a qualified teacher (NCCA 2003). In the absence of more recent research, MacPhail et al (2005) found that PE was poorly resourced, with low timetabled hours, insufficient personnel, limited equipment and low fiscal interest by the DES. The type of PE taught was games oriented and found “…evidence that teachers enjoy a high level of flexibility and autonomy” (Halbert and MacPhail 2010 p.33). The need for advocacy for PE by PE teachers in school is ‘relentless’, especially if that teacher is a sole PE teacher (Clonan 2006). Historically, low employment of qualified PE teachers in schools has meant high pupil-teacher ratios, with one PE teacher for over 500 pupils in some schools (MacPhail et al 2005). Many PE teachers are the sole practitioner in their schools. Along with the co-curricular unpaid contribution of school coaching activities, this can lead to teacher burnout (O’Sullivan 2006; Halbert and MacPhail 2010).
PE specific PD was fragmented and ad-hoc until 2003. It was ‘almost non-existent’, provided on non-school days and mostly delivered by subject association personnel or sporting bodies (O’Sullivan 2006). PE at Junior Cycle (12-15 years) was prescribed in 2003 for the first time (Halbert and MacPhail 2010) with a revised syllabus (NCCA 2003). A national PD programme was introduced in 2003 involving three days over three years (later revised to five days) for each qualified PE teacher, during school time (Halbert and MacPhail, 2010). The PD for the revised syllabus focussed on teacher planning, pedagogy, and support for adopting the new programme.

Most recent Irish PE PD initiatives are structured around CoP principles (Halbert and MacPhail 2010). CoP principles (see theme two, p.26) are also part of the PDST PE plan of networking PE teachers in conjunction with the education centres and the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) “as part of a collaborative learning framework as a potentially effective model for professional development” (Halbert and MacPhail 2010 p.35). The Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service (JCPESS) (2009) envisaged supporting the PD of teachers in three ways: embedding the Junior Cycle syllabus through school based support and local networks; creating structures to build capacity-building within the PE community; and research and development. An aspect of this was supporting CoPs – an example of which was the Kerry Education Service PE project, supported locally, regionally and nationally which sought to implement models of good PE practices using assessment and pupils’ learning (O’Reilly 2009). It also sought to develop a model of good practice that would be used to support clusters of teachers working in similar contexts nationally (JCPESS 2009).

It is in this professional context that PE teachers experience their daily lives in Irish schools. O’Sullivan (2006) concluded that PD providers should avoid simplistic assumptions about teacher needs and desires to learn, especially veteran teachers, “given their resilience and strategic compliance honed over the years” (p. 265). CPD needs to be ‘future proofed’ for an increasingly complex and demanding role. This requires that teachers develop a capacity to learn to adapt and improve their practices to cope with (as yet unseen and complex) professional issues over the career span (Makopoulo and Armour 2011; Opfer and Pedder 2011a, 2011b).
There have been examples of successful CPD for PE teachers in urban schools based on strategic, long-term support and collaboration between university and schools (Ward and O’Sullivan 2006; Tannehill and Murphy 2010; Tannehill 2014). Teachers can be the agents of change through CPD and their beliefs and understandings of an ‘initiative’ are important to sustain the change (NCCA 2010; Opfer and Pedder 2010; King 2014). It is a complex process (Fullan 1991) needing research (Gleeson and O’Donnabháin 2009; Opfer and Pedder 2011a, 2011b). When they are changing their practices it “causes teachers to reflect on their competence and identity” (Armour and Yelling 2004 p.178) and teachers need support in building their confidence and belief to make those changes. Consultation with and observation of other teachers were considered as a ‘definitely effective’ source of learning (Rait 1995 p.98).

Teachers need opportunities to discuss issues in the application of new ideas to their contexts (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006; O’Sullivan and Deglau 2006) including in urban contexts (Byrd-Blake and Hundley 2012). They need to be able to: talk about their practices; critically discuss PE issues with peers; and share their knowledge (of teaching, learning, pupils, and subject matter). They rarely get this opportunity (Opfer and Pedder 2010). Teachers are often silenced (Makopoulou and Armour 2011) and limited opportunities for talk can inhibit teachers from making changes (Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2007) and their capacity to learn (Makopoulou and Armour 2011). This talk can help them to make the “practical and conceptual leaps” to envisage the idea of the initiative and how they will adopt it in their context (Tannehill et al 2013 p.155).

Teacher educators and researchers wrote of the value of talk (conversation) to support teacher understandings, insights and to develop their reflections (Borko 2004; Tannehill et al 2013; Tannehill 2014): “conversation is the single most efficient agent for clarifying and enriching the consumption of research” (Tannehill et al 2013, p.xxiv) both formal and informal, wherever the opportunity arises (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Deglau et al 2006; Ni Chrónin et al 2006; O’Sullivan 2007b; Parker et al 2010). This is an under-researched area within CPD for PE teachers, and we need to establish if teachers use ‘talk’ to help them reflect, makes sense of and change their practices in a CoP (and, if so, how they do so). Some see a mutually supporting role for teacher educators and teachers in making changes and linking practice and theory:
Instead of separating theory from practice, we must help pre-service and practising teachers see the connection between the two, interpret what research is telling us about practice, and find ways to adapt and revise it for our own practice. (Tannehill et al 2013, p.xx)

There is little research on practitioner-driven CPD that demonstrates how it can be supported or how it can inform future CPD models (Tannehill and MacPhail 2016). The next section concentrates on CoPs as a framework for providing CPD.

2.3. THEME TWO: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

This theme offers an overview and critique of Social Learning Theory and CoPs proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991). It is followed by a review of the literature on PE professionals’ CoPs. Collaboration between teachers is seen as vital for CPD and changes to practice (Borko 2004; McLaughlin and Talbert 2006; Lieberman and Miller 2008; Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) across the career spectrum (Bolam et al 2005). The TC sees teachers as members of professional learning communities (PLCs) “in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice” (TC 2012 p.8). Collaborative learning practices of CoPs are recognised as providing this support and are key to teacher learning and change (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006). However, there is little insight on the influence on teachers’ practices, understandings and beliefs from actively engaged professional communities grappling with their day-to-day practice challenges.

Overview of Social Learning Theory and CoPs

Traditionally, learning was seen as a cognitive act that separated body and mind, knowledge and context, person and world (Brown 1994, 1997; Conway 2002; Fuller 2007). It was seen as the transmission of acquired knowledge from one who knew to one who did not. Wenger-Trayner (2015) suggested that learning models (or a combination) are used to guide, foster and evaluate learning including constructivism, behaviourism and cognitive models, but these epistemologies were insufficient to cater for the dynamic, innovative, social, problem-solving requirements of the future. Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed a theory of learning that arises from the co-production of knowledge and activity (‘situated learning’). Learning, knowledge, and context are mutually bound together (ibid):
Knowledge is not a separate object from the people who produced it or even the process of producing it. It is part of the mutual engagement through which participants refine and expand their experiences of practice. (Wenger 2009 p.4)

Social learning spaces enable interactions among participants who can bring their experiences of practice and of themselves in that practice to the ‘learning table’ (Wenger 2009). CoPs are the simplest social learning units with characteristics of social learning systems, each with its own boundaries of participation (Wenger 2010). CoPs are:

...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting in an ongoing basis. (Wenger et al 2002 p.40)

CoPs are distinguished from other groups by having a shared history of learning through:

1. Mutual engagement (participants supporting each other)
2. Joint enterprise (collective understanding of purposes and activities)

Relationships are built to enable a joint inquiry into practice (Wenger 2009) involving a joint reflection on practice and a shared professional identity (Wenger 1998). The activity of participants in social learning spaces (what they do) is their learning and there is no separation between what they produce and what they do (Lave and Wenger (1991). Learning can be assumed from participation.

Responding to questions of the rigor regarding knowledge claimed from non-traditional knowledge (not based on ‘research’), Wenger (2009) claimed there was a dual rigor of accountability that involves a “discipline of inquiry that takes practice as the place of knowledge and the person as the vehicle of knowledgeability” (Wenger 2009 p.3). First is knowledge as practice that is inseparable from those who produce it and is reified by documents, stories and ideas. ‘Traditional’ objectified knowledge is significant only if practitioners can negotiate its relevance to the contexts of the work of the community. Second is knowledge as identity, anchored in practice. Participants pursue learning as a “change in their ability to participate in the world, as a transformation in their identity”
(Wenger 2009 p.4). Through the mutual constitution of practice and identity, learning becomes knowledge when it:

...changes the experiences of engagement in practice... and the ability to find meaning in activities and to engage competently with other people involved. (Wenger 2009 p.4)

Members of a CoP are ‘knowledgeable’ through competent engagement with the CoP, depending on their skills and position within the CoP (ibid). This is a form of identity (and power, by judging who and what is considered competent) that is anchored in practice (ibid).

Wenger (1998a) clarified the importance of ‘ways of talking’ in CoPs. Through CoPs, members learn with and from each other, and must be able to express their experiences of practice to enable access to their experiences to serve as the learning within the community (Wenger 2009). To make coherent the experiences, thoughts and ideas, there is vulnerability when “...opening the door of the reflection on the messiness of practice. One’s identity may easily seem at stake” (Wenger 2009 p.5). Trust, commitment, involvement, mutuality, sharing, reciprocity, and solidarity are characteristics of effective CoPs (Hughes et al 2007; Wenger 2009; Parker et al 2010) and involve giving ‘voice’ to experiences, perspectives, reframing stories, and “reframing who we are” (Wenger 2009 p.6). Active engagement with a CoP is a collective reflection on the practices of the community, a collective ‘reflective practice’:

Social learning is largely a process of collective reflection on practice, with a view to solving problems and improving practice. It is a conceptualization that includes but expands Schön’s version - especially if you start including boundaries in between practices. (Wenger-Trayner 2016 personal correspondence)

The trust and support of a CoP allow for the members to take risks, have challenging discussions that facilitate deeper understandings leading to trying out new practices (Wenger 2009, Parker et al 2013). For teachers to change their practice requires much time, reflection, experimentation, critique and a contextual understanding of how the change works in practice requiring support, such as from colleagues, pupils and the university (Rovegno and Dolly 2006).

Piaget (1973) emphasised the close relationship between language, thought and
learning. This concurs with Bakhtin (1981) who suggested that we assimilate the words of others as part of our development and learning, and the more words (discourses) we can choose from, the more opportunities we have to learn. This gives a place and importance to voice (Sugrue 2004), including teachers’ voice (Brookfield 1995) which is important to explore (Clandinin and Connelly 1995). CoPs require time and opportunities for dialogue to form new visions of teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999) and can improve knowledge about teaching (Borko 2004).

Wenger (2009) developed Social Learning Theory to include accountability, expressibility, learning citizenship and landscapes of practices for CoP participants. Learning can result in an ordered system of participation or a regime of competences:

The community’s social negotiation of what constitutes competence results in a regime of competence: membership in good standing entails accountability to that practice. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015 p. 13)

Practice in the CoP is the curriculum of social learning spaces with the challenges of classroom practice driving the curriculum, and the experiences are the learning resources in social learning spaces. CoP members are accountable to that practice. They are also accountable to identity in how to engage competently with other practitioners (ways of behaving and talking) and finding meaning in activities (shared values). Participants need to be able to express their experience of practice and who they are in that experience “to serve as the substance of learning” (Wenger 2009 p.4). This is manifest in expressibility of practice in which CoP participants bring their experience of practice into the learning space and enable others to access that experience. It is done through talk (Wenger 2009) and what is known, not known, and what can be learned from each other is shared. It is also manifest in expressibility of identity as participants locate themselves in the practice and discuss it. This can change identity and is part of the meaningfulness of participation.

A ‘Body of knowledge’ is a “community of people who contribute to the continued vitality, application and evolution of the practice” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.13). Thus, a profession is comprised of multiple communities within its landscape, consequentially with multiple boundaries between them, a landscape of
practices (LoP). The PE landscape of practices (LoPE) could be seen to consist of competing voices and claims to knowledge, such as within the research community, the inspectorate and teachers in mainstream schools with access to adequate facilities. The body of knowledge within a PE community could comprise: teachers; researchers and academics; teacher educators; CPD providers/facilitators; legislators and curriculum developers; government bodies; sporting and coaching groups; pupils and school colleagues, including management and parents; related professionals such as psychologists; and local communities. These are both local and global depending on the interactions and participants within the community. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) stated no practice contains the ‘whole’ of the landscape and all practices are local. Knowledge in one practice is not simply implemented in another as “...relationships among practices are at once epistemologically flat, politically unequal and potentially contestable” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015 p. 16). Boundaries are learning assets (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015) and crossings are crucial in a LoP. Applying knowledge on a course (such as within CPD) to real-life practices is problematical (the ‘splits’ between theory and practice (Schön 1983)).

LoPs are key locations for social learning capability in contributing to the body of knowledge of the PE profession. Allied to LoPs is the concept of knowledgeability as an outcome of learning with respect to the landscape and used to account for complex relationships that people build across the landscape:

...knowledgeability entails translating this complex experience of the landscape, both its practices and their boundaries, into a meaningful moment of service. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.23)

Knowledgeability is considered by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) as a counterpart at the level of the landscape to the concept of competence that is defined at the level of CoPs.

Wenger (2009) described the management of participation in and across learning spaces as ‘learning citizenship’. The interplay of individual learning trajectories and the dynamics of social learning spaces complement each other and can enable or inhibit social learning systems such as the LoPE. Forms of learning citizenship include: the
quality and level of engagement as being central or peripheral participants, experts or novices; engaging with or exiting the learning spaces; brokering the boundaries between the spaces by stimulating interactions between them; convening new social learning spaces. The latter is the:

...most significant act of learning citizenship in terms of opening new possibilities for learning and legitimizing the need to care about an issue. (Wenger 2009 p.7)

**Critique of CoPs**

Social learning theory takes a social perspective on learning processes, and “learning takes place in the relation between the person and the world” (Wenger-Trayner 2013 p.4). A CoP is a technical term that “localises this relation in the social world” (ibid p.5). CoPs are units of social learning relations. The study of CoPs contributes to the understanding of social learning theory, but CoPs comprise only a part of the theory as it was later developed to include landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b).

Hughes (2007) argued that Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory lacked coherency and conceptualised learning theories abstractly without context or evidence, were concerned at how learning was and then prescribed how learning should be – they replaced “a one-sided view of learning with an equally one-sided version” (Hughes 2007 p.39), and has limitations as a result. Wenger (2009) clarified the dual rigors of social-learning theory and countered that the epistemological position from which it was conceptualised was central to his argument. Hughes et al (2007) also argued that ‘situated learning’ was a useful analytical tool but was used as a social technology and had not been systematically developed. Wenger (2009, 2010) and Wenger-Trayner’s (2013, 2014) later publications made efforts to provide context and evidence to the theory. They have updated and clarified their theory. A framework for analysis and planning social learning was created based on evidence and used in their recent work with diverse communities that open possibilities for innovation and transformation (Wenger-Trayner 2015).

Similar social learning theories have different emphases. Vygotsky’s (1978) (cited in UNESCO 2003) socio-cultural learning theory asserted that learning was on two levels:
first, through interaction with others; and then integrated into the ‘mental structure’ of the individual. Constructivist theory suggests that learners actively engage their own knowledge construction by integrating new knowledge into their existing understanding and meanings set in their social and historical contexts (UNESCO 2003). These provide psychological lenses of learning where collaborative learning and discourse support ‘intentional learning’ with the focus on the individual and uses ‘cognitive conceptual making’ (Wilson and Myers 2000). This is similar to another definition of CoP that allows for the joint construction of contextualised knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999). The emphasis here is on the individual and how as part of a community, knowledge is jointly constructed. Illeris (2003) criticised situated learning theory for disregarding internal psychological processes and focussing solely on external interaction processes. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theoretical lens is anthropological, it is specific in how it describes learning as a change in practice and identity: the activity within a CoP is the learning and a change of identity regarding competency of engagement within the CoP indicates the relationship of the individual to the learning in a CoP (Wenger 2009). Learning is an assumed result of participation in a CoP.

Much of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) empirical evidence showed a harmonious, clearly defined unit. It did not show conflict, tension, silencing, repression, cultural clashes (such as ‘expert’, facilitator, different values and beliefs) and can establish inequalities between members (Hughes et al 2007). It is not always benign and beneficial (Aubrey and Riley 2016) and can be considered as a conservative method of CPD. Hierarchies of prestige and moral values embedded in modes of talk may exist in the CoP, thus the work within the community may not be benign. Issues of power and marginalisation may be reproduced within, on and by a CoP and need to be examined. Hughes (2007) argued that the CoP model has been commandeered by a managerial discourse as an ‘ideal’ model of a learning group “…from an analytical model to a practitioner tool, and appears to have lost much of its critical centre through this translation” (p.38). As a result, CoPs can be used as an instrumental approach to the management of learning and PD that match with management goals, such as learning how to implement government policy rather that challenge its value (Billett 2007). It may also reproduce poor practice
Hughes et al (2007) also claimed that it had a limited capacity for transformation and change and may reproduce dominant power relations:

Their entire model is one of transmission and reproduction of knowledge rather than creation or invention. (Hughes et al 2007 p.174)

In response, Wenger (2009, 2010) acknowledged that CoPs have been commandeered and used in ways unfaithful to CoP. He recommended that core positions within a CoP ought not to reflect hierarchical positions within the external workplace. Alternatively, CoPs (“creative coping cells”) (Sugrue 2004 p.86) can provide safe spaces over the career span for teachers to exercise control over their learning, to escape the distorting effect of prescribed CPD (Sugrue 2004). Wenger-Trayner’s (2015) recent research with diverse communities, challenge these notions but acknowledge that a CoP can reproduce or transform (or both). Knowledgeable engagement with multiple CoPs can assist participants in having broader perspectives on the community’s practices (Wenger 2009) and this may help balance reproductive/transformative tendencies.

Research and state policy support teachers participating in communities to enhance their own learning and their pupils (TC 2012; Hislop 2013) although they do not suggest structures and guidelines of how this is to be achieved. A noted contribution to learning in communities is their increased capacity for learning and knowledge production (Brown 1994):

Learning is a social process, where the process in critical ways comprises the product and where the knowledge generated by the community is more than the sum of individuals’ learning. Communities of practice generate knowledge and understanding that are different in kind than that produced by individuals alone. (McLaughlin and Zarrow 2001 cited by Armour and Yelling 2007 p.195)

Learning within CoPs is situated within prior structural constraints that can afford or constrain participation (within CoPs) (Lave and Wenger 1991). Although Brown’s
(1994) understanding of the goal of this increased capacity for learning and knowledge production within CoPs was to enact roles typical of a dialogic research community, she did not explain this conceptualisation. Glazer and Hannafin (2006) recommended that teachers had greater opportunities to lead their own learning through talk, storytelling and support through CoPs, however lack of time to collaborate was a major roadblock in this. Mutual access to ‘real-world’ teacher and academic communities is also structurally and perhaps conceptually constrained. More research is needed that shows how they solve everyday problems of practice.

Vescio et al (2008) reviewed 11 studies (USA and UK) and the impact of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on teaching practices and pupil learning. PLCs are similar to CoPs (Lieberman and Miller 2008) but do not necessarily have a shared practice. Vescio et al (2008) noted a tendency for small-scale, qualitative, teacher-led research and recommended longitudinal, observational, in-depth case studies of changes arising from PLCs. They queried results derived from facilitator-researcher studies and suggested they “were the positive findings as a result of the interest and involvement of the teachers in an innovation as opposed to a benefit specifically tied to participation in a PLC” (p.88). They cautioned that results from teacher-led research and PLCs were limited by the workplace horizons of the members:

This can create paradigms of thinking that privilege certain voices and epistemologies based on preconceived notions of right, wrong, good or bad in schooling. (ibid p.89)

They suggested that independent evaluation of teacher-led innovations may help to overcome this perceived limitation. Perhaps the same is true of all research not solely teacher or facilitator-led research.

The perception of learning processes between novices - old-timers, that prioritised novices, is considered to be imbalanced (Fuller 2007). The learning trajectory of novices moving through increasing levels of participation (Lave and Wenger 1991) omits the complexity of CoP membership and participation. Wenger (2009) acknowledged that his theory made no “sweeping claim” (p.216) and his approach was incompatible with others. He clarified his theory to account for increasingly complex participation in CoPs.
Two clarifications relate to this study. First, he identified different types of CoP participation (Team BE 2011). The deepest level of CoP participation lies at the core of the CoP and comprise its co-ordinators/leaders. The next level of participation is the active membership of the CoP, moving through to occasional, peripheral (newcomers and/or beginners) and finally transactional participants comprising supporters, clients or outsiders. The original notion of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) was meant to convey meaningful participation by an individual (a beginner in the periphery) through authentic or genuine engagement with the CoP (Lave and Wenger 1991). However, this idea was insufficient to underpin the more complex relationships and trajectories in a CoP. Wenger wrote about the interconnected ‘weave’ of learning trajectories (1998) as new skills and ideas are introduced to professional CoPs such as developments in technology. Therefore, although LPP describes one type of participation in a CoP, it is but one of multiple types within a complex weave of participations.

Second, he developed his theory to include multiple CoP membership. ‘Boundaries’ are distinctions between membership and non-membership of different CoPs (Wenger 2009). CoPs constitute a complex social landscape through the weaving of shared practices, boundaries and peripheries, and the individual trajectories of identity through different participation forms within CoPs (landscapes of practice) (Wenger 1998). As members of many CoPs, we may or may not carry our learning from one learning space (CoP) to another along with important insights or challenges across boundaries between differing CoP spaces. Such insights may reshape the boundaries if it generates significant interactions between the spaces and promote innovation- “Innovation often happens at boundaries when things are combined in new ways” (Wenger 2009 p.7). This ‘thickened weave’ of social interaction may increase the learning trajectories of members within multiple CoPs (rather than simply from novice to expert) (ibid). It may also empower and/or constrain, alienate and/or include them. It is important to examine opportunities for CoP ‘brokerage’ in our professional landscape and where they occur and what innovations and new learning trajectories may result.

Wenger (1998b) suggested phases of development for CoPs that O’Sullivan (2007) adapted to relate to CoPs. These phases include:
1. Potential phase where teachers find each other, and find out what they have in common but do not have a shared practice;

2. Coalescing phase involves connecting and negotiating with each other, establishing joint enterprise and planning actions. The potential for the CoP is recognised;

3. Active phase is when the CoP have mutual engagement to a shared practice and commit to the enterprise of the community;

4. Dispersed phase is when members communicate to keep in contact and seek advice. It is not as intense as the previous phase but remains as a centre of knowledge;

5. Memorable phase is when the community is not central but remembered.

The life-cycle of a CoP can have greater or lesser significance for members. If the activities are no longer meaningful to its members, it ceases being a CoP (Wenger 1998a) or individuals change their participation levels within the community. The next section examines research on CoPs.

**PE and Communities of Practice**

The research on CoPs and situated learning do not always share the same theoretical perspectives, nor are these perspectives clear. Like Lave and Wenger (1991), O’Sullivan (2007b) interpreted learning in a CoP through situated learning theory as “...it produces a shared practice as members engage in a collective process of learning” (p.11). Kirk and MacDonald (1998) analysed its potential contribution to learning in PE through sport-education. Their emphasis on learning as participation or construction by an individual is unclear - they state the “focus on the social settings that construct and constitute the individual as a learner” (p.379/380). Kirk and MacDonald (1998) iterated that Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory required “conceptual sharpening and empirical support” (p.381). Later conceptions of Wenger’s theory (2009) restated its emphasis as an anthropological construct rather than a psychological construct through which constructivism is generally aligned (UNESCO 2003). Parker et al (2010) used Kirk and MacDonald’s (1998) conception of situated learning as being a constructivism concept. Parker et al (2013) interpreted Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory with knowledge as
‘acquisition’ (rather than competent participation (Wenger 2009)): it “...emphasises the relationship between knowledge and the situation in which it is acquired and used” (p.312/313). Deglau (2005) used a socio-cultural theoretical lens for her study of a CoP that is ‘rooted’ in constructivism. She acknowledged that constructivist and situated learning theories adopted different ontological and epistemological assumptions on knowledge and learning which have different implications for teaching, learning and assessment. These implications may be at odds with accredited curricula (Aubrey and Riley 2016).

The debate regarding the capacity of situated learning to reproduce or transform PE in schools offers considerable power for guidance on PE policy, development and teacher education (Kirk and Macdonald 1998). They asserted that schools mediated the reproduction of CoPs through reproduction of its schoolwork modules which may not transfer to the world outside schools. The potential influence of sport-education models within teacher-pupil CoPs to transform sport and PE in schools or model the “deeply sedimented imperatives for social order, a hierarchy of the relations of power” that are situated in the practices of schooling was theorised by Kirk and Kinchin (2003 p.231) and Kirk (2006). Penney (2003) found situated learning as a form of knowledge acquisition not transformation. Kirk (2006) saw the multidimensionality of pedagogy through the PE teaching, learning and curriculum as situated in social and physical environments. Whether (or how) situated learning in school CoPs or teacher CPD can bring about transformative changes is important to consider. There is little research on whether CoP transform (or reproduce) the practices of PE teachers or how CoP can disrupt hegemonic practices.

Of the 22 journal articles written on CoP, 15 were empirical in nature (the remainder conceptual and theoretical), two showed evidence of pupil learning, six were based in Ireland and included work on experienced PE teachers. One article combined RP and CoP (Crawford et al 2012) based in Ireland, and included the Reflective framework for Teaching Physical Education (RFTPE) (Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan 1994) and a CoP model with experienced teachers as part of the CoP ‘tetrad’ (principal, PST, university tutor and co-operating teacher) for supporting PSTs on placement. One study (Parker et al 2013) used the CoP as the unit of analysis. In Ireland the TC sees teachers as
members of professional learning communities (PLCs) “in the interests of sharing, developing and supporting good practice” (TC 2012 p.8). Thus, research to clarify how good practice is developed and supported is needed.

Two general types of research exist on CoPs. The first focuses on Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE). It examines the experiences of pre-service teachers (PSTs) on placement and their co-operating teachers (CTs) (including Keay 2006, 2009; Herold and Waring 2011) in Ireland (Chambers and Armour 2011; Dunning et al 2011; Crawford et al 2012; MacPhail et al 2014; Young and MacPhail 2015). Other PETE CoP research focuses on teacher educators in Ireland (MacPhail 2014; MacPhail et al 2014).

The second focuses on CoP of practising teachers. CoPs can change the culture, values, beliefs and practices of experienced PE teachers (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006) beyond classrooms and school (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Parker et al 2010; Hunuk et al 2012). Teachers learned from and with each other (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Tannehill and MacPhail 2016). Teachers also developed trust and respect (Parker et al 2013), were prepared to take risks, share successful programmes and reflect on failure (O’Sullivan 2007b). Changes resulted in focussing on pupil needs, continual engagement in teachers’ own professional learning, changes in identity, negotiation and creation of meaning and an increased engagement in PE through CoP (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Parker et al 2010). One research piece on a health education intervention in Turkey (Hunuk et al 2012) found that teacher engagement in the CoP resulted in improved pupil learning outcomes, although there was limited evidence of pupil learning outcomes in other research. Much of this research was conducted by those engaging with the CoPs as facilitators/teacher educators and researchers and reflected the CPD ‘interventions’ rather than the general day-to-day problems of practice not associated with a specific intervention.

The development and maintenance of CoPs have been found to require much skill and care (and luck) and is a significant challenge to encourage engagement in long-term meaningful and positive change for teachers and their pupils through CoPs (Parker et al 2010). Descriptions of effective CoPs have a high level of congruence with descriptors
of meaningful CPD (Armour and Duncombe 2004; Armour and Yelling 2004, 2007; Armour 2006). Teacher empowerment was the overarching theme in creating knowledge, developing curricula, and developing capacity to learn and improve the PE ‘field’ (Parker et al 2010; Tannehill and MacPhail 2016). The importance of quality facilitation in CoPs has been noted (Patton and Parker 2014; Parker et al 2013; Patton et al 2013). Patton and Parker (2014) found well facilitated CoPs supported knowledge and teacher capacity building. Successful CPD (within the research-defined CoP ‘initiative’) enabled teachers to move from being passive to active knowledge seekers, being empowered to self improve, “sharing their voice and taking ownership of professional development” (p.60) and improving pupil learning (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006). They suggested that facilitators need to be responsive to the (changing) needs of teachers and take more responsibility for the outcomes of their PD programmes.

Tannehill et al (2006) described the challenges to initiating CoPs (in Ireland). Parker et al (2013) examined the ‘landscape’ of PD opportunities through CoPs for teachers in Ireland. Parker et al (2013) identified guideposts and roadblocks to successful CPD through CoPs and acknowledged the importance of incentives, the learning environment, the context of national and school policies and the status of PE. They created a continuum of CoPs with a collection of teachers at one end to ‘authentic’ CoPs at the other (Appendix 1).

Groups with shared facilitation showed the most growth, empowerment, and seemed to reflect on their growth and its impact on teaching practice and in many cases student learning. (Parker et al 2013 p.324)

PE teachers in disadvantaged schools were supported and empowered through engagement with CoPs (Tannehill and Murphy 2012; Tannehill and MacPhail 2016). Research is needed with evidence of the effect on pupil learning and/or the influence of CoPs on teachers’ practices, understandings or beliefs. Also, the research of Parker et al (2013) needs to be extended to show how different types of CoPs on the continuum can influence teachers’ professional practices and what potential they may have for change within schools.

Situated learning theories have the potential to link theory and practice and provide a focus for reflection and reflective practice (Armour et al 2012). Goodyear and Casey
(2015) concurred and found that to initiate and sustain pedagogical innovation and change, opportunities for discussion were critical for CoPs to succeed. Armour et al (2012) reiterated the call for ‘inter-professional’ collaboration between universities and teachers. While they envisioned the PE profession’s responsibilities, the focus was on the work of the university and teachers who can work within university ‘initiatives’, rather than larger contexts such as working together on day-to-day problems/interests, common to both sets of professional practices. This may broker new boundaries, facilitate change and improve the knowledge base of the PE profession (suggested by Wenger 2009). PD ought to occur over the lifetime of a teaching career (Ward and O’Sullivan 2006; O’Sullivan 2007a, 2007b; Armour et al 2012; Tannehill 2014) and CoP (comprising teachers and teacher-educators/researchers) may offer a model of sustainable CPD beneficial to participants, their charges and the knowledge base. If “Effective teachers are reflective teachers who learn by inquiring into their practice” (Graham et al 2013 p.83) theoretically, a positive link between CoPs and reflection might be established. There is limited research showing definite links between reflection and improvements in practice, therefore research is needed to establish whether membership of a CoP can stimulate reflection and improvement in practice. The next section focuses on the reflective practices of professionals.

2.4. THEME THREE: REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Schön’s (1983) ‘reflective practitioner’ informs much of the theory on reflective practice (RP) and recent interpretations and adaptations in relation to teacher reflections are explored. Its place within the teacher CPD ‘niche’ is examined. This is followed by a critique on the empirical research on RP within PE. The latter part of this theme focuses on critically reflective practices. Marcos et al (2011) undertook a meta-analysis of 122 studies that promoted teacher reflections. They found that there was no common agreement on the constitution of reflection. The studies demonstrated a tendency towards prescription of particular reflection styles, but they lacked credible evidence for success. Their analysis showed that the studies raised awareness of reflection but rarely helped to solve problems or improve practice. They found that the difficulties of RP were omitted and assumptions were made about the use of RP. Evidence-based research with the difficulties documented was advocated. This included validated information to
help teachers reflect on practice (ibid). This identifies a gap in the literature on teacher reflections.

**Experience, learning and reflection**

Dewey (1938) proposed that all learning is based on experience, its context, and the meaning the learner derives from the experience, to influence future action. This is achieved “through a union of observation and memory, this union being the heart of reflection” (Dewey 1938 p.64). Dewey linked experience and reflection:

> To reflect is to look over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences. (Dewey 1938 p.87)

Dewey’s theory acknowledged the role of context, emotions, memory and observations in the intellectual act of learning through reflection but the importance of cultural and social influences on learning was absent. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) explained that our perceptual lenses can be narrowly defined and lead us to think in an idiosyncratic fashion. Reflective practice deliberately opens these lenses through which we view experiences therefore we must take into account political, cultural and social influences.

Kolb (1984) suggested a cycle of experience to direct thinking, and reflection, to enable learning. He acknowledged that experience included both action and practice for true learning and like Wenger (1998a) recognised the role of culture in experience where process is more important than product (Aubrey and Riley 2016). Kolb (1984) prioritised using observable evidence for improvement of practice and is frequently used by practitioners to improve practice (such as School Self Evaluation (SSE) (DESI 2012). His ‘reflection action cycle’ (experience, observation and reflection, abstract conceptualisation and experimentation) places cognitive analysis central to reflection but sidelines social, personal, and emotional elements of reflection and assumes that learning goes in a forward direction. It did not consider that learning could be negative, go backwards or lead to reduced understanding possibly resulting in turmoil and uncertainty. In contrast, Korthagen and Vasalos (2010) placed the practitioner at the centre of practice and reflection. Their model proposed layers of reflection from what is outside of the practitioner – the external environment to their core (their private domain) to facilitate deep reflection. They found this to be very effective with PSTs, but the
intensive support (two researcher/supporters to one teacher) for their reflection is not sustainable. The efficacy of this model for teacher growth/learning over a career span has not been researched.

**The Representation of Learning and Reflection**

Moon (2006) suggested that to develop knowledge we need to process experience based on prior knowledge to learn from it. Our theoretical knowledge bases are sets of concepts that guide our actions and through reflection we build on these knowledge bases. Reflection is an everyday activity, and might not always result in learning and some experiences are more helpful for learning than others (ibid). To learn from reflection requires deliberate effort - “Reflective learning emphasises the intention to learn as a result of reflection” (ibid p.78) and this includes reflecting on emotions as well as organising and reorganising knowledge for further insights.

Knowledge that is deeply held and intuitive, such as Polanyi’s ‘tacit knowledge’ (1966) can result in the knower being unaware of their knowledge. This may not be reflected on by the practitioner and may not be as productive as it could be. Tacit knowledge can be made explicit, and “once revealed it can be tested and developed” (Smith 2008 p.6). This may be difficult. Questioning educational provision and practice through critical dialogue (Hallet 2013) is helpful in shifting tacit knowledge to explicit words. The act of reflective writing by journaling can help develop understanding and meaning, and make explicit, tacit understanding. Reflective writing can also have a symbiotic relationship with professional development (Moon 2006; Bolton 2010) and professional practice (Attard and Armour 2006). This concept is similar to Schön’s (1983) conceptualisation of experience being tacit, much of which can be considered to involve knowing-in-action (where we know more than we can say) and can be tacit and unknown to the individual (Schön 1987a 1987b) (reflection-in-action). He described reflection-on-action (reflection after the event) to require the individual to order, remember and make sense of what was observed, link theories and develop theories-in-use and new ways of teaching (Schön 1983), especially when representing experience (through talk or writing). Dialogue enables the development of insights not possible by any one individual (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Senge 1990; Brown 1994; Wenger 1998,
Teachers and school management are expected to reflect on their practice (TC 2011, 2012; DESI 2012). Those engaged in reflection need to represent their learning from those reflections effectively or “...what they know may not be recognised” (Moon 2006 p.14). Words can represent learning (Dewey 1938) and are the tools of investigation: “Language is a fundamental tool of learning” (Moon 2006 p.20) and how we use that language plays an important role in the development of meaning for us as learners (Deglau 2005; Wenger 2009). Eisner (1982, 1991) made the point that the process of clarifying ideas, organizing them and then representing them through words is a further form of learning. This is also political (Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Freire 1996). When representing our personal reflections, we shape the content of our reflection in different ways, we can develop them, and learn from them and also from the process itself (secondary learning (Moon 2006)). Therefore, representing our learning through words is a form of learning and representing our reflections shapes our reflections further, and this is also a form of learning (Tannehill 2014). Formally, the written word was the predominant form of representing learning and reflection, and other representations (oral presentations, practical workshops) are also political acts (Brookfield 1995). Opportunities to represent our learning and reflections, especially to others, are significant to broaden their scope (and may also be considered to be political).

Moon (2006) asserted that there is a relationship between the quality of the learning experience and the type of reflection used. This ranges along a continuum: from (shallow) superficial noticing (observation); to making sense of experiences (meaning making); to transformative learning (deep learning). All types of reflection are useful to understand a situation. Modifying our ideas to represent meaningful learning can lead to greater understanding of them.

Reflection has multiple uses including learning, understanding; critical review; CPD; building theory from practice; problem solving; empowerment; coping; emotional aspects of practice; and recognition of the need for further reflection (Moon 1999). Teachers representing their reflections informally and formally in a CoP may be assessed against the standards constructed by the community (linked to their
understanding of competency). These standards may not align with formal academic standards, but reflect the beliefs and values of the community (Lave and Wenger 1991; Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006). Kirk and Kinchin (2003) added that “Unless there is a publicly established and shared concept of excellence within a community of practice, there can be no learning trajectory and, in effect, no community of practice” (p.230). Members must establish and articulate ‘what matters’ in practice. Stories of practice are the data mediating participation in CoPs (Wenger 2009).

Reflection is important for learning to take place, and must be deliberately planned for knowledge creation. Schön (1983, 1987) described a hierarchy of knowledge, where the most valuable knowledge was general and theoretical (‘privileged knowledge’) and practical knowledge was lower down the hierarchy. This led to a ‘split’ between research and practice (ibid). This is a challenge for teachers and academic scholars (Stenhouse 1981). Almond (1997) cautioned that “developing ideas in isolation from teachers’ practice is sterile, and practice without informed ideas and criticism can be blind” (p.398).

Moon (2006) (Table 2.2) suggested a hierarchy of reflection. At the bottom of the hierarchy lies descriptive representation where there is no reflection or it is tacit and the author and respondents are unaware of their reflections. Descriptive reflection includes alternative viewpoints of the description of events, but it is mostly from one perspective. Dialogic reflection involves stepping back from events and exploring the discourse of events and actions from different perspectives. Critical reflection explains actions and events set within multiple perspectives and contexts (including temporal and political) and is at the top of the hierarchy.
Table 2.2 Hierarchy of Reflection (Adapted from Moon 2006).

This hierarchy is a continuum, and can be useful to frame the depth of reflections of a CoP with critical reflection at the top of the hierarchy and representing the deepest reflections. A limitation of dialogic reflection is that it depends on whose voice is heard and used, how it is heard and used, and if there is a prioritisation of some voices over others. Wenger-Trayner (2016) described participation in a CoP as a collective reflection-in-action. It is necessary to establish whether reflections within a CoP range from simple observations to critical reflection and if and how the CoP members stimulate changes in practices of the CoP and the school practice of its members.

Moon (2006) and Bolton (2010) prioritised writing as a vehicle for the representation of learning and reflection, and suggested it had a deeper reflective contribution to learning because it is tangible. Bolton (2010) noted that not everyone reflects through the writing process. Formal sharing of reflections and learning by academics (through publication in peer reviewed journals, posters, oral presentations, keynote addresses) are other tangible representations of learning and part of academic life (Zeichner and Yan Liu 2010). This represents a dialogue with theory and knowledge construction through robust debate and may be towards the deeper end of the reflection hierarchy: “We learn from the process of representation and from the material that is generated as a result of representation” (Moon 2006 p.85).

Experience without reflection does not necessarily lead to learning from that experience. Also learning and reflection does not necessarily lead to a change in actions (Moon 2006). Moon (2006) studied individual reflection. The work of a CoP, its influences on teachers’ learning practices and pupil learning or how reflection can be used effectively to improve professional practice are not addressed in Moon’s research. The notion of a
reflective practitioner includes the deliberate act of reflection in order to influence professional practice (Schön 1984). Without reflecting, one or perhaps a CoP cannot have a reflective practice.

Knowledge and reflection

In order for teachers to contribute to the knowledge base, they must articulate their expertise and represent, develop and share it (Moon 2006; Bolton 2010). Teachers’ theoretical knowledge bases are sets of concepts that guide their actions and through reflection on their experiences they build on these knowledge bases (Moon 2006).

Engaging in research with teachers to improve professional practice that is usable by teachers is needed to:

...heal the splits between teaching and doing, school and life, research and practice, which have been so insidiously effective in deadening the experience of schools at all levels (Schön 1987a)

It is unclear whether Schön conceived the teacher as a researcher and contributor to knowledge. There is a gap between school practitioners engaging with research (Stenhouse 1981; Casey 2014). There are efforts to reduce that gap (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999, 2009; Armour and Yelling 2004a, 2004b; Armour 2006, 2010) using methodologies sympathetic to the practitioner-as-researcher (Whitehead and McNiff 2006; Casey 2012, 2014; MacPhail 2014).

Researchers have theorised about the importance of reflection in teaching to improve practice (Dewey 1938; Stenhouse 1981; Schön 1983, 1987; Brookfield 1995; Freire 1996). Reflection lost its real meaning and became a slogan embraced by educators “from every political and ideological perspective to frame and justify what they were doing in their programs” (Zeichner and Yan Liu 2010 p.68/69). It became a ‘conceptual colonisation’ and ‘fashionable educational jargon’ that described anything in teaching (Smyth 1992). Teachers in Ireland are expected to have ‘evidence based practice’ (DESI 2012; Hislop 2012, 2013) but paucity of detail and what counts as evidence indicates an underlying mixed and confusing epistemology. This in turn can influence how teachers reflect on their practice.
The Reflective Practitioner

Schön (1984, 1987a, 19987b) conceptualised the reflective practitioner as one who engaged in reflective practices to respond to complicated issues of professional practice, for which there are no easy or straightforward answers. It was expected that practitioners solve “well formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic preferably scientific knowledge” (Schön 1987a) from universities. However, the problems of professional practice were uncertain, messy and confusing (the ‘swampy lowlands’) (Schön, 1983, 1987a, 1987b) and pathways to solving problems were unclear. Reflection-on-action develops practice and expands professional knowledge (Schön 1983, 1987a, 1987b). A key to clarifying how we reflect is how we view the issues that confront us and articulate problems in our practice.

Reflective practitioners engage in problem setting, an ontological process (Schön 1987a). This process depends on the professional context and ontological view of the problem setter. Not all practitioners will view the same event as a problem, or view problems in the same way. Along with Dewey (1938), Schön felt it was ‘extraordinarily important’ to name the issues in order to construct an image that allows us to see the issues in a new way (Schön 1987a, 1987b). Research needs to take into account that naming problems are difficult. It also needs to account for how teachers can learn to name the problems of practice. Teachers must improvise to fill a gap between theory, technique and concrete action and reflective practice. This recognises the interdependent and integral nature of theory and practice (Osterman and Kottkamp 2004) to solve problems. Schön (1987a) referred to a reflective practicum – learning by doing with others, involving “a dialogue of reciprocal reflection-in-action” (each is reflecting on and responding to the others’ message). Schön (1987b) explained the negative effect of isolation on a teachers’ practice:

The teacher’s isolation in her classroom works against reflection-in-action. She needs to communicate her private puzzles and insights, to test them against the views of her peers. (p.333)

While acknowledging professional learning occurs through meaningful collaboration, Schön’s (1983) theory focussed on the individual-as-learner. Collective reflection-on-
action within a CoP needs to be researched to understand how it supports negotiation of ‘swampy lowlands’ and work with uncertainty.

While there is general agreement that reflection is necessary for quality practice, there is little consensus on what reflection is or what reflective practice entails. The terms reflective practice (RP) and reflection are often used interchangeably as though they have the same meaning. Reflection does not necessarily result in any changes in action, but reflective practice does (Schön 1983; Moon 2006). Lyons (2010a, 2010b) recognised the difficulty of reflection in ‘crowded schools’ and the increasing and incessant demands of testing that leaves little time for reflection. Research is needed on how teachers engage in reflection in ‘crowded schools’ in Ireland and specifically on teachers in DEIS schools.

Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) emphasised that the culture of the organization may or may not support reflective practices, and the personal element of growth and development of individuals working within that culture. The learning organization can create an environment of reflection that it models itself (careful observation and data based analysis of practice) such as empowering educators to assume personal responsibility for their own learning and professional growth. They also acknowledged that organizations needed to support professional learning and teacher change is best made collaboratively. Although the rhetoric supports this within education in Ireland (TC 2012), research is needed to identify what supports teacher or CoP reflections.

Coolahan recognised that “teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement” (2005 p.2). Quality is built over the teacher’s career:

...on a concept of teaching as praxis in which theory, practice and the ability to reflect critically on one’s own and others’ practice illuminate each other. (ETUCE 2008 p.26)

Interest in teacher quality has resulted in the recognition of the importance of CPD over the career span and encourages critical evaluation of teachers’ practice but not on the policies and strategies guiding such practice. There is a clear responsibility for teachers to engage in professional development to critically reflect on their practice, and supports for teachers to do so are emerging (such as registered teachers’ access to educational
journals (TC 2013)). How teachers reflect as part of a community of practitioners (that includes other teachers, special needs assistants (SNA’s) and teacher educators) needs to be examined as:

There is little emphasis on reflection as a social practice that takes place within communities of teachers who support and sustain each other’s growth. The challenge and support gained through social interaction is important in helping us clarify what we believe and in gaining the courage to pursue our beliefs. (Zeichner and Yan Liu 2010, p.72)

Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) suggested that structures can help reduce burnout, and can help teachers grow in wisdom or reflection but they can be used as a subtle tool to control teachers where there is a narrow form of accountability and teachers are expected to “reproduce the status quo” (Zeichner and Yan Liu 2010 p.75). Teacher education that promotes the reflective practice of teachers in order to enhance teacher development and educational reform has been challenged:

Instead, an illusion of teacher development has often been created which has maintained in more subtle ways the subservient position of the teacher. (Zeichner and Yan Liu 2010 p.70)

It is unclear whether a CoP influences its members’ awareness and articulation of feelings of subservience and conformity and if so, how it manages that. Is it possible to move from being a reflective practitioner to a ‘wise’ practitioner (Thompson and Thompson 2008) where the reflective practitioner is also aware of the limits of their practice within the system (Sellman 2009), whilst at the same time trying to improve practice? The ‘wise’ practitioner also accepts the impossibility of continuous improvement without setbacks.

**PE and the Reflective Practitioner**

The notion of the PE teacher as reflective practitioner is desirable (Song and Chen, 2012). Tsangaridou and Siedentop’s (1995) comprehensive review of empirical literature on reflective teaching found little empirical evidence to assess the impact of reflection on practice. They concluded that research needed to be conducted using a variety of methodologies to assess reflection in teaching. They found no evidence of whether reflective teaching resulted in learning improvements by pupils or their teachers. Standal and Moe’s (2013) review of empirical research (33 studies) of PE and
PETE reflective practice identified 19 studies on teachers. There was no longitudinal study on teachers’ reflective practice although some research studied reflection at different career stages (Sutcliffe et al 1999 cited in Standal and Moe 2013; Attard and Armour 2006; Deglau et al 2006; Macdonald et al 2006). The reviewers found that the research reflected the researchers’ view of reflection, not necessarily shared among all researchers, and that improvements could be found in reflections on the technicalities and practical issues of teaching but not necessarily in critical reflection. Authors noted the idiosyncratic nature of much of the research, and much of it was conducted by the teacher-educators of pre-service teachers’ (PSTs’) reflections. They argued that the distinction between reflection and reflective practice (where reflective practice implies action but reflection does not) was not clearly made in the research and this is a limitation of much research. The reviewers distinguished between reflection on practice and abstract reflection in the university setting with PSTs demonstrating the latter with greater ease than the former - “the lecture context is sheltered from pressure in ways that the practicum setting is not” (Standal and Moe 2013 p.231). It is difficult to replicate teachers’ reflective practices in a theoretical setting and ought to be studied in their real-life contexts.

Greater dialogue between universities and schools for improved practice in schools is echoed by many (such as Armour 2006, 2010; Armour and Yelling 2004; Deglau et al 2006; O’Sullivan 2007a; Crawford et al 2012; Patton et al 2013; Tannehill 2014). In my review of 15 empirical journal articles of PE reflective practices, 11 focused on experienced teachers, of which three were linked directly to their work as co-operating teachers for PSTs on placement. One study was co-authored by the teacher (Attard and Armour 2006). The remaining research was conducted by researchers in universities.

Reflection is not always followed by action or improved learning of student or teacher as described by Attard and Armour (2006) and Attard (2012). They wrote of the potentially negative experiences of reflecting, and once initiated, Attard was unable to stop. Much research does not describe the potentially negative effects of reflection and change (Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006) but this can be supported by professional CoPs (Deglau 2005). This prompts a need for research on experienced teachers’ reflections, the positives and negatives of reflective practice (RP), their reflective abilities and the
Tsangaridou (2005) suggested there was little research on experienced teachers’ reflections on their practice and pupil learning. Experienced teachers welcomed the opportunity for reflection, especially in a community setting (Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan 1997; Deglau et al 2006) and their ideas of teaching changed over time. Their reflections were different to PSTs or NQTs, whose reflections focussed on technical and practical issues and contrary to Standal and Moe’s (2013) findings that “...overall PE teachers are concerned with the technicalities of teaching” (p.227). Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan (1997) distinguished between teachers’ micro-reflection (deriving meaning from day-to-day aspects of practice) and macro-reflection (based on PD over time). Different methodological approaches to teacher reflections in communities (studying day-to-day practices or long-term PD) may ‘pick-up’ on different reflections within CoPs, depending on the precise focus of the work of that community in the short, intermediate or long-term, the agenda of the conveners of the group and the researchers’ focus. It can also reflect the type of CoP on the landscape of CoPs (Parker et al 2013) and whether the community is ‘authentic’ or otherwise. Standal and Moe (2013) suggested external moderators in CoPs could help overcome the pattern of reduced reflective behaviours of veteran teachers. Empirical evidence of the effects of reflective practice in PE is scarce (Crawford et al 2012). Much research is needed to extend what we know about the influence of CoPs on reflective practices of the community.

Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan’s (1994) Reflective Framework for Teaching in Physical Education (RFTPE) was used to analyse reflections of USA PSTs (ibid; Napper-Owen and McCallister 2005), in Cyprus (Tsangaridou and Polemitou 2015) and in Ireland (Crawford et al 2012) and as a teaching framework (Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan 1994; Tsangaridou and Polemitou 2015). The framework conceptualised reflection as “a conceptual vehicle that describes the content of prospective teachers’ reflection and the nature of that reflection” (Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan 1994 p.18). It is combined in a matrix of the focus and level of reflection. The focus of reflection can be technical, situational and sensitising. The levels of reflection are description, justification and critique. The authors argued that RP is not hierarchical in nature and different
dimensions are appropriate at different times. They concluded that reflective teachers could think critically, used concrete events to do so, and linked thought with action however this took time and needed support. Jung (2012) found that experienced (‘exceptional’) teachers engaged in technical rather than critical reflection. Their research concurred with Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan (1997) that teacher reflection is situationally driven and contextually bound. It is unclear from these researchers if experienced teachers reflect critically under normal circumstances, or if the understanding of critical reflection of the researchers differ. Interestingly, Tsangaridou and O’Sullivan (1997) claimed that experience without reflection could improve teachers’ efficiency, or lead to ‘routinized action’ (ibid). This may not necessarily lead to ineffective teaching, but perhaps the suggestion is that reflection can potentially improve teaching. Jung (2012) made the point that to improve pupil learning, teachers needed to become reflective practitioners, and be empowered as teachers. The RFTPE does not provide for the emotional or social aspects of reflection of PE professionals as teachers and learners (for example within a CoP), it focuses on pupil contexts. The RFTPE focuses on individual reflections. The rich depth of criticality afforded by engagement with alternative points of view from others in a CoP is absent from the framework.

The methods of reflective practice have included journaling, curriculum inquiry, and practitioner research. This research examines if participating in a CoP stimulates reflection and provides different opportunities for reflective practices.

**Critically Reflective Practitioner**

Not all reflection is critical – critical reflection is “hunting assumptions of power and hegemony by viewing what we do through different lenses... (we) question assumptions and challenge taken-for-granted ways of thinking and working” (Brookfield 1995 p.207). If we do not critically reflect, we are ignorant of how our world works - “Ignorance is not a passive state but rather an active exclusion from consciousness” (McLaren 1998 p.217). The three traditions that inform critical reflection are critical pedagogy, reflective practice and adult learning (Brookfield 1995).

All teaching is considered political (Brookfield 1995, 2000; Freire 1996; Mezirow 1997,
Teaching is never “innocent” in thinking we understand the effect we have (Brookfield 1995 p.1). The meanings we take from our work are those that others take, such as pupils. Teachers reproduce and legitimate social inequality (Giroux 1981). Critical pedagogy (CP) helps us to interpret power relations in such things as curricula, pedagogies, pupil behaviour and assessment practices. These are “social products embodying certain ways of seeing the world” (Brookfield 1995 p.212). There are different ‘varieties’ of critical pedagogy (Gore 1990) and some can be corrupted by the politics of neo-liberalism (Tinning 2002) such as assessment and accountability structures (Gleeson 2010; Sahlberg 2010). Critical pedagogy also involves the affective and emotional dimensions of learning and everyday life individually and socially (Kincheloe 2008).

Teachers can choose to “legitimise and reinforce the status quo or... liberate and transform” it (Brookfield 1985 p.209). We do this by helping pupils to analyse their world, by honouring pupils’ experiences, helping them to create their own dialogue (Freire 1996). It teaches both teachers and pupils to question “the conspiracy of the normal” (Brookfield 1995 p.15). An uncritical stance to teaching practice can lead to frustration and feelings of incompetence, a “vicious cycle of innocence and blame” (ibid p.1). Those committed to CP believe in the “emancipatory imperatives of self-empowerment and social transformation” (McLaren 1998 p.189 original emphasis). Social action is assumed within CP.

It is problematic for CP theorists to imply that subordinated and marginalized groups have a unified solidarity. Marginalised groups may compete like any other group for resources at the expense of others. Within marginalised groups there are also marginalised groups, such as lone parents in socioeconomically disadvantaged groupings. This leads to the difficult situation of having to prioritise needs, and it is difficult to prioritise one marginalised person’s needs over another. CP is difficult to adapt to local contexts and participants. The idea of emancipation, so bound up with CP, is a challenge. Emancipation does not necessarily mean improvement in circumstances and there may be multiple perspectives from which emancipation is decided. The point at which emancipation begins and repression ends is also unclear, and one action may
be simultaneously repressive and emancipatory. For example, a minority grouping having a greater say in education can be considered emancipatory, but if that grouping prioritises some members at the expense of others, it is repressive. The idea that CP could emancipate others was false (Freire 1996; Sicilia-Camacho and Fernández-Balboa 2009) and rejected as another form of oppression (Freire, 1996). Emancipation lies in creating one’s own dialogue (McLaren 1998) and finding one’s own words.

RP asks teachers to understand, question and investigate their practice (Brookfield 1995). Reflective practices question assumptions, “taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it” (ibid p.2) and looks at them from different perspectives. These assumptions may be paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal, and are not critical if they do not question power relations (ibid). Our reflections are shaped by our contexts and “reflective priorities are culturally imposed” (p.217). Collaborative reflection can broaden (or narrow) the horizons of our reflections. Perhaps teachers may not see the need for change, if through critical or uncritical reflection, their needs are met and they are convinced about the value of their work. Change is not always good. Teachers may see no need to challenge their assumptions. CoPs can provide support: “collaborative learning is not just nice, but necessary for survival” (Brown 1994 p.10). Perhaps because many teaching dilemmas have no resolution, it can result in “lost innocence” (Brookfield 1995 p.239). In response, McLaren (1998) stated that “Teachers can do no better than to create agendas of possibility in their classrooms” (p.218).

The main focus of adult learning is facilitating adults’ understanding of the meaning of their experience through their own interpretations (Mezirow 1997). It helps them make more autonomous and informed choices, and develop a sense of self empowerment (Mezirow 2000). Uncritical assumptions and ideas learned in childhood are brought into critical consciousness in adult learning (Mezirow 1997). CPD seeks to help teachers make meaning from experiences through critical analysis and critically reflective decisions during and after actions. Adult learning facilitates teachers to name their worlds with the potential to transform it. Transformation is:

...a transformation in perspective, in a frame of reference, in a personal paradigm, and a habit of mind together with its resulting points of view... a fundamental reordering of assumptions. (Brookfield 2000 p.139)
One discourse is of knowledge production, and teachers as researchers should:

...audaciously claim the right to participate in the production of knowledge, while at the same time retaining their humility concerning the tentative provisional nature of the knowledge. (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1998 p.18)

Vansieleghem (2013) critiqued research that gave ‘voice’ to others, and appropriated the world of others by what the researcher sees as important and valuable in that world. Thus, research that claims to give teachers’ ‘voice’ ultimately appropriates what the researcher views as important and valued in the teachers’ world. Teachers learn to speak about their practice in a way that is authentic and consistent. “...the moment of finding our voice leads us to withdraw our consent to our own servitude” (Brookfield 1995 p.46). This is why talking about teaching is so important (ibid).

Brookfield (1995) suggested six reasons why critical reflection helps us to:

1. Take informed actions
2. Develop a rationale for our practice and referencing it to our core beliefs
3. Understand that teachers’ efforts for pupils may operate in the face of a socially, economically and politically limiting context
4. Grounds teachers emotionally
5. Develop pupils’ ability to think critically by teachers modelling critical inquiry in their own practices “is one of the most powerful catalysts for critical thinking in her students” (Brookfield 1995 p.25)
6. Increase democratic trust.

The PE research literature is now examined from the perspective of the critically reflective practitioner. It is divided into three broad areas. The first focuses on the theoretical discussion through a critical framework on PE. The second focuses on pedagogy and the third focuses on research on PE teacher education.

**PE and the Critically Reflective Practitioner**

Critical writers stated that PE scholars needed to “problemataze knowledge construction, legitimation and dissemination, and to critically engage in its own ideology, power and culture” (Tinning 2002 p.224) to create a better world (Fernández-Balboa 1997). In
suggesting that PE can be detrimental to pupils and can involve problematic practices, Tinning (1997) wrote:

Physical education can liberate and oppress, inspire and disillusion, encourage and alienate, and be a source of satisfaction and achievement as well as disappointment and failure. (p.105)

Tinning argued that through our analysis of PE knowledge structures we

...should consider who is speaking (about the knowledge), from what position (of privilege, of epistemology), in what context, and with what political effect. (p.119)

Sparkes (1991) encouraged ‘polyvocality’ to broaden the intellectual landscape and entertain alternative viewpoints. This is important when considering teachers’ positions regarding the PE knowledge base (as contributors, recipients or both).

Hellison (1997) advocated for practical inquiry in a specific setting that is careful of making generalisations and recommending policy. This avoids researchers being ‘visitors’ rather than ‘activists’. He was confident that practical inquiry could transform ideas into practice and greater understanding, insight and ability to act more effectively. In response to such claims of certainty, Tinning (2002) argued that we needed to be modest in our claims for what we can achieve in our classrooms, to be circumspect in our claims to know. Attard and Armour (2006) said that critically reflective practice is a messy and complicated business. Extending from Schön’s reflective practitioner is the concept of critically reflective practice (Brookfield 1995). The distinction between reflective and critically reflective practice in PE literature is not clean and the latter research tends to focus on purely critical pedagogy with imperatives for change. Moon’s reflective hierarchy (2006) using alternative and multiple perspectives on practice could place critical reflection on the upper section of the hierarchy. However, critical reflection considers alternative perspectives within structures and of the structures themselves (Brookfield 1995; MacLaren 1998a; Kincheloe 2008). Considering alternative perspectives of structures was not necessarily a condition of Moon’s notion of criticality (2006). As CoPs may be reproductive rather than transformative (conservative), research is needed to find out if they have the capacity to facilitate critical participation within teachers’ CPD and/or classroom practices, understandings and beliefs.
Scholars who research PE teaching and PE teacher education (PETE), through a critical pedagogical lens agree on the importance of highlighting issues of social justice, equity, appraisals of the ends served by PE and the empowerment of teachers (O’Sullivan et al 1992; Tinning 1997, 2002). O’Sullivan et al (1992) argued that critical writers created a false dichotomy by separating PE scholars as either embracing the radical framework (and ‘emancipators’), or not (and reproducers, oppressors and ‘technocrats’), leaving no room for the middle ground. These authors set up “the very polarities they criticize in the dominant discourse” (p.269) becoming “no better than what it attempts to replace” (p.273). Tinning (2002) argued that defending CP was not the same as using a CP approach in one’s own practice as a teacher-educator and researcher. Muros and Fernández-Balboa (2005) found that many in PETE who claimed to use a CP approach did not reflect the principles as presented in the literature and often used methods contrary to the ideals of CP. Some did not practice reflection despite expecting their students to do so. Sicilia-Camacha and Fernández-Balboa (2009) also stated that where there was empirical research, the contexts were not universally applicable in different situations.

Critical reflection is complex and challenging. Naming, framing and choosing options to address problems of practice are influenced by the values of practitioners (Hellison 1997), and are reflected in how they speak and act (Bain 1997). Becoming a critically reflective practitioner makes work difficult (Kirk 2006) because of the complexity of cultures in schools (of pupils and teachers) that are set within broader political, cultural and social contexts. This creates tensions for teachers and they need to accept such “...tension as a condition of reflection” (Ennis 1997 p.217). Not only do practitioners’ values influence their practice, but so does the context in which they work. The degree of autonomy they enjoy is not uniform and there can be risks for those who take a critical path (Brookfield 1995; Tinning 2002; Kincheloe 2008).

Little research has been conducted by PE teachers on critical practice in schools. One such example from Australia is by Fitzpatrick and Russell (2013). An academic and teacher wrote about the challenge to more inclusive practices in PE. The teacher researcher noted that conducting this research was difficult, messy, complex and
emotional work, and gave a useful insight into the work of a critical pedagogue. However, perhaps this could describe the world of any committed pedagogue:

I think I need some sort of disclaimer. This is for those times I nearly broke down after class, for those times I could not get through to a group of students, for those times I went into class with a feeling of dread at the prospect of another day in the battle to be respected and liked and to be reasoned with, for those times I failed my students and myself. Teaching is a flawed art. Teaching is an imperfect science. Teaching is hard. Teaching sometimes takes more than it gives. Teaching is exhausting. Teaching is a constant struggle to give all students what they deserve, even though sometimes they might not deserve it. But with what you get back, and in a hope of contributing a better life for students and a better world for all people, it seems worth it. (‘Dan’ cited in Fitzpatrick and Russell 2013 p.12)

Deglau et al’s (2006) research pointed to the value of professional dialogue for experienced teachers. The teachers discussed the marginalised and low status of PE, control of their curriculum and content, powerlessness over parents (Deglau et al 2006) and the role of examinations for PE (Tannehill et al 2006). Deglau et al (2006) noted that when engaging in such dialogue there was a ‘limited criticality’ on teacher evaluations of assessment tools. Tinning (2002) stated that uncritical practitioners focus on pedagogical change within social frameworks, while critically reflective practitioners assume the social frameworks themselves are problematical and improvement requires challenging the status quo. Rather than approaching teacher criticality with a possible “vacant spectrum of polarised ideology” (O’Sullivan et al 1992 p.270), there is resonance somewhere between the two poles. Perhaps teachers exercise criticality by constantly seeking to justify their programmes to stakeholders and overcome marginalisation in the system. It needs to be clarified if teacher resistance and criticality is focussed on their perceived positions of status and marginalisation within a system and/or if this criticality is a more ‘academic’ questioning of their adopted PE curricula and pedagogies. That is, whether their criticality was of the system itself.

Professional isolation can be physical (Deglau et al 2006; O’Sullivan 2007a) and the effect of this can be corrosive to the individual practitioner and the profession. Deglau et al (2006) noted that “teachers often lack opportunities to reflect on their work and challenge the hegemonic operation of power” (p.426). They suggested teachers can challenge existing policies through critical reflection in communities but had no evidence of teachers changing their practice as a result of these discussions. Linked to
that, Casey (2012) argued that the power of teachers to critically reflect on their practice is limited so the idea of the reflective practitioner is more aspirational than real. It is worth investigating whether teachers can engage in critical reflection in a CoP and if it results in changed practices, beliefs or understandings.

2.5. CONCLUSION

In Ireland, teachers are expected to work collaboratively as reflective practitioners using critical reflection of their practice. This review revealed limited research on teacher experiences of quality CPD that would support such reflective practice. There is also a need for more research that reflects the alternative ‘voice’ of teacher-as-researcher rather than university/academic researcher. Research on CPD in general, and CoP in particular has limited independent evaluation of pupil learning and this study can make a contribution to that literature base.

The CoP research to date has not examined the ‘how’ of reflection or how teacher engagement with a CoP contributes to their capacity to be problem setters as well as problem solvers. Teachers have limited opportunities to use their voice to express views on their realities. They have limited opportunities to develop that voice and contribute to the PE knowledge base. Using the CoP as the unit-of-analysis, this study sought to examine the reflective practices of a CoP and the impact of their practice and beliefs on pupil learning.

Very little research exists on whether CoPs reproduce inequalities or act to transform its members and/or the lives of their charges (the pupils). In challenging teaching environments, especially in Ireland, there is little research on the day-to-day activities of teachers who work to overcome the problems of their practices, especially marginalised groupings such as those in high need schools. The next chapter describes the methodology used in the research.
3.1. INTRODUCTION

The term methodology in qualitative research is used to tell: “how we know the world or gain knowledge of it” (Denzin and Lincoln 2011 p.12). This chapter explains how I sought answers to the research questions posed in chapter 1. It describes the theoretical stance I took to address the research questions, the context in which the research took place, the data collection phases, and the types of data collected. It also includes a section on data analysis procedures. At the outset, I clarify my stance as a researcher including a biographical section explaining my ‘gaze’ in this research (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

This research on a CoP and how its members perceived change to their practices, understandings and beliefs through engagement in collective reflections on their practices, was conducted as part of the naturally occurring activities of the CoP (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Miles et al 2014). I was an opportunist in ‘mining’ CoP activities as they occurred, including the changes to my own practices, as ways of exploring the research questions. I foresaw the CoP’s opportunity to engage in curriculum innovation, present and publish about our experiences as rich sources of data in addressing the research questions.

The first section of the chapter describes me as the author of this qualitative research and includes a biographical piece. The next section describes the theoretical frame chosen to interrogate the data. This leads to an overview of the type of case study research design selected. There is a description of the efforts undertaken to overcome the weaknesses of the case study design followed by an overview of the phases of the research. These phases include a description of the research participants and data
collection strategies. The data analysis plan is reported and the conditions of ethical approval within the study are outlined.

3.2. RESEARCHER’S POSITIONING

Positionality is “saying who you are and ‘where you are coming from’” (Thomas 2009 p.111). This means that my understanding of the world (my worldview) informs how, what and why I engaged in the research. My worldview - “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba 1990, cited by Creswell 2009 p.6) has influenced this research. My experiences influence this worldview, thus I will write a brief biographic piece and outline my philosophical position regarding my understandings and values. Positionality influences understanding and beliefs and these guide the ontology and epistemology of an individual. Ontological assumptions are “assumptions about the nature of reality and the nature of things” (Cohen et al 2011 p.3). These give rise to epistemological assumptions that are “ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of reality and the nature of things” (ibid p.3) that in turn inform our view of the world. These in turn give rise to methodological considerations (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, cited in Cohen et al 2011). Methodological considerations inform ideas on instrumentation, data collection and data analysis.

Being positioned as a member of the CoP places me as an insider within the group. This has the advantage of getting intimate insights within the group but it can also silence and discipline on issues as much as it can generate co-operation and trust (Mullings 1999). Being a member of the CoP being researched opened doors allowing the members to assist me in this research. It also had the potential to silence them in relation to issues that were uncomfortable to discuss. I am very much a part of the group being studied. Thus, even though I am “an insider”, I have multiple identities, positionings, and belongings in and of various social groups such as other organisations (teachers union), institutions (different schools), age (there was a wide range of ages within the USG). As a consequence, it is important not to overestimate or underestimate my ‘insider’ role (Bell 2010). I view the binary of insider/outsider with caution as attempting to “freeze positionalities in place” (Mullings 1999 p.340) and I understand the dynamism and instability of ‘such positioning’. Being a member of the CoP provided possibilities as well as pitfalls in this research; I have detailed knowledge of
the research context and have deep insight of the research setting. I was aware however that there could also be drawbacks, such as reactivity and discomfort for my colleagues when I was interviewing them.

As the main instrument of qualitative research is the researcher (Le Compte et al 1992; Bryman 2008; Cohen et al 2011; Miles et al 2014), this research is qualitative in approach and orientation. Thus in the next section I present a brief autobiographic piece that outlines my philosophical position regarding my understandings and values of the research topic.

3.2.1. Researcher’s Biography

I am a veteran PE, Biology and Mathematics teacher working in a small, all-girls, urban DEIS school. A little more than one quarter of the pupils have special educational needs. I have always been the only PE teacher in my school, and thus have been a sole PE practitioner of physical education for over 33 years. The implications are that I have never had the opportunity to have a professional conversation with any other person (whether they were a PE professional or not) who had insight on teaching PE in my particular school context. This resulted in a significant feeling of isolation, with all the challenges that brought. It led to a narrowing of my perspectives (and of my practice as a consequence) and led to feelings of defensiveness. I had no such difficulties in my other subject areas.

I am a PE, Biology, ‘Social Personal and Health Education’ and Mathematics teacher since 1983 and have worked in my current school since 1984. This PhD focuses in part on my experiences as a sole practitioner of PE in my urban (DEIS) school (the main focus is on the CoP and within that my own practices). The school has limited PE facilities (physical facilities and equipment) and a large cohort of pupils who display challenging behaviour. This context requires me to adapt my practices as a PE professional to meet the needs of my pupils. Until I joined the CoP I had little access to new or innovative pedagogies for teaching PE, or colleagues to discuss these adaptations, nor any feedback to know if I was doing a professionally good job. For many years I struggled in this context. There was minimal CPD for PE staff to support their learning (MacPhail and Halbert 2005). As I began this research, I was timetabled
to teach with a support teacher. This occurred for the first three years of the study. It was an unanticipated resource as typically only teachers of exam subjects with classes perceived as difficult, were allocated additional teacher support. This decision to support PE resulted from the school principal’s use of extra resource hours allocated to DEIS schools.

Since 2008 I have been a member of a CoP working in similar contexts called the Urban Schools Group (USG). It includes teachers, teacher educators and the original facilitators of the group. I realised I had something to say about these professional experiences but until I began my PhD I lacked the conceptual tools (McLaren 1998) and words to articulate these ideas. Though participation in the USG and from conversations about the USG, I knew that this community had a particularly strong influence on its members and many remarked on the changes to them and their practices, as well as to me and my practices, as a result. My research questions evolved as I wondered how participation in the CoP changed or otherwise their practices both in school and beyond school.

Immediately prior to the USG, I became an associate presenter with the national professional development service for teachers (PDST). In 2013 I became a facilitator and mentor with the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). I mentored four final-year PSTs on placement in my school. Consequently, I have direct experience of the continuum of teacher education (TC 2011) from the perspectives of facilitating and participating in it. It has broadened my understanding of CPD, and experiences with the USG have contributed to my commitment to the value to the teacher personally and professionally of meaningful CPD.

3.2.2. Philosophical Positioning

My overriding worldview is derived from pragmatism that “arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (as in post-positivism)” (Creswell 2009 p.10). Pragmatism interprets epistemological disputes by querying the practical consequences of each notion. If no practical difference can be found, then the notions mean practically the same thing (Putnam 2002). In general, I find this pragmatic approach to align with my understandings as a teacher and researcher. The pragmatist
believes the idea that theories of truth are ‘plastic’ because one theory can be superseded by a better one. Individuals will emphasise their points of satisfaction regarding theories, differently. To a certain degree, therefore, theories are ‘plastic’ (Putnam 2002). This aligns with my concept of a critically reflective practitioner (Brookfield 1995) approach to this research, in that the ‘truths’ we perceive are political and ideological (Brookfield 1995, Kincheloe 2008). We need to be aware of them and create our own perhaps competing theories. As a researcher I “emphasize the research problem and use all approaches available to understand the problem” (Creswell 2009 p.10) (such as in case study (Thomas 2011)). Thus I am not committed to any one method or philosophy or ideas of reality. I use mixed methods research to gain a holistic view of an investigation (Yin 2009).

My positionality affects the nature of the observations and the interpretations that I make. As a Science and physical education teacher, I am positivist by training where “facts and values can be kept separate, and objectivity is always possible” (Kincheloe 2008 p.29) but experience has taught me that knowledge is constructed and interpreted and “…is situated in relations between people” (situated knowledge) (Thomas 2009 p.109). My understanding of epistemology colours my approach to this research. Similarly the ontological stance of the readers influences what and how they interpret and evaluate it. Therefore there are multiple ‘gazes’ through which the research is interpreted, and includes the researcher (observer) and reader (observed) (Denzin and Lincoln 2011 p.12). I hesitate to frame this in dichotomous thinking and framing issues by what they are not, with dualisms and polarities marking difference (Ellingson 2011). I agree with the continuum approach to mapping qualitative methodology (with art and science at extreme ends of the continuum, and a nuanced range of possibilities in between), or ‘crystallization’ which “serves to promote multiple perspectives on topics while destabilizing those same claims, yielding a post-modern form of validity” (Ellingson 2011 p.605).

As a teacher of a marginalised group of disadvantaged females and teaching a subject that is marginalised in the education system in Ireland, I find social issues need to be addressed. My practice as a teacher has an agenda to help improve my pupils’ self efficacy – to have the capacity to do the things they wish to do. Through my teaching, I
try to enable my pupils to see the degree to which they make choices that they may not realise they are making, examples include their participation in physical activity, leaders in their community – and what they prioritise in leading younger members of their community. I aim to empower my pupils to think about their thinking, and how this influences their actions. With an awareness of this, I hope to develop their skills in making changes that they desire, and to use their own communities (their friends, families, school-mates, school) to help them do that. I hope to help them develop their voice, empower them to make the changes they wish and offer them opportunities to express that voice and make them aware of these processes taking place. This aligns well with Freire’s notion of relationships between the student, teacher and society, so that the teacher helps students:

...perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but a limiting situation which they can transform. (Freire 1996 p.31)

The pupils need to create their own ideals of how they wish to view their futures and there exist opportunities in my class to enact these ideals.

This notion aligns with the “advocacy and participatory worldview” (Creswell 2009) and is reflected in the critically reflective practitioner (Brookfield 1995) approach to this research where “every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces” (Kincheloe 2008 p.2). I would not describe my stance as emancipatory, as I believe that with emancipation comes risk, and I would navigate this part of my practice with care as many of my pupils are some of the most vulnerable in Irish society. I also believe that to say a teacher’s work is emancipatory smacks somewhat of arrogance and this has no place in my philosophy.

3.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory is “a [hypothetical] story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur” (Sutton and Straw 1995 cited in Yin 2009 p.36). Theory is important to enhance our understanding of education and PE but also its development (Evans and Davies 2005). Our theories of learning influence our actions as teachers, whether or not we are aware of them (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger Trayner 2015a). This research is positioned
within a Social Learning Theory that explores collective teacher reflections within a CoP, the processes and contexts within which CoP learning takes place and how that community influences their practices, understandings and beliefs. The second theoretical perspective draws on Donald Schön’s (1983) theory of the reflective practitioner and as a concept within that, of the critically reflective practitioner (Brookfield 1995). The CoP is the unit of analysis.

### 3.3.1. Engagement with CoPs

Engagement with a CoP is a collective reflection on practice (Wenger-Trayner 2013) with stories of success and failure as the ‘value creation stories’ (Wenger-Trayner 2014) that form the reflective practicum of a CoP. The reflections of a CoP can be seen as the activities they engage in through participation that may lead to changes in their practices, beliefs and understandings that arise as a direct result of their participation in the CoP. I sought to explore what the community identified as problematic situations (reflection-in-action (Schön (1983))) and how these reflective conversations were constructed. For example, issue setting, problem posing, strategy generation, implementing or experimentation. Reflection-on-action is about reflecting on practice afterwards (ibid) and includes data from interviews, discussions, my reflective journals, teacher reflections and the survey. One teacher’s experiences of participation in the USG, ‘Ray’ (an NQT) and the changes to his practices, understandings and beliefs that arose directly from this participation and his associated change in identity is also included. It is an embedded case study within the research that gives an example of how a member, a newcomer to the PE profession of the USG was brokered access to other CoPs by members in the USG. This enabled him to participate peripherally across a broader range of communities, increase his landscape of learning, thus broadening his ‘weave’ of participation in the professional community.

### 3.3.2. Perspectives of a Critically Reflective Practice

The perspective of critically reflective practice (Brookfield (1995) suggests that we examine our practice by viewing what we do through four lenses:
1. Autobiographical lens of the CoP (including ‘Ray’s story’, survey, reflective journals, documents, interviews);

2. Our pupils and what they find affirming or inhibiting about our actions (observation of pupil learning by others (peers and principals) and data from research on my practice)

3. Colleagues’ perceptions through engaging in critical conversations about our practice (workshop priorities, discussions, my reflective journal, and interviews with principals and colleagues)

4. Locating our practice within teachers’ practical theoretical frameworks (discussions and publications).
A schematic of the data to be used in each section is given in Fig 3.1 below.

![Fig 3.1 Sources of Data using Brookfield’s (1995) Four Lenses](image)

- Colleague Interviews (my practice) (4)
- Principal Interviews (4)
- National Facilitator Interview

- Pupil Reflections (my practice)
- Observations of Pupil Learning

- Colleagues
- Pupils
- Biography (USG and My Practice)
- Teacher Practical Theory

- Reflective Journals
- Survey (14)
- Sky-Project Publication Discussions
- Facilitators focus group interview
- Focus group interviews (USG, Curriculum Initiative and Publications Group)
- Documents (minutes, resources, communications (emails))
- ‘Ray’s Story’

- Discussions
- Publications & Presentations

Fig 3.1 Sources of Data using Brookfield’s (1995) Four Lenses
3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1. Case Study

“A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected and the conclusions drawn to the initial questions of study” (Yin 2009 p.24). Case study research focuses on a contemporary phenomenon in depth, within a real-life context (Yin 2009). The case is specific, bounded and with working parts (Stake 2005; Yin 2009; Flyvbjerg 2011; Thomas 2011). Case study is a strategy of inquiry where a program, activity, process or event is explored in depth. It is bounded by time and activity and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures and paying close attention to the context. A characteristic of case study research is the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2009). While multiple definitions of case study are used by case study researchers, this depends on the context to which the case study itself is used (Flyvbjerg 2011). The definition I am using is:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin 2009 p.18)

This case study examined how members of a CoP reflected on their practices. The context of this case was a group of PE professionals working with pupils from designated disadvantaged backgrounds and in urban schools with poor PE facilities in Ireland. It is studied at three levels of detail: the USG as a whole; within that, a group who undertook a curricular initiative, and one USG-teacher’s practice – my own.

Discussion on the importance of case study as a method to further knowledge is as varied as the discussions on the paradigms of research (Thomas 2011) and the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher. Case study can reflect any positioning – and in my case, it was a qualitative, case study using mixed methods. Mixed methods can permit the researcher to investigate complex research questions and collect a stronger evidence base than if studied by single method alone (Yin 2009). The approach to this case study research was naturalistic (Lincoln and Guba 1985) and examined the everyday activities of the CoP: there was no ‘intervention’ under scrutiny or experiment being conducted. The approach I used in this research also tied into my philosophical positioning. It was pragmatic, focused on the research questions and I
used all information at my disposal to understand and attempt to explain how members of the CoP engaged with teaching, reflected on their practice. Case study is defined by the interest in an individual case or a particular phenomenon (in this research a community of PE professionals working on their CPD) and not the methods used in the inquiry. It is both a process of inquiry in the design of the research and the product of the inquiry in the findings about a case (Stake 2005). This means that as a process of inquiry, the case used multiple methods to examine a specific group engaged in its ‘everyday activities’ in a particular time and place. The product of the inquiry was focussed on how a specific CoP reflected on its practices, the resulting changes to those practices, and their understandings and beliefs about their teaching and the teaching profession.

Stake (2005) described three types of case study – instrumental, multiple and intrinsic. This study was an instrumental case study that focused on an issue or concern and the case illustrates that issue or concern (Stake 2005): how experienced teachers working in DEIS schools reflected on their practice within a CoP. The CoP served as a single case study with discrete units of activity embedded within it (Yin 2009). The discrete units in this case focussed on different priorities of the CoP over time. They include piloting a curriculum innovation new to Ireland, sharing the learning from that project through conference presentation and publishing journal articles. ‘Ray’s’ experiences of this and action research on my own practice arising from CoP workshops were also included. I was alert to a major criticism of the embedded single case design where the case focuses on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis (Yin 2009). Thus this project maintains its focus on the CoP and the units of activity such as the curriculum innovation.

3.4.2. Case Study Methods

There is no universal agreement on guidelines for conducting a case study. Yin (2009) suggests five components of case study research design (which are used in this research):

1. The research questions (‘how’ and ‘why’ questions)
2. Its propositions - if any (these are possible answers to the research questions to move the researcher in the right direction)
3. The unit of analysis
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Social Learning Theory of CoPs was used as a guide to help explore the research questions; however Stake (2005) urged caution in following the conceptualisations of theorists, and being open to rival explanations. I was open to rival explanations as I had two theoretical frames to interpret my data. The activities of a CoP over a two year period was the case and the unit of analysis, focussing on three sub-units of teachers within the CoP in increasing ‘magnification’: the everyday activities of the CoP; those involved in a curriculum initiative; and my own practice.

The strengths of case study research allow us to:

- Explore messy, real-life situations (Thomas 2011)
- Explore and refocus on specific issues as the research progresses (Flyvbjerg 2009)
- Present ‘thick description’ and an in depth understanding of a concept (Stake 2005).

The case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence. This freedom brings its own challenges and Yin (2009) cautions that good case study is difficult to undertake as it lacks a clear definition of skills, there is no clear routine of procedures and researchers must be comfortable with procedural uncertainties during the course of the study. Good researcher judgement is also emphasised as what is relevant in a case study may not be readily predictable.

Many researchers agree that poor case study lacks rigor (Stake 2005, Yin 2009). It is inherently subjective, it relies on personal interpretation of data and inferences, lacks generalizable findings, difficulty of checking for validity, difficulty of gaining access to people/study of an extended period of time, and it can be time-consuming (Stake 2005). The concern that case study research is not ‘scientific’ (Thomas 2011) is an attempt to apply the standards of natural sciences to social studies. The weaknesses of case study are linked to the freedoms it offers as a method, approach and design. Differing researcher worldviews mark the approach to the research and the traditional
paradigmatic arguments on validity, reliability, generalisability and researcher bias apply. Predictably then, there is limited agreement on these issues.

Single case designs are vulnerable. You put ‘all your eggs in one basket’ and the analytic benefit from more than one case study is more substantial (Yin 2009). However with the range of methods for data collection, analyses can be altered in light of new information or insight during data collection. This should not lessen the rigor with which the altered design is pursued. The skills for conducting case study research are not clearly defined (Yin 2009) where in normative studies procedures are strictly laid down, and procedures for conducting case study depend on how the researcher intends to approach the case study (Stake 2005; Yin 2009; Flyvbjerg 2011; Thomas 2011). With the freedom to choose the method and evidence appropriate for the case study comes the responsibility to do each well.

Yin (2009) has stated that case study is very difficult to do well and the skills to do so have not clearly been outlined. He suggested that “A pilot case study will help you refine your data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed” (Yin 2009 p.92) to overcome weakness in case study. The pilot is formative in helping to develop relevant lines of questions and can help with conceptual clarification. However, this was not possible with the CoP under study as there was not a suitable CoP available for study (with the exception of piloting the survey). As each CoP is unique, it is unclear whether the work of a pilot would have yielded more insights on the research process. This study used a naturalistic approach to data collection.

3.5. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA

Differing researcher ontologies mark the approach to the research and perspectives on terms such as validity, reliability, generalisability and researcher bias. Generalisability asks if the research findings can be applicable in other settings (Bryman 2008). Yin (2009 p.15) clarified that “Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes”. The mode of generalization in this research is analytic in that it focuses on its logic rather than statistical connections. Thus within this research, rich thick description of contexts and
findings allow the reader to decide whether what is learned from this case is useful in understanding their own contexts.

The steps undertaken to ensure the case study followed guidelines of quality (Stake 2005; Yin 2009; Flyvbjerg 2011) were:

1. Clarity of writing with consistent use of terms, definitions provided, review by supervisor, proof read by a colleague
2. The research questions were clearly outlined, including a rationale for their significance
3. Clear description and justification for the methods of case selection, data collection and data analysis
4. A clear account of the research process and the researcher.

There was a full and transparent account at all stages of the research and the methods used and member checking of data at all stages of the research process. This helps to ensure the accuracy of the report (Creswell 2008).

Validity has been defined as the “...extent to which a piece of research is finding out what the researcher intends to find out” (Thomas 2011 p.63). This was supported by following Yin’s (2009) guidelines. These included making corrections of transcribed data, such as interviews and discussions suggested by the research participants. Research findings were presented to participants and corrections or alterations suggested by them were made. I followed case study protocols (following college procedures for conducting PhD research and ethics guidelines), and developed a case-study database in the data collection phase. They included an overview of the case study project (objectives, issues and relevant readings on the research topic); field procedures were outlined (access to CoP and their ‘everyday’ operations, following ethics guidelines for obtaining and using data from my pupils, protection of research participants by using ‘gatekeepers’ who were accessible to all participants and who could instruct me to remove them from the inquiry); research questions were born in mind when collecting e, and opportunities were taken to use multiple sources; PhD report guidelines from the University were followed and annual PhD progression reports included review of the research by panels of academic assessors.
3.5.1. Triangulation, subjectivity and bias

Case study can contain a bias towards verification (the tendency to confirm researchers’ preconceived ideas) (Flyvbjerg 2011). However, using multiple triangulation methods can reduce subjectivity and bias. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different sources (individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection). This encourages more accurate and credible reporting (Creswell 2008). As I was so embedded within all aspects of this case study as a participant, it could be considered a weakness. I offered insights because of this deep immersion that may not be readily understood by the less involved researcher. Thus, the research findings of the researcher with intimate knowledge of the case are as valid as more abstract understandings derived from protocols and instruments of the outsider researcher for their conceptions of the case (Stake 2005). I also used multiple sources and types of triangulation to try to reduce my biases. I have changed some of my preconceived hypotheses (for example regarding teacher values), and followed disciplined practices of data analysis, as well as giving a full account of all stages of the research (Yin 2009) to reduce this bias.

Providing all research respondents with the opportunity to ‘member check’ and correct the data both on an individual basis (sending transcripts of each interview to the respondents and making amendments as they request) and as a group when I presented the findings to all groups collectively, provides another layer of reducing bias. Group responses may also serve to reduce any distortions arising from individual skewing of responses and selective/inaccurate memory (Cohen et al 2011). I used a ‘critical friend’ to discuss my perceptions of the research process and the data collection. The perception of another, who was not involved in the research in any other way was also useful to make visible my subjectivities and biases as I explained the processes to that person.
Table 3.1 Efforts to Reduce Bias

I used multiple types of triangulation to corroborate findings (also necessary in case studies (Patton 1990; Stake 2005; Bryman 2008; Yin 2009; Flyvbjerg 2011; Thomas 2011)):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIANGULATION TYPE</th>
<th>Efforts to Reduce Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data source Triangulation</td>
<td>CoP (including ‘Ray’s story), school principals, school colleagues (teachers and an SNA), pupils and my reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Triangulation</td>
<td>Interview (individual and focus group), survey, practitioner research, reflective journal, discussions, minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator Triangulation</td>
<td>My investigations overseen by my supervisor, the university progression protocols</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Triangulation Sources

The primary sources of evidence I used for the case study are in line with Yin’s (2009) recommendations:

1. Documentation (meetings minutes, resources created, publications, survey, pupil reflections)
2. Archival records (reports on the CoP by the initial facilitators)
3. Interviews (both individual and focus groups)
4. Direct observation (reflective journals, principals and colleagues)
5. Participant observation (as a full member of the CoP)
6. Physical artefacts (copies of the presentations and journal articles published by members of the CoP, academic poster on my practice).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical artefacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Six Primary Sources of Evidence (Yin 2009).

3.6 PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

3.6.1. Research Participants

- 17 teachers and one university person who participated in USG (12 female and 6 male). On average 65% were sole practitioners. ‘Ray’ (an NQT) and I were part of this group.
- Senior school management (3 principals and 1 deputy principal)
- School colleagues (3 teachers and 1 special needs assistant (SNA))
- School pupils: 24 from second year (‘M’); and 20 from third year (‘V’)

It is important to note that the CoP membership was not fixed (some members retired and new members joined). All members did not engage with every meeting, workshop or initiative. Data were collected from September 2012 to October 2014.
‘Ray’s’ experiences and learning trajectory are included. As a newcomer to the USG and an NQT, his story offered rich insight into how the USG influenced his learning trajectory as a legitimate peripheral participant as a member of the CoP and as a professional beyond it.

Senior school management in four of the USG schools knew the CoP member within their school long enough (at least over a period of three years) to directly observe changes (if any) in their teaching practices and the pupils through their membership of the USG. These were managers of teachers who were engaging with the curricular initiative. These data were collected in May and June 2013.

My school colleagues included three (non PE) teaching colleagues, two of whom supported me separately in teaching my PE classes and one who observed practice and pupils having had no experiences within my PE classes. There was one SNA who was assigned to one pupil in my second year class group. These data were collected in May and June of 2013.

The pupils who participated in the research were in their second year (13-14 years), and third year (14-15 years). I was timetabled with each class for PE for an 80 minute lesson per week. All were females. One pupil with special needs in the second year class had an SNA. Other pupils with special needs such as dyslexia, ADHD, obstructive defiance disorder, had no designated SNA assigned to them. The data collected were from one year of reflections from pupils of 2012 to 2013 and the pupils who participated in the curriculum initiative. Data on these pupils were gained by observations from senior management and the USG members. Ray was an NQT and newcomer to the group at the start of the data collection stage of the USG.

The USG is a CoP of PE professionals originating in 2008 with one regional co-ordinator and one university academic/teacher educator facilitating the CoP. It was a group originally of 16 members who found the CPD provided at the time to be inadequate in supporting them to deliver the then new JCPE curriculum. The original providers identified that these teachers rejected the CPD provided and convened the group. The teachers taught in different urban DEIS schools, with limited or no PE facilities and the teachers reported that pupils had behavioural challenges in class.
USG represent the spectrum of teaching experience from newly qualified (up to 5 years experience), experienced (6 to 20 years experience), to veteran (greater than 20 years experience) PE professionals, males and females, different school type (vocational, voluntary secondary, community school), single sex and mixed, small medium and large schools. Some were teaching PE with other PE colleagues (approximately 35%), and others were sole PE practitioners (the only PE teachers in the school). With the exception of the first three CPD days, all USG meetings and workshops were conducted after school in members’ own time.

The group was convened in 2008 and within its first year it became a CoP. It is a CoP because its members have

1. A shared domain of interest – teaching PE in urban DEIS schools with limited PE facilities. All teach in Urban DEIS schools and pupils have challenging behaviour.
2. Joint enterprise in activities, meetings, workshops, publishing etc. on the issues surrounding their practices.
3. The practice - they have developed a shared repertoire of resources including ways of approaching and finding solutions to problems of practice (such as on the 'Dropbox' site), stories of practice and shared experiences over a sustained length of time (nine years to date).

The group has been self-facilitated since 2010. Since 2013 it received support from the local education centre providing a meeting venue and financial support for outside speakers, if necessary. The original facilitator roles have changed within the group: one returned to school as a teacher and is an active member within the group as a teacher in similar circumstances. The other remained with the group as a facilitator/member and teacher educator/academic. My role within the group from 2010 to 2015 was to organise meetings and workshops and to take and share minutes of meetings. The group chose the topics for each meeting. Outside the meetings, communication was via email. Most of the workshops were presented by USG members and all were in a school venue that was available on the day. The pupil learning that teachers focussed on in this research is from the affective domain, although teachers used other models such as games models and sport education and adhered to the Junior Cycle syllabus.
Data collection strategies are listed below in order of importance with the largest set of data first, followed by the second largest set etc. This is a general method of categorisation and some smaller sets are interspersed among the larger for the purposes of clarity and structure of the section.

### 3.7.1. Strategy One: Documentation

Tables 3.4 a, b, c below show a summary of the data collection strategies used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minutes of meetings</td>
<td>Written after each meeting</td>
<td>USG General Meetings x 9</td>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>120 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Face to Face</td>
<td>Presentation Group x 2</td>
<td>Education centre / Hotel</td>
<td>45 mins / 90 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Group Skype or telephone</td>
<td>Presentation Group x 3</td>
<td>Own home of interviewee</td>
<td>50 mins each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>x 3</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Ray’s Story</td>
<td>x 1</td>
<td>Email and presentation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Teacher resources</td>
<td>Various resources</td>
<td>Created by USG members</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Powerpoint presentation</td>
<td>Presentation group</td>
<td>DCU PEPAYS conference</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 X Journal publications</td>
<td>PE Matters</td>
<td>5,000 words per article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar on female physical activity</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>30 mins joint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>3 X Posters</td>
<td>Limerick UL x 2 Dublin DCU x 1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Journal article</td>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>conference proceedings</td>
<td>5000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>AIESEP, Warsaw</td>
<td>12 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Pupil reflection tool 1</td>
<td>Pupil daily reflections</td>
<td>My school</td>
<td>3 minutes x 26 lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artefacts</td>
<td>Pupil reflection tool 2+3</td>
<td>Self evaluations / meta- reflections</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>25 mins each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4a Data Collection Strategies - Documentation**
A document is “a record of an event or process” (Cohen et al 2011 p.249). These differ depending on who produces them and for what purpose. One key issue about documents regarding educational research is that they may not be authentic and may misrepresent groups. That is, the question of reliability and representativeness of the documents need to be made clear and from the perspective of the groups they claim to represent (Cohen et al 2011). The context of the documents must also be made explicit (in the context of broader educational, social and political relationships of that time). Authorship of, the audience of and the outcomes of the documents need to be made explicit. This must also frame how the documents are being analysed. In this case, power relations inside and outside the group as well as its context and social construction require scrutiny. When a document is being presented, it is noted if any of these issues applied. Issues of copyright and data protection as well as freedom of information needed to be considered by me. As the researcher, the issues of anonymity regarding non-published documents must be respected. Strategy one comprised documents gathered over the entire data collection stage of which there are five sets of documents and detail can be found in Table 3.4a.

(a) Minutes of Meetings

This set included minutes of the nine two-hour meetings of the USG which occurred over a two year period. These were recorded by hand during the meetings and then written up and distributed to members electronically within a week (normally the next day) of the meeting. These were verified by members and any edits suggested were made.

(b) Discussions transcriptions

The second set of documents included the transcriptions of the five planning meetings for the presentation and publications about our experiences of the curriculum reform initiatives we had implemented in our schools. These articles were published in the PE Matters Journal (Clonan et al 2014a, 2014b). It also includes emails that included general communications, participants’ reflections and Ray’s story.
(c) Artefacts

A third set of documents were the artefacts (i.e. ‘Microsoft PowerPoint’) from presentations made by members of the USG during the research study. The artefacts generated by the group were saved on the USG ‘Dropbox’ file.

These presentations include:

- Group oral presentation at Physical Education Physical Activity And YouthSport (PEPAYS) conference, of the Sky Sports Living For Sports (SSLFS) project (Jun 2013);
- My presentations and posters at conferences from the beginning of engaging in/with the PhD. The academic posters were in PEPAYS (Jun 2010), University of Limerick Educational and Professional Studies Winter School (Feb 2011), AIESEP (Jun 2011), PEPAYS (Jun 2013). Oral presentations were PEPAYS (Jun 2013), AIESEP (Jul 2013), Post Graduate Education (PE) with two accompanying vignettes (April 2014), Further Education Network (Oct 2014), Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) (Oct 2014).
- Presentation to Postgraduate Masters in Education (PME) students by ‘Ray’ (a newly qualified teacher) and subsequent reflections, leading to ‘Ray’s story’.

The publications were:

- 2012 PEPAYS conference proceedings (PEPAYS 2013);
- PE Matters (Spring and Summer 2014).

(d) Pupil reflections

A fourth set of documents were made up from pupil reflections which were derived from Pupil Reflection Tool (PRT) 1, 2, and 3. These included the written reflections of pupils based on the data they had generated over a school year from two class groups. PRT1 comprised their daily three-minute post class reflections. This took place after every lesson and took approximately three minutes, of which there were 26 lessons and 35 sets. PRT2 was their end-of-year reflections using the data generated from PRT1 of which there were 33 sets. PRT3 were meta-reflections taken one week after PRT2 of which there were 35 sets.
(e) Reflection journals

My three reflection journals over the course of the research study make up the fifth set of documents. These included a personal practice reflection journal (two journals), a USG reflection journal (two journals) and my PhD reflection journal (seven journals). They began in January 2011. These were written by hand in A6 size journals (suitable to fit in my pocket). I wrote in them frequently but irregularly, as events unfolded. I wrote wherever I had the opportunity – at home, during school. Sometimes when I had no journal, I recorded my observations and thoughts on my mobile phone and transcribed them later. There was much overlap between the journals, and most reflections are recorded in the PhD process journal.

3.7.2. Strategy Two: Interviews

Interviews “are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events” (Yin 2009 p.108). Interviews offer the advantage of personalising the responses of the interviewee. This can provide opportunities of deeper probing but with a reduced number of respondents compared to questionnaires (Tuckman 1972 cited in Cohen et al 2011). The degree of control that an interviewer has is limited and the reactions of interviewer and interviewee to the interview process (which involves trust) can differ. There were two types of interviews undertaken during this project – individual and focus group interviews (see Table 3.4b below). All were semi-structured which combines the structures of a list of issues to be covered with freedom to follow-up on points as needed (Thomas 2009).
This strategy was made up of nine individual, semi-structured interviews, of which there were three groups of participants and four semi-structured focus group interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed into Microsoft ‘Word’ documents. After member checking, no changes were requested by the group. They were then entered into the nVivo software package for analysis management purposes.

(f) Individual interviews

I interviewed four school principals who had participated in the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ and who had known the PE teacher before and during their membership of the USG (Table 3.4). Three interviews were conducted over the phone and one was face to face. The telephone reduces interviewer’s ability to ‘read’ the respondent (for puzzlement, doubt, other) and can be inferior to face to face interviews (Holbrook 2003 cited in Bryman 2008). As the respondents requested telephone interviews, it was better to have their perspectives than not at all. They were conducted shortly after completion of the project (June 2013). The purpose of the interview was to seek senior management’s perspective on the teacher’s professional practice, pupil learning and the curriculum initiative as enacted in their respective schools. It was to find out what senior management observed during the curriculum initiative in their schools. It was to record their observations on any changes to the teachers’ practice, and the influence of that practice on the pupils and others in the school.
The second set of interviews was conducted with four colleagues in my school in May 2013 (Table 3.4). All were face to face and conducted in school. One interview was with an SNA linked to one pupil in the class with whom I was doing the SSLFS project, as well as using the pupil Reflection Tool for pupil self evaluation. One was with a teaching colleague working with me in the same class, and the remaining two were with teachers who also taught the classes involved in the projects. The purpose of the interviews was to seek my colleagues’ perspectives on my professional practice, pupil learning and the curriculum initiative as enacted in our school.

The third set of interviews was with the National Co-ordinator of CPD for PE teachers in post-primary schools. This was conducted by phone. The purpose of this interview was to obtain her perspectives on the activities of the USG and her rationale behind supporting the set-up of the Community of Practice.

\(g\) **Focus group interviews**

The first focus group interview was with four teachers of the USG (May 2014) (Table 3.4). The purpose of this interview was to explore their opinions of the USG on their practice. The second interview was with a larger cohort of the CoP and took place in Sept 2014 with sixteen participants (Table 3.4). With a large group there can be an issue of members influencing each other (such as repeating each others’ responses (Yin 2009)). Each individual member was encouraged to speak and had the opportunity to do so. As discussion and turn-taking was a normal part of the interaction of the CoP, this had the advantage of generating answers that were robust and honest as there was a familiarity and trust among the members of the group.

The third focus group interview was with the curriculum innovation cluster (Table 3.4). There were six involved in this interview. The purpose of this was to find out what role the USG had in their engagement and enactment of the curriculum initiative.

The fourth focus group interview was with two of the facilitators of the USG and was completed at the end of the data collection phase (Sept 2014) (Table 3.4). The purpose of this interview was to find out what they observed over time with the group and whether they noted any changes in the group.
### 3.7.3 Strategy Three: Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>USG general</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td>02—05/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USG (general) repeat of above</td>
<td>Home/School of respondent</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td>09/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4c Data Collection Strategies - Survey**

Strategy three comprised two surveys. The first was to gather demographic information about the group and written responses on their activities as an USG. This questionnaire was emailed to each member of the group using ‘Survey-Monkey’. The advantages of using the Internet for the survey was to reduce cost, reduce time to distribute gather and process data. Members could complete the survey at home (although this depended on good browser speed access) and at a time to suit themselves. It can also reduce researcher effects and results can be more authentic, as respondents only responded if they chose to (Cohen et al 2011).

The possibility of poor question design (“failure to catch accurately the views of or meanings from the respondents” (Cohen et al 2011 p.261)) was reduced by ‘piloting’ the questionnaire with four PE colleagues (members of the PEAI who were not members of the USG) prior to being distributed. These gave feedback and the suggested changes were implemented. This was an effort also to reduce bias in the questionnaire. Biased or incorrect responses can result from over or under reporting real situations in their practice. “Bias obtains where there is a systematic skewing or distortion in the responses” (Cohen et al 2011 p.261, original emphasis) and memory may be selective or inaccurate. A low response rate did occur (5 complete and 3 incomplete responses) and the survey was distributed a second time. This resulted in 13 completed questionnaires of a possible 16 respondents.

The second survey was based on data from action research on my school practice. It allowed for the systematic collection of information about teaching with the intention to take action and subsequently improve professional practices (Lewin 1946). There are many schools of action research but “what unites different conceptions of action research is the desire for improvement to practice based on a rigorous evidential trail of data and research” (Cohen et al 2011 p.344).
The data that were used in this research is the evidence gathered from my 34 pupils’ reflections of Pupil Reflective Tool (PRT) 2 (appendix 4) and PRT3 completed at the end of the school year in May 2013. It provides data on how they viewed the PE programme, what they learned from it and their thoughts on the reflection process themselves. This is in conjunction with data gained from PRT 1 from a previous action research cycle. It included 26 separate reflections over several units throughout the school year from 105 pupils from the Junior Cycle cohort (aged 12 to 15). The research data set was presented at the PEPAYS/AIESEP conference in 2011. I exclude detail on the action research cycle itself, but include the data derived from one cycle within it. A complete description of the action research is not the subject of this research piece. In all cases, the data were collated by hand and entered into ‘Microsoft Excel’.

3.7.4. Phases of Data Collection

As this is a naturalistic inquiry, much data collection timing was opportunistic. There were three broad phases of data collection:

The first phase was continual over the research period:

- Data from my reflection journals ranged from 2011 to 2015
- Meeting minutes and USG resources ranged from 2012 to 2014 which were already available within the group

The second phase was during Feb 2013 to Jun 2013:

- Conducted the individual interviews of principals and my school colleagues
- Conducted the focus group interview of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ group
- Administered the USG survey
- Gathered the data from PRT1, 2 and 3 from my pupils

The third phase involved:

- Recording discussions by the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative presentation group from March 2013 to Jun 2013 (when the presentation was made)
• Publications discussions by the same group took place in Jan/Feb 2014 and their reflections
• USG focus group interviews took place in May 2014 and Sept 2014
• The USG survey was repeated in an effort to improve response rate
• The individual and focus group interviews of the facilitators took place in Sept 2014.

3.8. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis methodology adopted by this study is similar to a grounded theory approach and in particular the constant comparison method. There is no ‘exact science’ of data analysis since qualitative research is:

...“designer research”, customized to the particular goals and needs of the enterprise and interpreted through each researcher’s unique analytic lens and filter. (Saldana 2014 cited in Miles et al 2014 p.xvii)

Saldana’s message refers to analysis also, and methods of data analysis can only be advised, not prescribed. The most important aspect of data analysis is that it is systematic and “the creation, testing, and revision of simple, practical, and effective analysis methods remain the highest priority for qualitative researchers” (Miles et al 2014 p.6). Quality case study research uses data analysis, where the clarity of the formulation of the main claims (they are made clear, the relationships between claim and evidence are made clear, and the nature of every claim such as description, explanation, theory, evaluation, are made clear) (Thomas 2011 adapted from Hammersley 2005). In addition, the researcher ought to explore rival explanations for the same kinds of observations (Stake 2005; Yin 2009; Flyvbjerg 2011). ‘Conversation Analysis’ (“the fine grained analysis of talk as it occurs in interaction in naturally occurring situations” (Bryman 2008 p.494) is not how these conversations were analysed but emphasis was placed on emerging themes. While this is not the focus of my research, it does not preclude such analysis in the future. One ‘critical friend’ supported me in my reflections during the period of time that I collected data from September 2012 to December 2013. She was a colleague teaching in a different school and was not part of the research. We met at a suitable location and we discussed issues arising, she helped me clarify my perceptions of the research process in general. I later wrote these understandings in my reflective journal.
The data analysis methodology chosen is the constant comparative method. I have captured data from the perceptions of the participants (including myself) and I have focussed on their words:

> Words are the way that most people come to understand their situations; we create our world with words; we explain ourselves with words; we defend and hide ourselves with words. (Maykut and Morehouse 1994 p.18)

I constructed themes and patterns that were reviewed with the participants. The main task was to describe how the members of the USG come to reflect within the CoP. It sought evidence of changes to practices, understandings and beliefs of the CoP. There were broad deductive categories based on constructs from the literature presented above as well as more refined categories derived inductively from the data set. These were based on meanings and relationships between categories. The thematic analysis approach offered the means to analyse the participants’ perspectives to integrate them in a way that sought to describe and in turn theorise an explanation of the social processes being studied. This involved assigning codes to selected data of different sizes. These were then labelled and assigned “symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles et al 2014 p.71). Thus it is a researcher-generated construct that attributes meaning interpreted by the researcher for the purposes of determining patterns, themes and theory building. “Coding is analysis” (Miles et al 2014 p.72, original emphasis), it also prompts deeper reflection on the meaning of the data (data reduction) that help to identify the meaningful material, assemble groups of data that ‘go’ together and reduce the bulk of the data into analysable categories. This comparative analysis can lead to descriptive and analytic categories (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The understanding of the properties of categories and between categories changed as the codes were compared and refined over the analytic process.

Data were managed using a qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo. This does not surrender the analytic process to the computer but the computer is used for efficient storage, retrieval and organisation of data. It is researcher led, not computer led. It is also used to offer a clear audit trail (necessary for good case study research) through logging data movements, coding patterns, mapping categories and through progression. This also renders the data analysis section of the study more readily
The data analysis was traceable. Data mentioned in the previous sections were used in the data analysis (interviews, journals, discussions, emails, surveys, presentations and minutes).

There are seven phases to the analysis cycles: three separate cycles of coding; two of managing codes; one for initial categorisation of open codes; and one for data reduction by consolidating codes into a more abstract theoretical frame. The analysis cycles use writing to prompt deeper reflection of the data leading to findings from which conclusions may be drawn (Miles et al 2014 and Maykut and Morehouse 1994):

1. This phase involved open coding of all transcripts. The initial open coding was conducted separately against the data type.
2. This phase involved common and unique codes from phase one being brought into a common framework. It involved relabeling and merging common codes from all those coded separately in phase one.
3. This phase involved breaking these restructured themes into subthemes to clarify concepts and meanings inherent in them.
4. This phase involved consolidating codes from phases one, two and three into more abstract ideas.
5. This phase involved writing analytical memos against these phase four themes that reflect accurately the content of each category and its associated codes. Findings were proposed at this stage.
6. Phase 6 involved validation procedures. This involved testing, revising analytical memos and seeking further evidence that support the findings.
7. Phase 7 involved the findings and discussion chapters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANALYTICAL PROCESS</th>
<th>PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN NVIVO</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>ITERATIVE PROCESS THROUGHOUT ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Comparing units of meaning across categories for inductive category coding</td>
<td>Phase 1 Open coding</td>
<td>Data management (open and hierarchical coding through NVivo)</td>
<td>Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2 Categorisation of codes</td>
<td>Descriptive accounts (reordering, ‘coding on’ and annotating through NVivo)</td>
<td>Refining and distilling more abstract concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Refining categories</td>
<td>Phase 3 ‘Coding on’</td>
<td>Explanatory accounts (extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVivo)</td>
<td>Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Exploring relationships and patterns across categories</td>
<td>Phase 4 Data reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigning meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Integrating data to write findings</td>
<td>Phase 5 Writing analytical memos Phase 6 Validating analytical memos Phase 7 Synthesising memos</td>
<td></td>
<td>Generating themes and concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Summary of Coding Strategies for Qualitative Data

3.9. ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval (ref. 13.1.06) was granted by the University of Limerick in March 2013. An extension to the ethical approval was requested until September 2015 as a focus group interview had a low response rate (being the end of the academic year). This was rescheduled in September 2015.

The School Board of Management also granted ethical approval as did the local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC). The requirement for securing approval from both agencies was unforeseen and took an extra month for permission to be granted. It is worth noting that the 34 pupils and parents who eventually gave permission came from a total of 45 pupils. The main reason given for non return of permission was that they regularly lost the letters. No individual contacted the ‘gatekeeper’ to indicate an intention not to participate or withdraw.
A copy of the final granted ethical approval is included in Appendix 2. Each participant received the general information letter and specific information and permission letters. They were given to the USG members, principals, parents, pupils, school board of management and local VEC.

The next three chapters provide the findings from the data: chapter four focuses on the general activities of the USG and includes the story of an early career teacher (Ray) who joined the group; chapter five focuses on the curriculum initiative; and chapter six focuses on ‘my practice’.

References that are quoted from data include the name of the participant and the source of the quote. For example ‘Kay USGSP-D2’ is Kay, from the USG ‘Living-For-Sports Curriculum Initiative’ discussion No.2. ‘Jean USG-FG2’ represents Jean from the second USG focus group interview. Where a person who was interviewed is referenced it includes their role within the school, such as ‘Máire-P’ is school principal, Máire. Another example is ‘Ró SC-SNA’, as Ró, a school colleague who is a special needs assistant (SNA). Finally, where a reflective journal is quoted, it includes the number of the journal followed by the date of the reflection, such as ‘RJ1-01Jan2011’ which refers to reflection journal no.1 written on 1 January 2011.
CHAPTER 4

THE URBAN SCHOOLS GROUP

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how the practices and understandings of USG-members as professionals changed since becoming members of the USG. The first research question is split into two sections:

1. To what extent did USG-teachers perceive changes to their practices?
2. To what extent was there impact to teachers’ understandings and beliefs?

For the purposes of this study, teachers’ practices have two aspects: their classrooms that include the teaching, managerial and assessment behaviours during lessons; and how they functioned as a teacher that included the relationships and interactions with their peers including their school colleagues and the USG. Thus, each section refers to their classroom practices, followed by their professional engagement and interactions in school outside the classroom. The first research question also presents Ray’s story (an NQT) as a microcosm of the USG. It shows how engagement and resulting changes in USG-teachers’ practices impacted on perceptions of pupil learning. Finally, a summary of the main findings is given to close the chapter.

4.2. WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE USG ON USG-TEACHERS’ SCHOOL PRACTICES?

In research question one, the influences of the USG on teachers’ workplace practices are examined. USG-teachers’ practices include not only their school-based practices but also their other professional activities. Curriculum in this study refers to both instruction and content. The changes to school practices are best reflected in two themes:

1. The content of curricular offerings
2. Professional standards.

4.2.1. Theme One: The Content of Curricular Offerings

All teachers stated that the USG had changed their teaching practices. Difficulty with
engaging pupils in participating in PE lessons had resulted in a narrowing of curricular offerings, limiting their PE programmes. As a result of the different workshops that the USG engaged in, it offered them a bigger range of ideas and activities that they could use in their lessons. The most common change was that participants included a greater variety of activities in their PE programme and they adapted these activities to suit their pupils.

Learning new content at workshops

The identified changed practices were directly linked to their learning of new content during different USG workshops. Many teachers said: “Greater variety of activities and ideas. Perhaps not just in the programme content but in its delivery” (Survey). Engaging pupils in learning and improving pupil participation were identified as central aims for most USG-teachers and a key motivation for USG membership. The workshop content was initially identified by USG and often delivered by the teachers themselves. The survey data highlighted that the teachers found the workshops ‘useful, usable and used’. The workshops were the principle method for the USG-teachers to access new ideas. Workshop ‘minutes’, sent to members, included information on resources specific to the workshop as well as others considered useful by members. Minutes were accompanied by notes and schemes of work to ensure maximum engagement with the activity:

...if somebody is teaching you... you can see how easy it is... the people who have taught at different strands have made it easy so they have given you worksheets. They have done the lessons out... from a stage to a stage to a stage, and I was “Well, I could do that. (Kay USG-FG1)

Workshops focussed on how they had to doubly adapt their teaching content and pedagogical approaches for poorly behaved pupils, and limited PE facilities and resources. Every activity presented at workshops had to be further adapted for the specific school contexts. The workshops met the needs of the USG-teachers by making the content accessible to them:

Even Adventure Ed. and I was dreading teaching that, and gymnastics and dancing. ...since I have gone to the Urban Schools. I am teaching them now and I am loving it. I would have avoided that like the plague. (Kay USG-FG1)
The workshop themes reflected priorities of the USG and their efforts to teach the required strands of the syllabus. They represented the focus for change in teachers’ practices (Appendix 3) and served to broaden the content of teachers’ curricular offerings in school. Therefore all workshop themes represent examples of potential changes to USG-teachers’ practice and were a deliberate effort to meet DES syllabus requirements. They focussed on the JCPE strands, DES curricula such as JCPE, LCA, JCSP and DES policies, such as literacy:

The literacy resources ‘initiative’ is almost complete with those who have not yet done their ‘homework’ being reminded to do so (and don’t forget to include pictures as well). (Minutes-M)

They included adaptations for pupils with SEN (physical, learning and behavioural difficulties) as noted in the USG minutes.

Teachers reported through survey that all workshop activities were adopted into their PE programmes by at least some of the USG-teachers. Initial workshops included a focus on pedagogical models (such as Sport Education, Adventure Education and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), ‘new’ activities (such as Ultimate Frisbee and Sport Acrobatics), and ideas “that worked” (such as skipping, adapted co-operation/team-challenge games and spikeball) (Appendix 3). Later workshops prioritised technology (such as ‘smart technology’, the internet and ‘Drop-box’), difficult to teach activities (such as dance, adapted games), creating resources (such as PE department folders, literacy work-cards) and programme planning. USG-teachers also undertook new projects (for example ‘Sky Sports Living For Sports’ or ‘Junior Certificate Schools Award’).

The survey indicated that the most commonly adopted changes and additions to USG-teachers’ curricula were Sports Acrobatics, Adapted Games, and Athletics followed by Spikeball (adapted volleyball) and Orienteering. This may have been because they were the elements of the JCPE curriculum most in need of development by USG-teachers. Another reason might be that the workshop content helped them to meet the needs of their pupils:
I always shied away from gymnastics ...with the students in my place. But the sports acrobatics now has become like a major thing, and I would never have done that only from... doing it with Urban Schools. (Blá USG-FG1)

The activities least included were ‘X-box Kinnect’, perhaps due to the unavailability of equipment such as ‘X-boxes’. The pupil-centred pedagogical model, TPSR, was adopted and used by every USG teacher (survey) and it helped them to manage the challenges of pupil behaviour in class. The ‘Sport Education’ curriculum model that was adapted by many of the USG-teachers helped pupils to make positive choices about their options for participating in lessons. Most teachers spoke about how they were now dealing with pupils differently in class: “I think my teaching has changed because of the USI ...I try to deal with students differently” (Kay USGSP-email).

Practical workshops were held in USG-teachers’ schools, leading to discussions where USG-teachers made efforts to translate and adapt workshop ideas to their practice. As well as keeping the workshop contexts ‘real’, school-based workshops served as a platform to discuss adaptations made by the workshop-leader to facilitate their PE programme. This stimulated the exchange of ideas among teachers:

Mary said the ‘heavy-duty’ Velcro strip in the hall for attaching laminated posters to, has been great... Also Sarah said the whiteboard in the hall was a great idea too. (minutes-L)

**Better resources**

The USG created many resources to help its USG-teachers teach the content. The availability of so many resources and ideas gave the teachers greater options to engage the pupils: “It has opened up a variety of new ideas for the classroom which has helped motivate students” (Survey). Greater variety was not simply a broader exposure to activities, it also included depth of exposure and different pedagogies in an effort to improve pupil engagement with the syllabus to meet pupil needs and syllabus requirements. The wider variety of activities also “helped motivate students” (Survey).

USG-teachers also had a greater access to resources. Resources shared in ‘Drop-box’ reflected the work of the group and included planning and policy documents for PE, class materials (worksheets, videos), equipment adaptation for pupils with SEN, and
limited facilities. Having appropriate resources was important to USG-teachers because it minimized the time they needed to spend in looking for them:

I would have a filing cabinet full of resources and I would go online and I would get lost in finding new ideas. (Blá USG-FG1)

As the USG-teachers became more discerning, they sought more quality resources pertinent to their contexts. This led to a plan to cull resources to make them more manageable. Their approach was to include newer USG-teachers in the process, and discussed ‘filtering’ the cull:

...if our next step is to filter ...five of the six of us here are a part of the old, the original group. Do you think that it would be more difficult to filter with new folks who haven’t gone the whole way with this? Do you know what I mean? Who maybe haven’t gained the same insights yet? (Alice USG-FG2)

Volunteers went through a section of the ‘Drop-box’ site to identify files for culling. This prompted a call for repetition of some of the workshops that the USG-teachers felt would be most valuable to facilitate newer members:

You know, that was the one that I felt very comfortable with four years ago... so we revisited last year the spikeball kind of thing, and maybe there is room for Teresa to go over her fantastic outdoor orienteering... to ask round and fill ...in all the people who are new on the things were really good (Nessa USG-FG2)

Allied to accessing resources was an improvement in technological skills. The role of technology in the teaching of physical education occupied a significant niche among the USG priorities, such as the implementation of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ and the work of the USG in storing resources. The teachers saw technology as both a barrier and enabler to their own learning, USG discussions and resources on the internet, and to pupil learning. Technology workshops accounted for one third of the 2011-2013 workshops and learning to maximise the Internet and smart-technology. In general, the newer, younger USG-teachers led these workshops and shared their knowledge and expertise with the more experienced but less ‘tech-savvy’ teachers. Technology was increasingly seen and used by some teachers to capture pupil learning through the use of written work or by photographing or videoing pupils engaged in lessons in school (for example USG minutes-C6Oct2011). Photographs and videos were also shared (electronically) within the USG and the school management liked to use
these images for advertising the school in their school websites (see chapter 5).

Difficulty with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ website was a barrier to some USG-teachers in signing up or accessing support materials and on-line resources. These problems were overcome by support from other USG-teachers. However, some used the internet rarely (a challenge for USG administrators), as they did not have frequent access to a computer and needed continual support with the use of technology. Alice set up ‘Drop-box’ to store resources created by the community so that the teachers could “pick and choose the resources most appropriate to you” (Alice USGCI-D2). Though convenient, ‘Drop-box’ required regular, continuous support for USG-teachers:

Once again, people asked how to use Dropbox. A spontaneous workshop on Dropbox ensued on Mary’s laptop and all seemed happy with the outcome. (Minutes-H)

In general, the broadening of teachers’ practices included their work with the teaching community and school practices. The increased breadth built their capacity to make adaptations for their specific school contexts. It also helped them to access more resources through technology.

4.2.2. Theme Two: Change to Teachers’ Alignment with Professional Standards

Teachers’ reported that they adapted to DES professional standards. This was reflected in both their school/classroom practices as well as their professional activities outside the classroom. Pursuing higher professional standards did not arise solely from improved subject knowledge and more opportunities to name and share positive PE. Their planning, lesson structures, and assessments also changed in school.

Better planning

Teachers were required by the DES to write plans for all class groups being taught. Not only were they to reflect the differing programmes within which the various curricula were placed, but they also included annual plans, and subject department plans. As many were sole practitioners, USG-teachers had sole responsibility for these plans. Meeting teacher planning needs was an important part of the meetings. Teachers spent time on preparation of their school programmes such as teaching the Leaving Certificate
Applied (LCA) programme or Junior Certificate Schools Awards (JCSA) or the Junior Cycle PE (JCPE) syllabus:

We didn't work on anything specifically on the LCA assignments yet, Brenda. We are planning to. We can share our resources. I will send my LCA scheme onto this site in the next few days... I would like a resources and course planning night for LCA specifically. (USG emails)

Most requests were followed by a workshop on planning and how a teacher had approached and taught a particular programme or specific curriculum strand within the JCPE, for example:

Jean has the presentations structured exactly as per the LCA module descriptors. This is how she teaches the programme (following the units in the module descriptors). These include theory classes as well as the practical. (Minutes-K)

They perceived this effort at planning improved their teaching:

...it’s really better for me... Now it has improved my teaching and the amount of stuff that we do in our school... it really has. (Kay USG-FG1)

It also served to improve teacher reflections:

...because if you don’t reflect, so you will realise ... you can’t improve and you can’t change things, and I think that’s what it has made us do in our school. (Blá USG-FG1)

The planning resources available for USG-teachers reassured them that they were adequately prepared to address the teaching demands of their school:

I just started in a new school and I showed the other teacher the whole folder and everything and he just couldn’t get over it, and he had never seen anything like it. (Emma USG-FG2)

Greater use of lesson structure and assessment

Better planning and preparation was perceived to lead to greater use of lesson structures:

I found that with some of my really problematic classes, I have learnt that I need...structure. I have to say, we are warming up, I have got four drills that we are going to explore and look at, and then we are going on to the games. (Blá USG-FG1)

This influenced all members. The importance of pupil enjoyment for deeper engagement with the lesson was learned quickly by Jean (NQT) who changed her
understanding of pupils’ perspectives of PE:

I am not that long out of college. I just thought... “They will be really enthusiastic and very competitive against one another. They will really want to ...show their talents” ...I changed and I said, “OK, it’s all about enjoying it” ...and if they do enjoy it, will they work hard at it, and ...they will actually put their mind to it. (Jean USG-FG1)

Teachers identified assessment of pupil learning as another change to their practice:

...works well, the assessment ...we have our assessment wheels and now we have our sheets done out now for next year, so Stan has gone home to do it all. But do you know what I mean, like, we would have been brutal ...we assessed dance... we have improved on from the Urban Skills. There’s no way we would have done all that [before]… (Kay USG-FG1)

Assessment also included engaging pupils in self-reflection tasks (chapters five and six). When evaluating the quality of pupil participation, teachers felt that better planning and preparation led to improved pupil learning. I reflected on this after it was discussed following a meeting:

    They have ‘upped’ their game professionally by being a member of the USG and accept and expect a higher standard of themselves wrt [with respect to] teaching. Better planning and willing to try out more things. Measure of success is by QUALITY of pupil participation and performance. (RJ5-30May2014)

Teachers began to recognise and articulate pupil learning more clearly. Alice noted that teachers had noted improvements in pupil behaviour, performance and pupil recognition of their learning:

    ...there are things that you have done since you have been in the group that have impacted behaviour or performance or their recognition of being able to do something. (Alice USG-FG2)

*Interactions with peers*

The second main category of identified change within teachers’ practices was in how they operated as teachers outside the classroom. These included mentoring students on teaching placement, talking about their practice (including at conferences) and how they behaved as a colleague. These represented opportunities to share their learning as PE professionals in the CoP, leading to improved preparation in their school programmes.
A priority of the original facilitators was for USG-teachers to recognise their own expertise and knowledge, and to share their expertise with the group. After much reluctance USG-teachers began to lead workshops. Confidence grew and the pattern of sharing was established within the group. The expectation that all USG-teachers would contribute, regardless of length of time as a member or as a teacher, became ‘normalised’:

I went to a few group presentations... before I had presented, and ...I was kind of quite nervous but ...when it was my turn, I felt that everyone was so supportive and ...you could just throw an idea out and no-one is going to slate it... everyone will be really constructive and you really take it on board... it has helped in that way... I don’t mind taking on board anything and I don’t feel afraid to try anything new. (Jean USG-FG2)

The presenters pushed themselves to make the presentation as good as possible: “I thought it was great because ...I had to pull up my socks to get the things done” (Jean USG-FG1).

However the USG-teachers wanted to contribute:

...Brilliant, at least ...I am giving, do you know, that you’re not just take, take, take, take. You would find that you would have something that you knew was kind of useful and worked that you could bring to kind of give back... I think when they find something like that that they can give, you would be delighted to give it over because then they would feel like they have gained so much. (Emma USG-FG2)

This enabled the presenting USG-teachers to see and share the positives in their practices. It also helped them to discuss the challenges in their practices and how to address them:

...you are better prepared with maybe new ideas, your classes run better. OK, some games did not work out but you’re, I think I certainly have presented with more of a smile on my face because I felt supported and I got more confident, and I think as a result, my classes are going better and there are less people sitting it out. (Nessa USG-FG2)

Engaging in mentoring

One value of delivering workshops was that USG-teachers gave honest feedback on workshops or ideas which were positive or negative. Delivering the workshops was stressful but they felt supported as Kay notes below:
... once you started it, it was fine. Everybody was so nice and ... it was easy to do. I mean, everybody just helped each other and... getting constant feedback... so I am glad I did the research... but you can tell by people though that they were genuine and they were happy... I think that people would tell you if they... didn’t think it was useful, or they would come back and say, “That didn’t work with my group”. (Kay USG-FG1)

Feedback discussions were usually focussed on solutions. Providing solutions to problems of practice helped USG-teachers to share their challenges. Shared understanding of the problems was reassuring and it helped USG-teachers to justify their programmes to themselves as much as to others:

...there are other people in the same boat as we are and have the same difficulties and things have worked for them and it’s great to try out things ...that you can kind of justify what you do now and the fact that you would feel more comfortable doing it. (Hilda USG-FG2)

The sharing of ‘tried-and-tested’ ideas that were researched, and had worked in USG types of schools encouraged other USG-teachers to try them out. This had the benefit of saving them work and motivating them by giving them “the USG buzz” (Macey):

This has been tried and tested in schools like myself... a majority of the stuff I will use, and some things don’t work with my lads... But you then can take something that’s ready-made for you. And it just cuts down the workload... that support... this worked ...you went, “Right, OK, I’ll go with that. (Blá USG-FG1)

I would have a meeting in USG, I’m like, “Oh, I can’t wait to teach... (Jean USG-FG1)

Feedback on the workshop gave the leader positive feedback on their practices in the absence of collegial support via observations during school lessons. It was a type of peer observation ‘by proxy’. Teresa’s workshop received positive feedback:

...the Adventure Ed …I have downloaded all that stuff. We have laminated it all and we use it all the time. It’s a godsend, it really is. I have to be honest. I think that it is (Kay USG-FG1)

The NQTs spoke of their reluctance to seek feedback in school, perhaps based on a fear of being judged to be incompetent as a new teacher:

...in school we don’t say everything out because ...we would think that all the teachers are going to go, “Oh, they can’t control the class, they only have to kick a ball around the place and they can’t even do that. (Jean USG-FG2)
Another change occurred. They began to operate as part of a network of colleagues. This was especially valuable for teachers who worked as sole practitioners. They began to think about their role as colleagues and collaborated as such on planning. It provided the support to try new things and to tackle the challenges in their own school environment:

...it gave me a greater confidence because I knew I had a group that I could work with...it gave me ...colleagues. (Mary USG-FG2)

I don’t feel like a sole practitioner any more. (Teresa RJ3-07Apr2015)

Some USG-teachers reported that they were willing to try new things and to reflect as a group. Jean believed these changes contributed to her successes in their classroom practices:

...a lot of us in the Urban Schools Group, it’s all, because we move with the times, and as methods change, we are willing to change and we try them... more so than other PE teachers... we are willing to try it, and then we can say, “Well, that didn’t work” or “That did work” and we reflect on it as a group. (Jean USG-FG1)

The group recognised that they supported each other well because they had so many common challenges in their school practices. With the array of changes and policies related to school planning, the USG helped to remove the stress associated with following DES recommendations:

...you and your staff are all dealing with this. There is all paperwork ...there is new SSE, there is another form of this, there is another form for that... How are we going to get this done? How do we do that?” ...there is a way through it. If you look at it this way, because that’s what our group is looking at ...it stops me being a headless chicken and panicking. (Brenda USG-FG2)

Contributions to the USG involved supporting others in their planning processes. The stress of inspection by the DES was also reduced by sharing the resources and planning burden:

...it’s reassurance though ...you know where you are wanting to be sure for your first inspection of what you are getting and what you are looking for. (Emma USG-FG2)

During USG meetings teachers reflected on their lessons. Often teachers were overly negative. Alice (facilitator) intervened on a number of occasions and urged teachers to see the positives in their practice:
...be gentle with yourself because... I am doing this as an outsider because I wasn’t in there watching any of you do this... the response from your students that I saw on the day ...it had a huge impact on them. And, yeah, there are probably things you missed... you think, “Well, that was a crap lesson.” I bet ...the students don’t recognise when it was a crap lesson because they probably still learnt something. They probably still enjoyed themselves, but you didn’t get done exactly what you want. (Alice USG-D5)

Advocating for PE in and beyond school

Discussion on PE allowed USG members to advocate for their PE programmes. The ability to advocate developed their sense of themselves as professionals which helped to clarify their knowledge and priorities within PE. Participation in the USG resulted in teachers’ improved ability to justify and advocate for their subject. Talking about their practices helped them to articulate this. A teacher noted they were now able to articulate more clearly to stakeholders the meaning and priorities of their physical education programme: “my emphasis is not on skill development. I’m a teacher NOT a coach!” (Survey). There was an element of advocacy in educating principals, parents, and pupils about the purpose and value of PE in the education of young people. This included educating stakeholders on the challenges they had faced to successfully implement their PE programme:

The support the USG have given has helped me to justify how I run the PE programme and how it has to be adapted on a regular basis. (Survey)

The sense of teachers’ enhanced knowledge development benefitted them in their capacity and energy to justify their programme to others. This included the veteran teachers as well as the NQTs:

Well, for me it is I have a lot more knowledge, I gained more interest again, I was a bit... burned out, I suppose, doing the same thing probably... I wouldn’t progress ...and I feel I could actually talk why I’m doing or what I’m doing. (Nessa USG-FG2)

Linked to the low status of PE is the lack of understanding by pupils, peers and principals of what the teacher is trying to achieve as well as being compounded by no clear metric of what constituted quality learning and teaching in PE. One principal noted that she would need assistance with being able to judge what a quality PE lesson/programme is: “I would need a little bit of help with being alert to it” (Carol USG-P). It led to an imperative to justify their subject areas (and as a result, themselves)
in school, potentially influencing timetabling by management and pupil engagement in PE.

Justification and advocacy of PE helped to clarify the poor conceptualisations of PE held by management. This poor conceptualisation of the role of PE extended from senior management through to the poor attitude of pupils towards the subject:

I had somebody asking me ...“what would you do with an iPad in PE?” when I was talking about it ...And I was going, “Probably the same as any of the others. I would use it as a tool to augment the teaching and learning”, you know? ...that was from the Deputy [principal]. (Brenda USG-FG2)

...they have to do it ...like geography is on the syllabus. Yeah, they have to do PE, it’s on the syllabus as well. (Kay USG-FG1).

This was perceived as a problem and contributed to a feeling of isolation among school peers throughout the teacher’s career as explained by Brenda:

...it’s not just being the single PE teacher. In all fairness, a lot of our colleagues probably don’t recognise what we would do as teaching either, you know? ...You are isolated further within the staff as well. (Brenda USG-FG2)

A DES inspection was associated with defending your practice. I reflected after a discussion with a USG-teacher on how quality preparation and planning helped her:

This also means the confidence to ‘take on’ the inspectorate after a deep felt fear about criticism of her practice in the past and an inability to defend it. Now, with confidence, she would be able to defend her position and practice. (RJ4-17Dec2013)

Justification of their PE programme changed how it made them feel about themselves. It resulted in their developing a sense of competence as professionals:

...it also gave you the confidence to do ...you might have said, “Oh no, I have to do this” ...now you go, “Oh well, you know, there are other people in the same boat as we are and have the same difficulties and things have worked for them and it’s great to try out things.” ...you can justify what you do now and ...you would feel more comfortable doing it. (Hilda USG-FG2)

### 4.2.3. Ray’s Story: The USG ‘Making a Difference’

Ray’s experience is an example of how the USG supported a teacher and the changes to his practice arising from the perspectives above. At the time of the research, he was a
sole practitioner. This is relevant because the changes to his practice are clearly as a result of his membership of the USG. The data are derived from personal correspondence with Ray.

Ray was a second year NQT and a sole practitioner when he joined the USG. He was identified by Alice, his initial teacher-educator, and invited to join the group. Ray expressed difficulty in managing his pupils’ challenging behaviour in PE at his first USG meeting. He indicated:

I listened to the wisdom of experienced teachers and I left feeling that I had some tools and resources from the group to overcome pupils’ challenging behaviour. With pupils’ behaviour I realised that I was approaching just off centre and through the USG it refocused me on changing tactics on it.

Having identified pupils with problems as discussed during the USG meeting, Ray was determined to find ways to praise them, and quickly saw positive changes from his efforts. One pupil, ‘Roy’ was “uncontrollable”. Ray put him in charge of the soccer team and went to some of his club soccer matches. In a subsequent meeting with Ray, Roy wept. No-one from his family had ever seen him play – he was of international standard but hadn’t the confidence or the transport to get to the Irish trials. Ray developed a rapport with Roy whose behaviour began to improve “more than I could ever have imagined”. His attendance improved, he started doing his homework, leading to studying Sport Health and Performance in a third level college. Colleagues acknowledged that was due to Ray’s influence. He realised he could make a difference in school: “My practice became more holistic and pupil centred and that I could make a difference to pupils’ lives”.

Ray felt reassured and confident of the support of the group, in good days and bad:

The support from the group was that it was okay to have a bad day, that many experienced teachers had bad days. It doesn’t reflect on you personally as a teacher. Good days, bad days and exceptionally bad days... you’re not on your own. That on your lowest point you can send a message to the group and if you’re under pressure with resources drop box is there. It is reassuring that someone is at the end of a phone.

Arising from his membership of the USG, Ray took the opportunity to engage with the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative. This had five positive impacts on Ray’s practice:
1. It provided him with the means to improve school-wide problems of attendance and ‘anti-social behaviour’. This approach included all pupils and staff and had a lasting impact on the school. It helped to forge a strong lasting rapport with the pupils, and to develop a leadership role amongst his teaching colleagues “he definitely has a respect and people definitely look up to him” (Máire USG-P);

2. The status and profile of PE was changed from being “non-existent” to PE being voted “...the number one appreciated subject in the school” by the pupils. This also included raising the profile of PE in the local community arising from media exposure;

3. The rationale and resources Ray created for pupil selection procedures were quickly shared with all USG members;

4. This pushed him to develop his professional practice further by sharing his learning experiences formally through a conference presentation and a publication in a peer-reviewed journal;

5. One of his ‘Living-for-Sports Curriculum Initiative’ projects was awarded the ‘Project of the Year’ overall prize (from over 1500 schools in ROI, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) by the Youth Sports Trust.

Having engaged successfully with the USG and his successful implementation of the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative, Ray identified a need to develop his understanding of school management and he enrolled in an accredited educational management postgraduate programme. He became involved in the professional association and was invited to share his learning experiences with ‘Postgraduate Masters in Education’ students preparing to be physical education teachers. He also engaged with a number of curriculum initiatives including the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Ray acknowledged the impact the USG had on his identity as a professional and his practice both within the classroom and as a member of a professional community:

The opportunity we had to work as part of the USG community, sharing ideas, consulting teaching colleagues in like-kinds of settings and supporting one another in our practice has had a huge impact on us professionally. ...We all shared and had day-to-day interaction. And if we don’t have it our pupils don’t have it... the successes and awards... My ideas and confidence in myself, the USG accelerated it. When you present something to the group, nuggets, you might just think it’s something that you do, and the group thinks it’s phenomenal. That helps. It helps in reflection on your practice and
helps you to be conscious of your practice. It is something I believe in... I can’t wait to share... I am subconsciously thinking all the time... it is ‘unburdened’ professional development.

As well as the changes in the professional activities of the USG-teachers in the classroom and as colleagues, USG-teachers changed their sense of what it meant to be a professional and their identity as a professional. This is examined in the next section.

4.3. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THERE IMPACT TO TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDINGS AND BELIEF?

This section describes how the USG-teachers changed their understanding of themselves as professionals. Pursuing higher professional standards did not arise solely from improved subject knowledge and more opportunities to name and share positive PE. It was manifested in greater confidence and resilience when undertaking something new or putting their PE plans into action. They also began to value their contributions as professionals. They developed this understanding from the support of the USG. The confidence and greater certainty about their priorities as teachers toward the learning of their students in physical education contributed to that change. Their changed values and beliefs in themselves as professionals were: increased confidence and resilience; and changed involvement in CPD.

4.3.1. Greater Confidence and Resilience in Their Ability to Deliver Quality PE

The single most important change in USG-teachers was the improvement in their confidence. USG-teachers noted they had to “adapt everything by the double” (Sarah RJ1-7Jan2011) to overcome the twin challenges of inadequate facilities and behaviourally challenging pupils from DEIS schools. This required innovation on every strand of the PE syllabus both in content and pedagogy in order to fulfil curricular requirements.

Experiences of negativity

Over previous years, negativity had contributed to high levels of stress and burnout among some of the participants. One recently retired USG-teacher, later reflected on that stress: “The knot that I never knew I had in my stomach, is gone” (Úna RJ1-
01Jan2011). The nationwide CPD on the new JCPE programme originally provided had a negative effect on the USG-teachers. This was based on their perceptions that the underlying assumptions of PE teachers’ practice of the CPD were alien to theirs. This resulted in reducing their belief in their ability to implement the new syllabus:

...I got so upset wondering how am I going to implement this Junior Cycle? I had been so excited about it... but when we went to those in-services and then coming out just feeling deflated, going, “How am I going to do this? (Blá USG-D5)

It caused them to question the validity of what they were offering as PE to their students: it “...trashed my practice” (Úna RJ1-01Jan2011). These feelings of negativity were compounded by isolation:

...their demeanour was that they were beaten into the ground into the sense that ...they were underprivileged, and undervalued, and under-everything, and worse than that, they were mostly on their own in that situation. (Mary USG-F)

Teachers felt the challenge to contain pupils in order to maintain control in their lessons and limited their teaching spaces. They became aware of their institutionalisation in coping they way they did:

I don’t really teach very much outside on the football pitch because my kids can’t cope with it, but also I have some interruption from outside with messers, so down through the years, [I] have become institutionalised into ...my little box. (Blá USGSP-D5)

Teachers felt that the support of the USG was helpful to them in overcoming negativity and burn-out: “If it wasn’t for this group, I’d have gone long ago” (Nessa RJ1-24Mar2011).

Greater clarity to their priorities for PE

These teachers perceived that by articulating priorities and acknowledging how they linked with their practices helped them to clarify their goals and align practice changes with their priorities. Figs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 show that, since their involvement with the USG, the teachers perceived a better alignment of their goals with their practice. They felt that this extended to the future (Survey). Teachers’ beliefs in achieving what they set out to achieve improved and this alignment was directly attributed to the USG.
Fig 4.1 Alignment of USG Teachers’ PE Goals with their Practices, before the USG

Fig 4.2 Alignment of USG-Teachers’ PE Goals with School Goals during the Last Year
Fig 4.3 Predicted Alignment by USG-Teachers of Their PE Goals with School Goals

While there is no suggestion of the statistical robustness of this metric of teacher beliefs, it serves to give a sense of USG-teachers’ beliefs and the patterns of change arising from membership with the USG. Teachers rated their beliefs in a numerical scale (from 1 being no alignment, through to 5 being full alignment) about how their thinking of where their practice trajectories were before, during and in the coming year. It shows that the relative size of the blue sections (no alignment) of the pie-charts decreased and the size of the green sections increased (full alignment). The red segments showed a substantial reduction of partial alignment. The pattern shows that USG-teachers believed their school PE practices were becoming increasingly more aligned with their PE goals. This resulted in increased confidence and belief in teachers’ ability to teach what they intended to teach and in their professional ability.

The survey revealed that the main aims of USG-teachers’ PE programmes were to encourage lifelong Physical Activity (PA) and a commitment to pupil participation in their PE lessons and social skills. This focus manifested itself in trying to create the conditions for a more positive learning environment. For example, one teacher’s PE programme’s aim was that:

...the students experience enjoyment and satisfaction through personal engagement in physical activity, obtaining knowledge and developing skills both physical and social that demonstrate the respect teamwork and co-operation and enable them to establish and maintain physically active and socially responsible lives. (Survey)
The focus of USG meetings helped implement PE programmes that reflected greater pupil engagement in PE and developed positive attitudes to PE. The meetings included discussions regarding behaviour, enhancing pupil learning, helping pupils make positive changes, how teachers could ‘make a difference’ in pupils’ lives, helping pupils to engage with their peers in a competitive environment such as Ultimate Frisbee (and the values behind that sport), the call to have a ‘USG sports-day’, and include pupils with SEN (USG minutes).

Some of the solutions considered by the USG included pupil reflection and pupil goal-setting (see chapters 5 and 6). Teachers wanted pupils to engage in and feel successful in their learning and participation in PE that might extend beyond school. Some teachers began engaging differently with the new syllabus:

...we have certainly changed from the initial thing of just trying to meet the needs of the new PE curriculum which were failing us anyway. Instead it [USG meetings] developed into a way of looking at how the kids develop... and I know we are... concerned really about how to teach the lay-up, you know, that’s the minorest of detail of whatever particular skill it is. It helps you to get the kids active, work with one another and not killing one another. You know, looking at one another and not giving out saying, “Ah”, you know, when they miss something... choosing to be active and to hopefully finding something or to give them some confidence or a success rate or a feeling of achievement, that they will maintain that ...well past school. (Brenda USG-FG2)

Discussions helped the teachers to understand the rationales of their PE programmes as noted by one of the teachers:

...in my PE classes I’m not pushing them to be top athletes. I’m pushing them to be the best they can be regardless of what it is. (Teresa USGSP-D5)

The facilitator Alice summarised what she saw as the contribution the USG made to its members:

...if you think about the philosophical kinds of things that we have gained from it, ...you would talk about the confidence you have gained or what you have done theoretically with teaching personal and social responsibility, and moving our focus from activities to the students. I mean, those are more of the philosophical kinds of things that you were promoting. (Alice USG-FG2)

While some USG-teachers felt they were ‘behind’ their PE colleagues in having to teach
basic teamwork and co-operative skills (‘social skills’), Alice disagreed noting:

I kind of disagree with both of you on a couple of things because from my perspective, you are not behind. We don’t teach the curriculum, we teach kids. (Alice USGSP-D5)

These findings indicate that teachers were comfortable with articulating and sharing their PE practice priorities. In many cases, they changed their priorities and pedagogies, from content centred to pupil centred:

The USI has completely changed the way I think in my approach to teaching PE. I am now much more focussed on teaching social skills and building confidence and self-esteem within the pupil. Before I joined the group I am sad to say I was more interested in the naturally ‘sporty’ pupil, but now I get so much satisfaction in watching a pupil who was unfit becoming physically active, or the pupil who thought s/he hated sport becoming more confident and trying new things. I am also a lot more aware of negative social interactions and I am quick to stop a lesson or call a pupil aside to teach them the negative impact it is having on the others around them. (Survey)

Increased confidence and resilience

The increased self-belief manifested itself as increased confidence in what the USG-teachers did in school (both in the classroom and as leaders in school) and in themselves as professionals, especially in addressing the challenges faced in DEIS schools. Another effect (and probably directly linked to confidence and self-belief) was increased resilience in trying out something new. Resilience can be described as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties (Merriam-Webster 2014) and could be short-term (from class to class) and longer term (over a career). Blá spoke about how she was now more confident in trying new things in an effort to engage her students:

...in a lot of cases I would end up with serious behavioural problems coming into the room, that anything that I would have planned, I kind of would sometimes just go for the easiest option, just literally get them changed, get them warmed up, you know, and get on with the lesson, whereas now, I feel challenged in myself because it has built my confidence to try the things that, I suppose again as I said, that I would never have tried before, ...big time. (Blá USG-FG1).

Improved planning and reflection led to greater resilience in insisting that pupils remain on task:

I think the biggest thing that ...we have learnt is to plan more because we would have had a plan and then you kind of go, “I am not in the humour for teaching soccer”, but now... for the last few years, every year we reflect at the end of the year, ...so we are
finally ... planning to the three years, and we are going to keep to it now, so all that is pinned on the PE hall, it’s up outside the changing room ... and I don’t think that we would have done that to the degree that we would have done it without the Urban Schools. (Kay USG-FG1)

Conversely, some teachers persisted when they did not achieve their lesson objectives, and didn’t see it as a reflection of their overall professionalism. One teacher reported:

“Failure is not what it used to be” – if the class does not go as planned, she asks the pupils and discusses it with them what went wrong and how to improve/what to do next time. She doesn’t take it as a personal reflection. She is working WITH her pupils, not for them or at a remove from them. They are part of this process. (RJ4-17Dec2013)

Longer-term resilience, increased motivation, overcoming burn-out and a belief in the ability to do their job was mentioned by many as being very important impacts on their practices:

...You get to a really good in-service, so it’s re-energised, it’s brought everything back to the fore, saying, “Yes, I really want to go in and teach this one and get the kids really involved” ...you kind of go down to a dip ... teaching... the same things. And now you have got the new things to do ... it has reinvented what you used to do and it’s brought it back to the fore. (Kay USG-D5)

I would definitely feel I was on burnout ... it [USG] just came at the perfect time... it definitely changed my whole belief in myself. (Blá USG-D5)

It also helped NQTs develop self-belief and resilience, as noted by Jean:

Well I just found, like, when I came out of college... they, you just presume that you are going to go into a school and that everyone wants to just do the same, and you are going to get all that enthusiasm and all the rest... I thought, “Oh no, sure I’ll be fine, like, sure we did this in college.” And then I realised when I actually was teaching and I went, “Oh God”, you know, and I really had a back-fall “Do I want to do this here?” or “Can I do this here? (Jean USG-FG1)

4.3.2. Changed practices in CPD

Changes occurred to the teachers’ involvement in CPD. This resulted in their changed understanding of how they as a community contributed to meaningful CPD. This meant changes to their commitment to CPD, their notions of quality CPD and their role in CPD. An important source of evidence for this perspective of change comes from the facilitators as they observed the changes to the teachers. The facilitators who originally convened the group observed changes to the community. The USG-teachers’ practices
changed, and the facilitators’ professional practices changed. As well as the improvement in confidence in the value of their work and self-belief as teaching professionals mentioned earlier, another change that the facilitators saw was the USG-teachers’ concept of meaningful CPD.

**Changed conceptions of CPD**

A key challenge for the facilitators was to change the USG-teachers’ conception of meaningful CPD. Working on the fringes, USG-teachers’ efforts to meet the needs of their pupils were unsupported and the pupils and the teachers ultimately lost out:

> ...they had been neglected... the system and the education had failed these teachers in the same way as ... it’s failing their children that they teach. (Mary USG-F)

The national facilitator had a vision that put teachers at the centre of CPD based on their needs:

> ...the whole concept of a national network of teacher clusters, [where teachers] can be in charge of their own professional development as long as there is a structure and a catalyst for it... If you are not meeting the needs of teachers like that, you really aren’t doing a very good job. (Maggie USG-F)

USG-teachers did not initially trust the facilitators, and perhaps had a limited conception of CPD. Facilitators wanted USG CPD to be teacher-led and bring USG-teachers ‘on-board’:

> ...they did have their arms crossed on the first day. They didn’t really want to hear from you and they certainly didn’t want to hear from the one from the University. (Alice USG-F)

The USG-teachers did not believe that they had control of their learning and were suspicious:

> ...and I knew everyone was really suspicious ...they wouldn’t have known that I had fought to get that group to go together...the scary bit was to get over the first couple of ...sessions, …I mean, your whole aim is to make yourself redundant, ...to make them realise that ...I didn’t have an end-plan in sight... that I hadn’t got it all worked out...when people realised that, I kind of knew it would be alright but I was a bit nervous. (Mary USG-F)

The USG-teachers did not yet understand that the expertise lay within the group, and felt that they were being treated as ‘subjects’:
Will the university people stay once their research is over? Interesting to see if they do (RJ1-24Mar2011)

...my vision ...that they would realise ...that the answers were within the group ...But I did know that people were interested ...otherwise they wouldn’t have bothered talking. (Mary USG-F)

*Establishing trust*

These beliefs changed. Trust was established (we “trust each other” Emma USG-FG2) and the solution-focused culture of the community helped the USG-teachers share problems without fear:

...I would express, like, what went wrong ...because I think that we all experienced the same thing, and I think the first thing I would say was ...“what do you think?” And even before we actually got going on the workshop, you might have a solution because (we)...just talked it over on a coffee and they have the same solutions. Whereas sometimes I find in a school ...it’s more about what the teachers would say what worked for them... that’s what I felt, like a failure... (Jean USG-FG1)

This feeling was similar for a veteran teacher like Kay:

You’re not embarrassed to say it didn’t work, “I don’t know what to do.” And you’re not afraid to tell people, whereas with other people in the school, you might think, “Oh I’d better not tell them that that didn’t work in the class. (Kay USG-D5)

This trust and security then led to improved learning through robust discussion and evaluation of their practice in a supportive learning environment:

...you know we tend to learn better together and the USG tend to feed off each other and challenge each other and questioning each other and you cannot do that when you’re insecure. (Alice USG-D5)

Teachers began to appreciate each others’ knowledge, especially when delivering workshops: “Because I think it’s the doing... the people who have taught at different strands have made it look easy” (Kay USG-FG1).

An important value of the group was the understanding that problems of practice would be taken seriously as part of the work of the USG:

Someone in the group has a solution... this can often lead to a workshop being created to sort this particular area of concern out. It is very consoling. (Jean USG-FG1)
Although there was a pattern of overcoming negativity and trust established within the CoP, it took time to establish. Not everyone in the group felt welcomed from the beginning:

Alice felt she was no longer an ‘outsider’. From first meeting, arms crossed – ‘who’s she?’...Eventually Alice was ‘slagged’ [teased], something that Irish people do to people they accept as part of the group. (RJ1-27Feb2011)

Some outside personnel also had a negative reaction if the motives of the person were not in line with the CoP. This was experienced at workshops experienced outside their usual context:

An individual (a staff member) arrived, but not to help, but to look. Her behaviour irritated some of the USG. (RJ1-24Mar2011)

At a workshop for co-operating teachers, a visiting person who wanted to engage with the community was deliberately excluded as she assumed access to it, her motives were not trusted:

The staff-member ASSUMED she would get the help of the USG. A big assumption and she came over as arrogant. People felt they wouldn’t particularly like to help because of her manner. (RJ1-14Apr2011)

Access to the USG had to be negotiated, and not everyone was granted that access. A PE colleague who argued that her pupils came from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and felt entitled to join the group was not invited: “not many of our teams have a show-jumping equestrian team!” (RJ10-16Mar2013). Perhaps teachers were defensive of their pupils and wanted to preserve pupil feeling of attainment and success in PE: “…want a Sports day for our kinds of kids, where they’re not ‘wiped off the floor by the good schools” (Macey RJ3-27May2013).

This could also be interpreted as teachers being defensive of their own practices. It was a closed community, and monitored access to it, possibly because they did not trust other personnel whose values they did not share.

*Appreciating their knowledge*

Leading their own workshops was seen by the facilitators as an important role in helping teachers to spur this process. By delivering the workshops they could share their knowledge and gain insights about themselves as professionals:
It has made me value my own work and as a result I feel happier. (Jean USG-FG1)
...a self belief that what I have been doing is good and has pushed me to explore new
areas of the curriculum I had stayed clear of. (Bla USG-FG1)

The community began to change and appreciate their knowledge:

...people began to work so well together... And suddenly it was all about, “I will
present the workshop in this” and “I will present the workshop in that”, and that was the
vision... right from the start ...from ...the very fact that everybody ...has presented a
workshop to this group, is saying that they value the knowledge that they have of the
practice themselves. (Mary USG-F)

There was a view by the facilitators that the USG-teachers began to value their work in
school:

...giving [them] confidence... it has given people a realisation that... “I’m good at this.
There are things that I do that nobody would be able to do ...and I can now have the
confidence to share that with other people” ...I think it gave people self-value. (Mary
USG-FG2)

This was borne out by the teachers who began to appreciate their knowledge and their
role in CPD. Jean, an NQT, shared her thoughts:

I felt confident and reassured that I was like everyone else in the group, that I too had
good ideas and when I presented I was so happy to see questions being asked and
wanting to know how things worked precisely... I believed ...I was as good as all the
other presentations... we should all present and regularly. (Jean USG-FG1)

USG teachers were confident that the ‘gaps’ in their knowledge could be addressed by
others in the group:

We all bring something different to the group. I know where my strengths are, and I
know very much where my weaknesses are, and some people definitely have their
strengths in the parts where I have the weaknesses. (Nessa USG-FG2)

USG-teachers appreciated and valued their sharing: “...to be able to ...sit with a group of
people, and getting really instilled by them” (Bla USG-FG1). The support they felt from
each other was substantial: “The support element is huge, absolutely huge” (Hilda USG-
FG2).
Commitment to theory

Mary noted the importance of repeating the activity, not only for the content and pedagogy, but also the opportunity to discuss the philosophy behind the rationale of the choices that were made in order to make sense of what the group was doing:

…it’s kind of like a dual carriageway …in the sense that… two lanes …that go side by side on a highway where you have …some of the stuff that we have done that we found really useful, and then the other … stuff that we have done that …didn’t work or whatever. But beyond that there is also …putting the student …central and looking at… the social responsibility. I think that some of the new people that are going to come, I think that some of them… when we talk about spikeball, which we all found really great, won’t know what we are talking about …So there is the activity, and, but then there is also… the philosophy behind it. (Mary USG-FG2)

The value of the group discussions facilitated teacher engagement with theory and how theory could integrate with changes to practice. This also emphasised the importance of group discussions to engage not only with the content, but also to link the theory of what they were doing and why they were doing it, and the implications of their decisions on pupil access to PE:

…a discussion on PE kit ensued …Perhaps clothing (and PE is generally the only subject in the school curriculum that routinely asks us to wear a certain type of clothing, and change clothes during school time) is a fundamentally deeper social issue than participating in PE class, such as money, identity and body image. (USG minutes-M)

The following example illustrates how a discussion began about pupil clothing and developed into a deeper discussion about the role that clothing might play in pupils’ identity and other social issues:

I definitely felt that I had taught for a long time social and personal responsibility, not really knowing … what it was that I was doing. (Blá USG-FG1)

Seeing their strengths and leading CPD

Speaking about the positives in practice and solving problems was not always part of the culture in Irish schools: “…in school …if you are talking about what went well in your class … you’re nearly seen as boasting” (Jean USG-FG1). Delivering workshops gave the teachers an opportunity that they did not have before to share their knowledge, and this helped them to see that they had valuable knowledge without a fear of being judged for sharing good ideas especially in such a changing context: “…it has given me
more insight of where my strengths are” (Nessa USG-FG2). It also encouraged them to make efforts to improve:

...it does make you highlight where, I wouldn’t maybe use the word “weakness”, but where I need to work on, where I need to improve. (Teresa USG-FG2)

The members within the community began to change their understandings of their professional worth, and emerge as potential leaders of a CoP as perceived by one of the facilitators:

There clearly was a group identity... and ...in developing leadership... people began to come out of that experience ...with a new perspective on their own professional life. (Maggie USG-F)

USG-teachers changed their professional belief in the value of their school practices. They wanted to engage in projects that developed this aspect of their professional knowledge:

Like a little mini project... that we could work on ...and then we could... put at the end of the year into our own folders and where we could stand by that and say, “Yes, that’s what I have done. (Jean USG-FG1)

The new perspectives on their professional lives had resulted in several changes. Teachers focussed on their school contexts and how best to improve. They stopped comparing their school practices to others in different contexts such as non-DEIS schools in the city and nationally and recognised that they were meeting their pupils’ needs. They saw that by engaging with like minded professionals (USG) they could best improve the PE experiences of their pupils and also their own capacities as a professional. Alice reflected:

...you all have questioned yourselves on whether or not you were giving students what they needed in terms of, not just physical education, but as teachers, and part of the thing that I saw was that you began to recognise that yes, that you were doing it. Alice USG-D5)

To ensure its survival, USG-teachers sought to recruit new USG-teachers, including NQTs, and invited PSTs who were on placement with them to their meetings:

Doris felt that what was in common with all our group was the challenging behavioural problems of the students... Teachers having these kinds of difficulties ought to be the ones who join our group next (“new blood” was needed). There was a general consensus among the group on this point. (USG minutes-C 6-Oct-2011)
The value of the group became more apparent to the members. Many reported that they felt confident enough to deliver workshops to others outside the group: “...I definitely would feel... I could use it within maybe the Junior Cert Schools Program Co-ordination” (Bla USG-FG1).

School culture influenced the roles teachers took in schools. Some USG-teachers (such as Blá, Kay, and Teresa) took on new leadership roles in schools. They shared the idea of CoPs amongst school peers (sharing the concept of what quality CPD ‘looks like’), as well as some putting that knowledge into practice in other areas in school (taking CPD leadership in school) such as with DEIS initiatives and JCSP programmes. Other USG-teachers did not take leadership roles with school colleagues to reflect on their practice as it was not part of the school culture, as Nessa explained about these colleagues:

But that’s what they feel. They think, “You’re a colleague. Who are you to tell others?” in a way. That’s what I find in the school very much. (Nessa USGSP-FG)

Not all school colleagues had the same enthusiasm for teacher workshops either, which knocked USG-teachers’ confidence as Blá recalled of one of her experiences, a colleague stating:

“...what are you asking me to do that for? I am not... I want to be here to do my curriculum and that’s it” (Blá USG-FG1)

The changes to the USG-teachers’ understandings as a CoP that led their learning were significant. The USG evolved to an established group that not only led its own learning but also led the learning of others and created new knowledge. Their changed understandings and beliefs were manifest through a changed understanding of their role in and commitment to CPD resulting in an increased responsibility for their CPD and others. This resulted in a change to the PE experiences of their pupils in their lessons and consequently, their perceptions of enhanced pupil learning. Alice observed that what had not changed within the USG was care for the pupils. This care prioritised their actions:

I see a group of teachers that teach students that care about students... some of you jump on anything that’s available to try to help the kids... if I said, “Let’s try this”, many of you would say, “OK”. (Alice USG-D5)
As a result of the USG, the teachers changed their practices both in the classroom and their activities as professionals outside the classroom. They widened their curricular offerings, reported the use of more active pedagogies, and improved their access to resources. Their professional standards rose through better planning, better class structures and assessment. They enjoyed more meaningful interactions with peers and advocated for PE. Their knowledge, values and beliefs changed and redefined what it meant to be a professional. They developed greater vision for their PE programmes, and gained greater knowledge base about curriculum and pedagogy. This manifested in improved confidence and resilience. The next chapter questions how the CoP piloted an innovative curriculum initiative, the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’, to fruition in Ireland, and examines how these changes influenced pupil learning.
CHAPTER 5

THE LIVING-FOR-SPORTS CURRICULAR INITIATIVE

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how a number of the USG teachers engaged in Sky Sport Living for Sport: a curriculum initiative. This was an external provider's (SKY) programme targeted to students in school physical education and sport settings. The ‘Sky Sport Living for Sport’ (SSLFS) project (which will be called the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’) was a UK based programme and the USG chose to pilot it in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The chapter describes what the teachers did in their individual schools and how they influenced each other as members of the community in bringing the initiative to fruition. The Curricular Initiative teachers had to access, translate, implement and evaluate the initiative in their schools mostly in isolation. A smaller number of teachers from the USG undertook to share their work on the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative via a research presentation and an article for the UK PE teachers’ professional journal. The Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative was an extension to their school professional practice, and a new experience. Here we share insight into what the project meant for these USG Curricular Initiative teachers in terms of their practices, attitudes and engagement as reflective practitioners, and pupil learning.

The findings in this chapter address the perspectives of Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative teachers, their school colleagues such as supporting teachers and principals and other members of the USG about the impact of their engagement in their teaching and the pupils’ learning in PE. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings from the teachers’ engagement with this initiative. The three aspects to research question two addressed in this chapter are:

1. What were teachers perceived changes to practice after engaging with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’?
2. To what extent did engagement of USG-teachers with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ change their understandings and beliefs?

3. To what extent did teachers perceive changes in their practice impacting pupils?

5.1.1. Background on the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’

Since 2004 the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and SKY Sports (an independent TV channel) have co-ordinated the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ in the UK (Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales) (SSLFS, 2015). The programme targets 11-16 year olds “to improve their confidence, attainment, life-skills and behaviours through sports activities and role models” (Chrysalis 2014 p.4). A total of 1,512 schools in the UK and 100 in the ROI engaged with the project in 2013/14 (Chrysalis Research 2014). In 2012/13 SSLFS ran a national pilot project in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) with nine schools, eight of which were teachers in the USG. It involved a six to twelve-week school project with 20 pupils on a sports related initiative, finishing with a culminating event in each school. Schools were assigned an Athlete Mentor (AM) whose role was to engage and motivate pupils to be physically active. The AM visited the school twice, worked with participating pupils and engaged with the wider school. The project concluded with a group celebration of the pupils’ attainment and schools organised and funded a post-project celebration.

Teachers adopted and adapted the Sky curriculum resources to align with the distinctive focus of the project in their schools. The Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative website had teaching resources, case studies, on-line support, the AM visits, and provided other incentives to enhance and maintain engagement throughout the project. For clarity, USG Curricular Initiative teachers are referred to as ‘Curricular Initiative teachers’, other colleagues are referred to by relationship for example ‘school colleague’.

5.2. HOW DID THE CURRICULAR INITIATIVE TEACHERS PERCEIVE CHANGES TO THEIR PRACTICE?

This question examined the perceived changes to individual teachers’ practices and how the community operated to implement the project.
5.2.1. Perceived Changes to Teachers’ School Practices

Here we see evidence for two changes to the teachers’ school practices through engagement with the project. The first change was manifest in a shift from skill development to a focus on pupil personal development (specifically improving behaviour and leadership capacity). The challenges were the transfer of learning beyond PE lessons and the difficulty of prioritising beneficiaries (poorly behaved pupils or those pupils engaged with their learning). Improvements occurred but were limited and highlighted difficult questions of school practices generally. The second change involved a shift of pedagogical priorities in practice. Supporting evidence is derived from interview data, meetings minutes, emails, discussions and my reflective journals.

*A shift from skill acquisition to pupils’ personal development*

Table 5.1 gives an overview of the content of the eight projects undertaken. The Sky teachers focussed their projects on improving behaviour, developing confidence and building the leadership capacity of students in PE/sport.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAD TEACHER</th>
<th>PUPIL GROUP</th>
<th>AFTER SCHOOL</th>
<th>DURING CLASS TIME</th>
<th>PA CONTENT</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>CELEBRATION PROJECT END</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blá</td>
<td>2nd year boys class with challenging behaviour</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Soccer skills project</td>
<td>Respect, improve behaviour, communication and co-operation</td>
<td>Paintball excursion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>2nd year girls class with challenging behaviour</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Acro-sport challenge</td>
<td>Co-operation and leadership, improve behaviour, Participation</td>
<td>Trip to local seaside village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
<td>Improved pupils (one per class) – whole school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Participation in a variety of sports provided by local sports partnerships</td>
<td>Improve behaviour and self development. Join a team</td>
<td>Jumpzone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>2nd year class with challenging behaviour</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Spikeball challenge</td>
<td>Behaviour improvement and confidence</td>
<td>Celebration in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilda</td>
<td>Under 16 Basketball team – mixed discipline issues</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Train for 1 hour after school. Play basketball league</td>
<td>Commitment, working as a team, co-operation, leadership skills etc.</td>
<td>Bowling trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy</td>
<td>Third year mixed discipline issues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Work with multi-disability visually impaired</td>
<td>Leadership, confidence and inclusion</td>
<td>Canoeing trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nessa</td>
<td>Challenging boys in junior classes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Boxing training x 8 wks, competitions</td>
<td>Leadership, confidence and persistence</td>
<td>Awards presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Years 1, 2 and 3 “in need of support”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12 weeks of chosen activity after 3 taster sessions. Then work on primary transitions programme in the school.</td>
<td>Confidence, behaviour improvement, attainment, attitudes to learning, attendance and social skills improvement.</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.1** Summary of USG ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiatives’

All projects focussed on pupil personal development. The majority took place during PE
lessons and focussed on one sport/activity with a few focussed on participation in a variety of sports/activities. Changes were evidenced by reported improved pupil behaviour, increased leadership capacity, greater teamwork, more confidence and cooperation with peers. Skill acquisition assumed a secondary role. The pupils became more inclusive and extended themselves to perform at a higher level.

The USG teachers themselves changed. They showed great courage by choosing to complete their projects with pupils who had challenging behaviour that presented a degree of risk to the teacher, as success (or failure) was publicly witnessed. Pupils’ improvement was reflected by increased engagement in PE and participation in after-school sport. Not all pupils improved to the same extent:

...the one who would be doing an awful lot of slagging and putting people down ...the other kids then started to ignore him, and didn’t engage with him. So for them, it kind of worked, that they realised how annoying and destructive, how their learning was being affected. (Kay USGSP-FG)

Although the incentives provided to the school by the external provider initially attracted pupils to the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’, pupil successes in doing their project and the pride that came with it, became the most important factors. ‘Curricular Initiative’ teachers’ beliefs in their pupils shone through. Often the Curricular Initiative teachers exceeded their own expectations; one teacher was cautioned by her school colleagues of being too ambitious in her project:

   It wasn’t the paintballing. It wasn’t the T-shirt. They loved being in charge and doing an event that they never thought they would ever be able to do... but I ended up getting to an end result where an event occurred, that I never... People laughed at me when I said I was going to do it. And I actually pulled it off. (Blá USGSP-D5)

In evaluating the projects, Curricular Initiative teachers never spoke of failure of their pupils, but they spoke their perceptions about pupils’ learning. However, there was contrasting evidence that the improvements transferred beyond PE lessons. Depending on their approach to the project, teachers were divided regarding the benefits of the project beyond the PE lesson. For example, school-wide improvement was noted during the whole-school pupil selection procedure, but it did not necessarily extend beyond that phase. Curricular Initiative teachers felt that the learning did not transfer to other lessons from Sky participants from PE, resulting in teachers advocating a whole-school
approach. This may have contrasted with principals’ views, who spoke about whole-
school benefits and pupil improvements. All projects were set within the constraints of
busy schools which presented its own difficulties, such as timetabling limitations and
the timing of the project. No principal was critical about the costs of the time invested in
the project as the benefits derived from that investment were considered worthwhile.
Principals also identified the benefits to pupils by acknowledging the positivity of the
Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative for certain classes or pupils with a “buzz” (Carol
USG-P) around the school. They noticed the change in pupil behaviour: “..., you kind of
noticed an improvement around the place” (Carol USG-P).

Some principals believed that what pupils were learning in the PE setting had a positive
effect on their learning in other subjects:

...once kids get involved in sport and start taking any level of sport seriously as in the
structures of it, the routines of it, the discipline of it – that discipline always goes across
to their regular learning, because without them knowing that they now are into the
structure of it, just pushing themselves with a little bit more to listen to do whatever it
is. Oh no, absolutely, once sport, PE, that improves, the learning improves. (Freda
USG-P)

The benefit of the programme complementing school ethos so publicly was also
acknowledged. As the projects were in DEIS schools, reaching challenged pupils to
encourage and motivate them was a priority:

...it wasn’t just about being involved in sports. It was about being involved in something
that might help to encourage them to continue at school and to stay motivated in school.
So it worked very much for them. (Karl USG-P)

Considering the significant learning benefits to the project participants, and the ‘Living-
for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ s regulation of limiting participants to 20 pupils, this
meant that participants had to be carefully selected. This is discussed in greater detail
later in this section.

A second round of projects focussed on greater integration with other school activities
to boost the positive effects on pupils, PE and the entire school. This included
integration of a diverse cohort of pupils within the project and outside of it, of initiatives
within PE and other subjects, other school initiatives, other teachers, and the whole
school. Sharing information on the projects gave Curricular Initiative teachers a
considerable resource base for planning other projects and supporting each other. The
sustainability of positive change was not yet an issue, but it was felt that the success of the projects, and Curricular Initiative teachers’ efforts to engage, might be taken-for-granted.

A change to more inclusive pedagogies

A second change noted in teacher practice as a result of their engagement with the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative was after teacher-identified pupil-centred practice style as evidenced by an increased focus on pupil self-evaluation. Options for supporting pupil reflections were shared, and became a feature of at least four projects. Self-evaluation was introduced at the beginning and end of projects in the form of reflecting on goal attainment identified by the pupils, or as a form of evaluation at the end of the project:

I had a goal-setting thing where the first day they filled out, why am I here, what I aim to learn and how I am going to do it. Just the three of them, the three little boxes and then I kept them, and the last day then, I asked them to take out their sheets that they filled out the first day. (Ray USGSP-D5)

This resulted in Curricular Initiative teachers indicating they were more engaged with their pupils’ learning. For them this learning was defined as the number of pupils on task, the length of time and quality of their engagement on tasks, the degree of task completion as well as pupil behaviour and interactions. This idea of pupil learning was an important source for their reflections on their practice (see also chapters 4 and 6). Other Curricular Initiative teachers used different methods for pupil goal setting:

...this gave me an opportunity... we’re going to look at our behaviour and we’re going to try and change it using the tool of sport. And they got it and I got it. (Nessa USGSP-FG)

The teachers gave greater value to pupils’ voice. For example, nearly all celebrations as part of the project were selected by the pupils. This power to the students was tempered by what Curricular Initiative teachers felt possible, considering the behaviour (and unpredictability) of their pupils:

Ray: ...we went through a list of all the sports and picked out seven or eight.
Blá: Oh, the kids picked themselves?
Ray: Yeah, yeah. Well they picked but I kind of really picked. I steered them towards the ones that were actually viable. (USGSP-FG)
Giving greater say to pupils required teacher support to engage in decision-making. As the pupils became aware of the consequences of their decisions, it made them more aware of their responsibility for them.

The ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ was not only viewed as complementary to the existing PE curriculum but was seen as the PE curriculum, with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ being the “cherry on the cake” (Teresa USGSP-FG):

It was said more than once that we do this kind of thing (a TPSR type of model in our classrooms) anyway and that this curriculum initiative would complement it. Also how we track behaviour. (Minutes-G)

Improving pupil behaviour and promoting pupil responsibility for their own learning featured highly in both the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ guiding principles and the TPSR message. Improving pupil learning and responsibility also aligned well with USG values. Perhaps it was this alignment that contributed to the projects’ successes:

I think that we use the Don Hellison thing. You try to reach the kids the whole time... this programme allowed me time to think and the space to do it in, the resource pack allowed them to get involved. And sky sports was dangling a carrot. (Blá USGSP-D2)

Inclusion was not centred solely on pupil practices but extended across other spheres. For example, it was suggested that the project could be adapted as part of existing curricula (Leaving Certificate Applied and Social Personal and Health Education), and proposed curricular change (a Junior Cycle short-course). It could be adapted within initiatives to improve pupil behaviour such as government initiatives to promote attainment (DEIS ‘schools completion’), school-based initiatives (pupil-to-pupil mentoring) and existing pedagogical models (TPSR).

The content, process and pedagogy used in the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiatives represented a change to all Curricular Initiative teachers’ practices to a varying extent. The teachers chose a target-pupil group for the curriculum-change and helped pupils in targeting personal goal setting and attainment. Every teacher who signed up for the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative, completed it, and all signed up again for a second round of projects with a new cohort group. Thus the changes in school practice became embedded in their ‘everyday’ practices. If the Curricular Initiative teachers’
practices became more pupil-centred, more focussed on pupil development and featured pupil voice more significantly than before, they were also articulating these changes clearly. This indicated a greater awareness of changes to their practice and its significance in pupil learning. The USG discussions saw teachers had greater engagement on a conceptual level about their practices by articulating the pedagogies of their practice, their teaching values and engaging in epistemological dialogue.

5.2.2. The Project Changed the Profile of PE

This section demonstrates that the profile of PE was enhanced through engagement with the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative. A key finding was that the incentives provided by the external provider increased the profile (“level of public exposure received” (Merriam-Webster 2014)) of PE in each school. It did so in three ways:

1. The merchandise provided to the pupils and school
2. The involvement of the Athlete Mentors (AMs)
3. The extensive focus of traditional and social media on the project.

A second finding was that the educational value of PE was enhanced but in some cases exposed the contrasting values placed on pupil attainment in school by peers. The evidence for these assertions is derived from reflection journals, interviews, the presentation and USG discussions.

The ‘Sky Sports’ brand is a significant corporate brand. Some Curricular Initiative teachers were sceptical about the corporation motives, but in the eyes of the USG teachers, its alliance with the (UK) ‘Youth Sport Trust’ gave the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ credibility and in time eroded suspicions. One member remarked “They have the same goals but different ideas” (RJ6-30Apr2015).

The incentives on offer for pupils and teachers/schools were reasons to engage with the project. Pupil incentives included tee-shirts and wrist bands which they wore with pride:

...they had a fabulous little rugby thing that I was at... both my teams were in their Sky T-shirts. It was a fabulous advertisement for them, because that’s what they want. ...the kids were really proud to be wearing them. (Blá USGSP-D5)
Another incentive was the ‘celebration’ for the participating pupils. This was a ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ requirement, but was not provided or funded by the external provider.

The presence of the AMs in schools interacting with the pupils was considered a highlight and a key incentive for pupils, principals and peers to engage with the project. AMs made presentations to the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative participants and also to the entire school. The AMs were chosen because they were well known and could relate to, motivate and perhaps inspire the pupils. Their own narratives about perseverance, overcoming adversity, and making good decisions were a source of hope and this effect was noted by principals:

They [pupils] took it on board. They focused. They listened to what he was saying. They worked with him, and they very much appreciated that level of interest... in them, and they identified with him basically. I mean, I think that that was very strong, that they identified with this very positive role model, and saw that you can... do great things. I mean, I think that idea that, anybody can do a great thing in, you know, was part of it. (Carol USG-P)

Potential for positive publicity was derived from the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ in two ways. The profile of the participating pupils, their project and their merchandise with the ‘SKY’ logo was increased within the school, as they were more visible and it attracted attention within the school. The second profiling of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ was through the ensuing publicity derived from the official launch of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ to Ireland and the success of the national pilot project. The ‘Ambassador Athlete’ (Katie Taylor) for Ireland launched the project, and spent much time with the pupils, along with other AMs. This ‘Sky-Sports’ publicity campaign was broadcast with a potential audience of 40 million viewers. The success of the projects in the schools drew attention to project participants and their schools which enhanced the school’s reputation in the local community:

...the amount of... accolades and you know, congratulations we have got from different people in the community as well, we’re just, it’s been great for our school. (Máire USG-P)

One principal was reported to be engaging with the project for selfish reasons:

...the Principal was very much on board..., but I think it was just for his own publicity to be honest. It was a big thing and ...he never asked about the kids. (Ray USGSP-FG)
This type of publicity was important, especially as principals considered the lack of PE amenities a disadvantage, for example in recruiting pupils to USG schools. Principals acknowledged the project’s positive effect on the local community. It raised the profile of PE to parents through media publicity and the methods employed by some schools to share and celebrate pupil learning (such as end-of-year celebrations). This was a DEIS requirement “The parents were also delighted” (Máire USG-P). But some principals who were enthusiastic about the value of the project began to get complacent about the successes (and effort required). They needed reminding about it:

...management can sometimes stop seeing the work, the results and the merit of it and take it a little for granted. They needed to be reminded of that. (RJ6-29Apr2015)

Thus the profile of PE was raised within the school: from the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ because of the visiting AMs, and the school-wide approach adopted by many Curricular Initiative teachers; and the increased profile of participating pupils. The profile of PE was also raised in the wider community as it was a national pilot-project with national media attention following a Sky-supported media campaign for its launch.

Most projects embraced a school-wide focus, involving all pupils, peers and principals at various stages. This was principally through the AMs’ school-wide presentations. Afterwards, projects had varying degrees of school-wide inclusion, from pupil selection procedures, project implementation and engagement with the culminating event. From the outset, Ray’s aim was to afford all pupils’ access to the project regardless of ability, and his selection procedure included all staff and pupils:

I wanted to make it open to any student that no matter how sporty you are or how not sporty you are, whatever your interest, whether you were the bold kid or the active kid, you were open for selection. (Ray, USG-PEPAYS)

Using this selection process enabled Ray to share his ideas and values about his PE practices with the wider school community and engage them in the project from the start. Most projects did not adopt this approach. Where timetabling facilitated, Curricular Initiative teachers engaged with peers in the school (teachers, SNAs and principals) to facilitate the optimum impact of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’:
I worked with the form teacher of this particular class and we did posters and we stuck them up in the room about respecting others and listening to other people... he had them for History and Irish ...so he was trying to encourage them as well. (Kay USGSP-FG)

Some Curricular Initiative teachers realised that the positive impact of the project did not extend beyond the PE lessons and felt that this effect could be improved through engaging with their peers. Raising the publicity of PE involved engaging with them on the values and pedagogies underpinning their PE programmes:

...to just develop... in a holistic sense, personal experiences in a holistic way... in terms of knowledge and skills... that can be attributed to any discipline and not necessarily from a PE point of view. (Máire USG-P)

Teresa’s colleagues noted its holistic nature and how it could transfer outside PE:

...their PE class is far more than a PE class, from what I would have thought of traditionally as a PE class. There’s far more life learning going on, and it’s great because in a lot of classes you don’t get that because you’re trying to squeeze in a curriculum. (Mona SC-ST)

Sharing with non-PE school colleagues exposed different educational priorities among that group. This posed a challenge for Curricular Initiative teachers who felt they could only talk to their ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ team about their efforts as:

They don’t see the life skills that you’re, you know ...it’s a different form of teaching I think …they don’t quite get it. They’re into exams, they’re into their other areas of learning. (Blá USGSP-D2)

Not all peers viewed the benefits of the Sky initiative as being educational. Some perceived its value more in pupil management than pupil learning, or the glamour associated with celebrities and AMs:

A few teachers actually said to me only last week, “When are you starting up that Sky thing again for the two weeks? The kids are wrecking my head, and it quietened them down great last year”. (Ray USGSP-D5)

In summary, the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ resulted in a change in how PE was seen in school and it raised the subject’s profile. It facilitated collegial discussion by the PE teachers on the values and practices underpinning their PE programmes. It raised PE’s profile so that peers, pupils, parents and principals were aware of what the teacher was trying to achieve and ‘show-case’ quality attainment in PE. Although helping pupils engage with their learning more effectively was acknowledged, it was
mostly limited to PE lessons. Other contributions were not acknowledged as educational, for example it was stated that it helped pupil management by teaching colleagues and for school publicity potential by management.

5.2.3. **The USG Infrastructure that Supported Development and Change**

The ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ subgroup undertaking the initiative, and the smaller group who shared their project experiences at a research conference met to prepare the project and plan the presentation. This time allowed them space to share ideas about how best to implement the project and extend the original project in line with their thinking. These discussion shaped their thinking, and as a result their values and beliefs of their role as teachers. In preparing for the conference, they discussed their implementation of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’, and translated the meanings they generated as a result, into ways of adapting their practices for their school contexts. The stages they underwent in this process from the inception of ideas, to their development and subsequent impact are examined here. A challenge confronting the Curricular Initiative teachers was how to identify and articulate learning in a low status subject, and their challenge was compounded by the isolation of practitioners. The data used in this analysis are derived from the formal-sharing group discussions, emails, interviews, and minutes.

Sharing was enabled through discussion (formal, informal, planned and incidental) as Curricular Initiative teachers sought to clarify precise meanings of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. The four stages of the project completion involved:

1. Accessing the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ (including registering and planning projects on the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ website)
2. Translating the national ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ pilot objectives into meaningful individual projects for each school
3. Implementing the individual projects
4. Evaluation and revision of the projects.

The sharing by teachers of ideas was apparent at all stages both formally and informally and included knowledge of Curricular Initiative teachers’ dispositions, values and practice contexts. The process was democratic. Efforts at inclusion were made by
accommodating personal circumstances, for example organising meetings around childcare arrangements, and Curricular Initiative teachers who were absent could still influence progression as every decision was shared and could be changed if necessary:

Now if Kay doesn’t like what we have decided that Kay is doing, we will have to kind of revisit this. (Teresa USGSP-D1)

The teachers discussed both the practical issues of implementation and the conceptual development of the value of the project to the teacher and the school. A key issue for discussion centred on selection of project participants. This brought the thorny issue in DEIS schools of dealing with pupil challenging behaviour into sharp relief. The challenge was attaining the balance of concentrating already scare resources on poorly behaved pupils repeatedly, or attending to pupils who are more engaged in learning. Curricular Initiative teachers reflected that pupil selection procedures were a challenge concluding that there was no perfect method.

The strategy chosen by one teacher focussed on individual pupil selection (by all staff) from different classes focussing on enhancing whole-school pupil behaviour. Any pupil, regardless of past record, could be selected. Pupils (one per class) with the best record on punctuality, attention, homework, attitude, respect and uniform, were eligible. In another project, some pupils noted to their teachers that misbehaving pupils got too many school resources and too much attention was directed towards helping them, with well-behaved children feeling overlooked:

I went this time deliberately with a mainstream class because the class I chose previously, the rest of the kids then were giving me a hard time. “Why do you always pick them?” “Why do you always pick them?” “The kids who are crap and really causing shit always get everything. (Blá USGSP-D5)

Class-wide approaches to selection criteria rather than individual pupils could mean that certain pupils did not understand why they were chosen for the project:

I think it could be better as a targeted thing for certain people... just in so much as they’ll benefit from the ‘I’m special’ part of it... but I wonder if they really take on board how special it was to do it because it was the class. (Mona USGSC-ST)

One principal acknowledged that the positive effect of the project could be reduced if too many pupils were selected: “…the deeper you go into a project like that, it dilutes its importance in another way” (Máire USG-P).
Discussions focussed on pedagogy and Curricular Initiative teachers used the TPSR model to varying degrees in PE. This encouraged pupil responsibility and improved pupil behaviour. This is evidenced by the similarities of the projects and the role that PE could play within school in supporting this. Teachers identified which pupils most needed the support of the project. One principal noted:

So we sat down and we discussed who would it work best with and we did pick a challenging class, the most challenging class in the school at the time... And some kids were very close to the edge of expulsion from that class as well. (Karl USG-P)

This reflected that the challenge of differentiation and inclusion was complex, value-laden and often difficult. It was difficult to be fair to all pupils:

....the rest of the Second Years were ...gutted that they hadn’t been picked... So then next year when we do it then, we could do it in different classes, so that was brilliant. (Kay USGSP-FG)

A second round of projects included different pupil profiles, and one teacher tried to encourage better behaved and more active pupils to improve their performance:

...advertising it and getting the group to do things to do with their fitness ...go for, like, gifted children who are, like, you know, good at sport and try and push them harder or do you go for the kids who are in trouble at school with behaviour and try and encourage them?...But maybe trying to do it together as a group this year and see if we could do it that way. (Kay USGSP-FG)

Later discussion on selection criteria drew attention to the dilemma faced by teachers of including (and rewarding) pupils who were most in need of support versus pupils who were working at learning already (and often overlooked). The effect of this discussion was that many teachers changed their pupil selection procedures to try to take into account differentiation and inclusion in their projects that was fair and equitable. This was part of an ongoing USG debate about teaching children with challenging behaviour.

Sharing ideas helped to develop the ideas further, it reassured Curricular Initiative teachers, gave opportunities for feedback on progress to date and overcame the doubts about trying a new initiative on his/her own:

...the isolation can sometimes result in you being quite, “Am I on the right track” or “Am I not?” And our bond and our... openness helped us to all come through it. (Blá USGSP-D1)
Blá shared successful pupil learning and her use of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ resources during one meeting. She reported successful pupil learning and engagement, evidenced by showing video material of her pupils to USG Curricular Initiative teachers. It made Curricular Initiative teachers aware of the Sky resources, since few had been using them. Blá explained how she was inspired to using them by adapting and integrating the resources with previous resources created by the USG:

I then tapped into our own Urban Schools Resource Package that we have collated down through the years, being together, obviously, the work that Alice has done with us, and ‘Think Tank…’ and sharing resources. (Blá PEPAYS)

This prompted discussion on broadening the impact of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ beyond PE lessons and how this impact might be achieved:

As a result of discussion, it seemed that the challenge was to extend the positive behaviour changes to classes other than PE. (Minutes-H)

By sharing aspects of her practice, it enabled Blá to name the conceptual framework surrounding her project, her project aims, priorities, values, and method of pupil evaluation.

The USG infrastructure prompted the Curricular Initiative teachers (with some assistance from Alice) to examine and record what was going well in their own practice with the project and share what was working well. Discussions among the Curricular Initiative teachers focussed on pupil learning, and difficulties identifying and articulating, assessing and sharing it: “...It can be quotes from the students. It could also be your observations on how behaviour changed” (Alice USGSP-D5).

Alice remarked to the Curricular Initiative teachers that they could be negative in their assessment of pupil learning (and consequently their own performance as teachers). This also exposed the difficulty about sharing pupil learning and attainment in PE in USG schools, especially when pupils exceeded expectations. Where other school subject-areas had standard testing and an examination schedule that all stakeholders understood, PE teachers did not operate within such a framework. This could also limit teachers’ ability to see the positives and successes in their own practices. Some
Curricular Initiative teachers were slow to identify, articulate and share success and positives in their practice with colleagues in school. This reticence was noted by Alice, whose experience at the national ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ launch prompted her to share her observations of (to ‘translate’) school colleagues’ reactions to Curricular Initiative teachers’ practices:

I suspect that what your staff is saying and I suspect what you feel ....that you might feel it as patting you on the back, but what you feel is that it’s bragging. But if you think about, is that working with Sky Sports and the hard work and the pleasure in all of the things that are happening, they acknowledge it? (Alice USGSP-D2)

As a result, Curricular Initiative teachers were learning to see and name the positives in their practice.

Discussions served to help Curricular Initiative teachers develop their ideas and meanings in PE, save each other “hours of work” as well as solving practical issues of implementation as noted by Blá:

Ray actually decreased my workload because he had put together his presentation. I took it and I tweaked it. That’s the best thing about the Urban Schools Initiative. (Blá USGSP-D5)

These discussions helped Curricular Initiative teachers to figure out what they were going to do “through consultation with the USG” (Ray USGSP-D3). This networking helped Curricular Initiative teachers add value to their projects and access resources that they created for the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ themselves or those that were available on the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ website:

I suppose it’s kind of how the Urban Schools’ little chit-chats, text messages, emails, “What are you doing?” Even today, like we, I know myself and Teresa, you’re in the same boat, we didn’t know that this resource pack existed until you told us. I didn’t know it existed, I didn’t know. And I suppose it’s kind of how the Urban Schools initiative helped to facilitate that. (Ray USGSP-D5)

Although meetings were planned and included an agenda, not all meetings ran smoothly or adhered to that agenda. The shared and self-facilitation of the meetings sometimes meant that they were not managed very well and were not focussed. Sometimes meetings felt disorderly by some Curricular Initiative teachers, and reminders were needed to keep meetings productive:
This was a fast-paced meeting, fleeing from topic to topic” ...We ought to have a clear agenda for the meetings circulated prior. The agenda to be agreed by the group. (Minutes-L)

The identification and negotiation of tasks followed a pattern that was fluid and honed from experiences of being a member of the USG and how the community operates - “stuff that we’re always milling out there between us” (Blá-PEPAYS). This pattern showed key features:

1. In-depth knowledge of each other’s practices and contexts (both professional and personal
2. Support and confidence building
3. Naming professional successes of each other and the community
4. Robust discussion that included both agreement and disagreement on key issues
5. Volunteering for tasks
6. Suggestions to a member if it was perceived that they had knowledge and/or specific skills
7. Linking tasks to other work (either previous workshops or the future use of work being completed).

Discussions were mostly solution focussed, robust, democratic and flowed naturally. These features at times inhibited productivity as the agenda may not have allowed sufficient time for this discussion, and Curricular Initiative teachers’ needs vying for time at meetings presented as a challenge at times. Thus, certain strengths of the USG infrastructures could simultaneously function as limitations.

The challenges of PE as a low status subject in naming learning, and the isolation of practitioners is shown to be overcome through the nature of USG meetings, and the power of community.

5.3. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE CURRICULAR INITIATIVE CHANGE TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND BELIEFS?

This question focuses on the Curricular Initiative teachers and how their beliefs changed as a result of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. Section one examines how the USG interacted and engaged with each other to support one another. Section two
examines the impact that external recognition of the value of Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative pilot study had on them.

5.3.1. USG teachers’ Involvement in the Curricular Initiative

This section examines the impact of the USG on both the changes in the teachers’ professional beliefs and the relationships that influenced and supported this change. This study examines the relationships and interactions resulting in those changes and why Curricular Initiative teachers became and remained involved in the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. It includes the interactions among a smaller group (the ‘formal sharing group’) who chose to also present and publish their work for the larger community. This was a task outside school contexts and took them beyond their comfort zone and their role as PE teachers. The key finding is that the combined factors of building trust, gaining reassurance, developing confidence, acknowledging the support of peers and teamwork were key parts of their relationships that contributed to the success of their Sky projects. The ‘community’ in a CoP was the ‘essence’ of the support by this CoP that despite challenging circumstances, they were empowered to translate a proposition into successful reality. It was how USG-teachers changed their practices, understandings and beliefs. Data to address this research question are derived from discussions, interview and minutes.

The Curricular Initiative teachers began this project from within an existing CoP, the USG, whose relationships and interaction patterns were already established. Therefore trust, knowledge of each other’s practice contexts, integration, sharing information and ideas already existed, and characterised their usual behaviour.

To engage with the project, Curricular Initiative teachers needed to feel reassured of support from the USG. Those who declined to engage with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ cited extra workload, lack of time or interest. Those feeling ‘daunted’ by undertaking such a novel initiative, yet who choose to participate felt that the support of the group would help:

...I was very daunted by doing the project because I didn’t know what to do, but the fact that everybody else within the group was doing it like that, we fell back on each other, and we would be able to talk about it. That’s why I did it really. At the start, I was going, “I have it written down here.” I was going, “Oh will I, won’t I?” Then I said, “I
will, I will, I will”. (Kay USGSP-D3)

After the information evening, Curricular Initiative teachers knew they would get the reassurance they needed:

...it was the community of practice that brought us back to the table where a lot of us decided to sign up for it because a lot of us would have asked can we really do what we want to do here, can we take this on board, so we came back for a little bit of more reassurance. It had a lot to do with our group. (Blá USGSP-D2)

Central to support was trust. Curricular Initiative teachers felt they could display vulnerability and show emotion about the task to be accomplished, yet confident that they would not be judged and solutions would be sought as a collective. Through mutual encouragement and the attraction of undertaking a joint project with exciting possibilities, reluctant Curricular Initiative teachers experienced positive peer pressure to take it on:

Nessa: I did it because you were doing it. I was actually nearly too lazy to, I tried at one stage to go, I went on their website and I got stuck in it...
Blá: You know, I made you do it.
Nessa: And then, well, now you were all kind of there. And I was actually afraid that I would miss out. So I went back on and I’m delighted that I went back on. (USGSP-FG)

The ‘formal sharing group’ appreciated one another’s strengths and what they had to offer to the group. As a result, this strengthened the group. The expectations and culture of academia was alien to Curricular Initiative teachers of the USG. The lead for the writing of the journal article was undertaken by Alice, who suggested the appropriate journal, and the section of that journal that focussed on applied practice. There was an emotional response to the task and Curricular Initiative teachers expressed a fear of writing and presenting. This was especially evident when discussing technology and writing for publication. The veteran teachers expressed more concern with writing:

Kay: How many words?
Ray: 1500 to 2000 words.
Kay: Oh Jesus. You are joking. Yeah. Hello?!
Blá: Oh no, will you stop it now, come on. Seriously, that’s serious.
Ray: That’s only, that’s two pages typed. (USGSP-D5)

They shared what they felt were their strengths and weaknesses. When shared, it was often followed with reassurance by others who reiterated the tasks at hand, how it could
be done, and offered support for each other by doing the task together. They volunteered readily for tasks:

Blá: I’m really worried now about this, when you’re talking about this...
Kay: Yeah, so am I.
Teresa: Well, listen, we can get together.
Alice: Oh God, but you see, don’t be nervous because it’s just...what we’re looking for is just the story, and then how we present them and the wording of it. I don’t want it to be a research kind of paper writing. I want it to be applied kind of writing. So I would play with that. (USGSP-D5)

Making the presentation and publication was pushing them beyond their ‘comfort zone’ and was a new challenge. Through asking for and receiving support, the perceived difficult task was overcome:

Blá: I could have shied off this...
Kay: I did, I texted her today, “I don’t think I can do this”, didn’t I? I did...
Blá: So when I got her email, and I read, “Do I want to do this” and then I said, No, why did you say this? This is your new challenge, grow up and fecking face it and do it. (USGSP-D5)

Overcoming these challenges boosted confidence and participants acknowledged their personal and professional growth (and they also had greater empathy for pupils’ learning new content):

Blá: You know, like, it’s taken me how many years to even build up, I’m going back to college but I’m not going back this year, I’ll go back next year...
Teresa: But do you know, those lads, to get them to hold each other’s hands? Now you know how they felt, do you know? (USGSP-D5)

The interactions prompted them to name successful practices arising from the projects, enabling them to recognise their own successes. Alice shared her observations of the USG overcoming challenges, developing their strengths and confidence, and expanding their skills:

But do you know what, you have done this all the way along...when we have gotten through a lot of the different things and said, “Oh, I don’t think we can do that with my kids” and then all of a sudden, you’re doing it! So this isn’t the first challenge that you are facing, you know? (Alice USGSP-D5)

Tasks were clarified and shared to include everyone’s contribution. This collaborative nature ensured a democratic point of view was shared. For example, editing was a task about which they knew little. Having been explained, everyone’s contribution was
valued

Alice: ...we could do editing on it or whatever and then send it out to everybody ...so it doesn’t just come from me reading your work and picking up the lessons that were learnt...
Ray: ...maybe we should just write our own, and send it to you, and you edit it, and send it back
Alice: ...then you can say... “Hmm, it seems like we have this twice” or “Oh Kay, you left out that really cool story”...because you will remember things that each other wrote down.
Blá: ...could you...
Ray: Reign us back in as well, yeah. (USGSP-D5)

Differentiation of each other’s abilities and knowledge, positive peer-pressure, and recognising strengths of peers also featured in finding solutions to challenges. Where a task that required a specific skill or knowledge, naming a member’s known ability in that area suggested their contribution:

Blá: Ray, are you really good at that because I’m absolutely crap at that kind of stuff?
Ray: Yeah, I would be good at that, yeah.
Blá: Well, you do that and we can put it all together then. (USGSP-D1)

An important part of this process was being able to know when, where and how a member could contribute, through having an in-depth knowledge of each other’s practice. This meant that Curricular Initiative teachers were able to articulate each other’s contributions to the group, either already made or yet to be made and the effect on others within the group. This was relevant because it involved making tacit understandings of the USG practices, explicit:

Ray: And like, Blá, ...you kind of used the resource pack online very well, whereas..., I wasn’t really aware of its existence really to be honest, and you kind of showed it to us in the folder and everything, and I think that kind of shined a better light on it for all of us...
Teresa: Yeah, it kind of jolted us up into thinking, “Gosh, there’s more to it than this”. (USGSP-D1)

Identifying and articulating successful practices also manifested into problem-solving. For example, in this case the problem was solved through networking. Prior to a meeting, Ray heard that Mary had used ‘schools completion’ in her project (‘schools completion’, also called the ‘behavioural unit’ as an extra resource for helping at-risk pupils in school). In a separate discussion, Blá mentioned her interest in using ‘schools completion’, wondered how, and what the pitfalls were. Ray linked them and they were
able to have that discussion. Tasks were linked to other tasks from the past or in the future, as well as successful networking by linking personnel with specific work. This knowledge came from talk (formal and informal, planned and incidental) on Curricular Initiative teachers’ personal and professional lives.

Successful implementation of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ was recognised by the Curricular Initiative teachers because of this team-work, its alignment with existing USG values, and their priority of focussing on pupil needs:

...it’s the ethos that, what we have established over, down through the years of working together, that we’re always looking for another way to meet the needs of our kids because they are so challenging. (Blá USGSP-D5)

Support in the USG was multi-directional. It included what the original facilitators did for teachers, what teachers did for the facilitators and what teachers did for teachers. Appreciation of the original facilitators (Mary and Alice) and their role in helping to develop such a supportive community was expressed by the Curricular Initiative teachers: “THANK YOU MARY AND ALICE FOR GETTING US THIS FAR. FROM THE BEGINNING IN 2008 TO THIS!” (Minutes-J, original emphasis).

The tension of engaging with one project was that there were usually multiple agendas at USG meetings which reduced the time Curricular Initiative teachers needed to discuss the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. This required a balance and was a challenge:

The point was made that now that the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ is not a priority in the meetings any more, that those who were not doing ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ felt more included again. This is an important point that we don’t (however unintended this might be) ‘alienate’ some of our members. Still, anyone having difficulty shouldn’t hesitate to ask for help as there is enough experience to go around, to help. (Minutes –L)

Curricular Initiative teachers acknowledged the mutual support within the USG. Reassurance, collegiality, trust and acknowledgement of the work done by Curricular Initiative teachers were part of the ‘essence’ that enabled the interactions that formed the core community working processes. This improved their belief in the value of themselves and their professional work. Recognition of work was also part of the
development of themselves as professionals both within the community and outside it. This is explored in the next section.

5.3.2. Recognition of the Work of the Curricular Initiative Teachers

This section focuses on the recognition of the work of the ‘Curricular Initiative teachers’ from two outside groups (SSLFS personnel and the PE profession). The Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative ‘spotlighted’ the work of the teacher in schools. It also explores the impact of the smaller group sharing their learning through a presentation at a conference and a publication for the wider PE profession. In the world of the teacher, the opportunity to share their learning and experiences is very limited. Four Curricular Initiative teachers took an opportunity to share with the PE profession through publication and presentation at a research conference. It acted as a powerful catalyst for them to recognise their knowledge, engage with it more deeply and develop their thinking, by ‘opening a door’ into the world of the academy, research and knowledge creation. It changed the teachers’ understanding of themselves as being knowledgeable and developed their confidence which spurred them to further develop themselves as professionals. Alice acted as a conduit between the two worlds. Data are sourced from emails, discussions, interviews.

The ‘formal sharing group’ enabled the study of the mechanisms of how they discussed the meanings and practical implications of implementing a novel initiative in closer detail (how and why they approached the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ as they did). By volunteering to present, opportunities for deep discussions enabled them to engage in the development of their conceptual understandings of what their projects were about in their schools and the role of the USG in helping them to facilitate that. It helped them to ‘see’ their own practice including the acknowledgement of good practice as well as practice that needed improvement. Other Curricular Initiative teachers declined to get involved because they lacked interest or confidence:

I wouldn't mind attending, but would be very nervous about presenting, even if you would hold my hand. Also not interested to write an article, sorry. (USGSP emails)

Guidance from Alice helped the group to negotiate their first academic conference and publication and helped to clarify academic cultural rules. This ranged from preparing, identifying the abstract, identifying the appropriate conference strand to deciding on the
word-count and writing style appropriate to the publication. Curricular Initiative teachers wanted to properly represent their USG colleagues so there was a deliberate engagement with the task until each member was satisfied:

But I would like us to meet like Ray said, to actually just hone it right down from beginning to end... (Blá USGSP-D1)

Discussions formed a loose pattern on how they negotiated its content, the process of sharing and the meaning of the task. Alice had a clear vision of what was required to adhere to academic cultural norms, and to meet the required criteria. She did this by interpreting the group’s understanding of what was required and helped to develop their ideas. This also led to the group having a deeper understanding of research and what that meant to the Curricular Initiative teachers:

Because I think that the second round of it, to do with your own research. You can’t just get up and talk about - here’s what I found. I notice you have three research questions, you could talk about how Ray is actually saying about what he did the first question and Blá is sharing what she did by answering the second question. And obviously the data hasn’t been analysed at this point yet but you are just sharing what you did in a way. (Alice USGSP-D2)

Teresa concluded that the group wanted to share how the USG helped them to ‘take on’ something new, to acknowledge the support that helped it to become a success and then wanting to share that to the wider professional community. It also led to their belief that it helped to improve teacher learning and then pupil learning. Ray realised his commitment to learning from his pupils and the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative made a difference to his pupils:

Teresa: ...and was the path of learning that we shared what we learned which... it isn’t research unless it’s shared?
Ray: yeah, I think that all the teachers involved and all the teachers learning from your students you want to pass that on to your students. (USGSP-D2)

Successful engagement with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ improved the Curricular Initiative teachers’ confidence in their professional practice. Writing about it afforded the opportunity of deeper understanding of the project and gave it more meaning: “allowed her to think more deeply about what she had done and what it meant” (Blá USGSP emails).

Outside schools, the USG began to get recognition for their achievements and
competence. The external provider of the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ was impressed with the way in which the community worked together to pilot the national project. A ‘Special Achievement Award’ by SSLFS was made to all participating Curricular Initiative teachers in recognition of their successful piloting of the national ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ and support of each other in doing so. This award ceremony was made by leading executives of the ROI ‘Sky’ corporation. Other awards included overall ‘Project of the Year’ (ROI, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) by one Sky-teacher; and ‘Teacher of the Year’ (ROI) by another Sky-teacher. This had an impact on the group:

It was amazing and emotional. We were photographed and each given a medal. The conversation was so alive and we continued ‘brainstorming’ in the pub after a ‘cocktail’ (bought by Alice) about how we can spread the word – as ambassadors to our colleagues in the ROI. The buzz. (RJ6-27Apr2015)

Alice shared her thoughts on the meaning of the USG to her:

...has enriched my life both personally and professionally” [she felt overwhelmed] ...this is the first award to a group of teachers. (‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ national co-ordinator) was “very excited about that”. (RJ6-30Apr2015)

This recognition brought further vitality to the group. The group also recognised how far they had travelled on the journey, and I reflected: “We have come so far from the ‘marginalised of the marginalised’ to public international accolade” (RJ6-29Apr2015).

Despite opportunities becoming available to further develop Curricular Initiative teachers’ professional roles, they were dependent on external bodies which led to tensions. One example arose from the possibility of supporting other PE colleagues who were newly introducing the project into their schools, as ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ ambassadors. Demonstrating development in their confidence as professionals, most Curricular Initiative teachers were interested in this role. This was in contrast to a similar offer from the PDST previously, where few USG-teachers were interested. Unfortunately, this opportunity was no longer available, once the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ personnel ceased communicating after the national pilot-project launch. The USG-teachers reported feeling disappointed and ‘dropped’ by the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ organising personnel:

...they got their kick-off in Ireland and yes, I can see them setting you aside at this point. I don’t agree with it ...because you kind of did serve their purpose. Now that’s
unfortunate because that doesn’t say much to me about the people running it ...quite honestly. (Alice USGSP-D5)

This prompted a discussion on the value of the project, the quality work of the group, and despite this set-back, many, not all, perceived the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ as beneficial “I will take from it what I want” (Blá USGSP-D5). Some Curricular Initiative teachers were critical and wary of the fact that credit for the success of the project was being taken by the corporation involved. It perhaps eroded trust that had been developed in the corporation:

...in fact it’s our work, and... the benefits for it is that our kids were made to feel special. We did the teaching, and we used the resource. (Teresa USGSP-D5)

The confidence gained from the ‘formal sharing group’ influenced their personal as well as their professional development. All subsequently engaged in accredited formal long-term educational programmes, although one claimed it was not as a result of that. Ray’s principal advocated for more school resources to DES inspectors by having Ray present to them on the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ and its impact on the school. As a result of those experiences, Ray saw engagement with a management diploma as an opportunity to have a wider influence on change in schools. He acknowledged the contribution of engaging with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’ towards recognition of his skills and knowledge by the accrediting body of the diploma in order to do this. Ray also reflected that he had become more “...research minded and I have begun to collect and scrutinise data obtained from my students” (USGSP-email).

This suggests that Ray engaged with pupils to help them identify their personal goals and (that as a teacher) was empowered to help pupils change. Blá crystallised the meaning of developing herself professionally by improved confidence through sharing her project experiences, pushing herself outside her comfort zone, starting to undertake research on her practice and further developing her professional learning:

I didn’t present to our own group, but I presented at the (PEPAYS), ...I can sit in front of kids any day and talk, but being a public speaker in front of adults and very knowledgeable adults, I was very, very nervous about doing it. ...and I stood the other day in front of a hall of 100 people and not a bother, whereas I would have been probably physically sick prior to that... And I think also pushing me to do the written piece as well... (Blá USG –FG1)
I look forward to pushing myself outside my comfort zone in work this year and am presently engaging in my own research on "your subject and its survival through an amalgamation" and working with a colleague for the first time in 18 years! On a personal level my involvement has given me the push and self-belief to go back to college this autumn. This is something I have shied away from for years, (Blá USG-emails)

5.4. TO WHAT EXTENT DID TEACHERS PERCEIVE CHANGES IN THEIR PRACTICE IMPACTING PUPILS?

This section studies the reported changes to pupil learning as perceived by the teachers, their colleagues and school management. Evidence to support changes to pupil learning is drawn particularly but not exclusively from the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative since it raised the profile of PE in the school and pupil learning in PE was acknowledged.

The challenges to teachers’ practices need to be described in order for us to gain a perspective on the changes to pupils’ learning. In the context of poor facilities, challenging behaviour and poor attitude to PE, the following were identified in the survey as the main challenges:

The non-participation of a small group of students who take up a large part of your time and energy. To keep motivated and deliver ‘good’ sessions as you get older and have seen it all before so many times. To keep motivated in spite of poor facilities and challenging students. (Survey)

The behavioural consequences for non-engagement were distressing for teachers: “Because if you don’t get them on board, it’s a nightmare for you” (Kay USG-FG1). In a specific USG context, one principal commented on the challenge:

I feel it must be quite hard to motivate them when there are so few facilities for them to display their talents in a school setting... some of our kids are quite turned off about PE... a sizeable number don’t want to do anything at all. (Carol USG-P)

Arising from teachers broadening their repertoire and striving to adhere to syllabus guidelines, their expectations for the PE programmes were raised and they sought to bring their pupils on board:

...all day every time... they were....“Can we play soccer? Can we play soccer?” [following engagement with USG workshops] And we went outside and we played
ultimate Frisbee. They had a ball... They were arguing about how to umpire it... [they said] “I don’t want to do this.” But yet they get into it, they enjoy it. (Kay USG-FG1)

Because teachers changed, pupil experience of the PE programme changed. The teachers supported the JCPE curriculum despite the challenges. They were more resilient in implementing the syllabus strands rather than ‘giving in’ to pupil pressure. Pupils began to realise that their complaints would not result in deviation from the plan:

...So we have now laminated it, it’s now up for them, so then they know, “This is it, this is it, get on with it” ...There has been no moaning and groaning... we would tell them at the start, “You are doing six weeks of this” and they just get on with it. (Kay USG-FG1)

Pupils were also extended by taking on new roles within PE lessons:

There were about 250 children there... my kids ended up on their own with a group of primary school kids, which really brought them out of their comfort zone... but after a while... they just got on with it and managed. (Teresa USGSP-D2)

Teachers reported that pupils improved in their engagement in PE, and this further encouraged the teacher:

...a fifth Year group of girls who will do nothing for me and... “this is what I can do with them”, and it went like a dream. I did it. There was a bit of skipping and group-work ...and they loved it, which encouraged me the following week to do... team challenges. (Nessa USGSP-FG)

This engagement was observed by others, outside the classroom as Alice noted:

...just going to that final [Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative] event at Croke Park and just seeing the kids’ faces... that was just dynamite. (Alice USGSP-D5)

Deeper engagement with the PE programme and opportunities for reflection on their practice helped pupils to manage their behaviour:

...one kid did turn around to me and said it was his saving grace in not getting kicked out of school. (Blá USGSP-D2)

At times, this increased student self-belief, pushed them to strive to improve their attainment in PE:

...one of my kids, his challenge wasn’t going to be complete until ...he gets up and talks to the whole group... He actually said to me this challenge isn’t over yet... I outlined to him this will be quite daunting... he’s got a chance to get out of it right now, but he said no, I have to do it. (Blá USGSP-D2)
Principals supported teachers’ reports by noting individual pupils’ as well as class groupings’ improved attainment, for example, Máire noted:

...one lad that was participating... had very, very poor literacy... he would have been barely able to read... he would have struggled with that... but you know, he kept at it... and he has made huge progress this year... he would completely attribute that to the focus he learned to apply to the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative team. (Máire USG-P)

One teacher showed a video of her lesson that focussed on respect and communication. She shared how the group had grown and showed greater resilience. They exceeded expectations of what they could achieve, resulting in them mentoring other pupils in the school the following year. Blá summarised the change as follows:

They wouldn’t even hold hands prior to this... these guys trying to solve something... But they still persevered and they are the kind of group that would never have done that. You’ll notice that they will actually go straight back to doing it again... There was one child who didn’t get on with anyone in the group... they have started to use the skills, they were involving him much more... they talk openly of what they thought about each other... I would never normally have done that with a bunch of boys. I was astounded by their feedback on each other. Because they used the word ‘love’, “he’s good looking”, and they were using words not that I was looking for, like “he’s kind”. (Blá USGSP-D2)

The Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative showed pupils how success could come through engagement with PE and sport by learning life skills and making progress:

...it just shows them a different way of being successful, because in school they’re all told do your school work and that’s very important and that’s how you get success. So it’s really good for them to see that you can be successful in another sphere. (Mona SC-ST)

Many USG-teachers who involved pupils more in self-reflection were impressed at the honesty of pupils. This also gave teachers valuable feedback on their lessons and indicated that pupils were engaging with their own learning:

...they are so honest. They will come up to you and they will have a two and then you are like, “Really, a two?” “Yeah, I could have done a bit better... I didn’t put any effort in. (Jean USG-FG1)

As a result, increased use of pupil reflections influenced the teachers to focus more on pupils’ needs:
...they are complaining and they didn’t get this and it’s not fair, and you realise that no, there has to be a Plan B. It’s about enjoyment and about participation for life. Now if they don’t like this now, they are never going to pick it up again. (Jean USG-FG1)

One of the reasons why the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative encouraged pupils to achieve more was because they felt ‘special’. It is important to note that most project participants were among the most challenging pupils in the school, making their achievements and positive changes even more remarkable. Their experiences were memorable and they wanted to mark the occasion of their wonderful achievements:

...they all got their beautiful white Sky T-shirts and just before they went out to do the event, I caught them in the corner signing their names all over the Sky T-shirts... They were... “This is our event, this is our memory”. I found that just bizarre. I got really cross with them, but when I look back, I went, “Actually that was really deadly”. (Blá USGSP-D5)

All teachers noted that the pupils improved their behaviour during the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative. They suggested that this was because the pupils had to change in order to earn the honour of being in the Sky-team for the school: “…my groups felt really special. They were chosen... maybe they felt they had to step up to the mark?” (Teresa USGSP-D2).

The media were interested in the pupils and what they had to say, and this gave the pupils a positive experience of school and their achievements, that perhaps they might not get elsewhere:

...they were so much more important and they were ...interviewing the students involved in the team, so they felt, you know, that it was very much targeted at them ...there was fantastic excitement here, the day that it was on TV and ...the website, and then when they went off to Dublin, when they met Katie Taylor... they were just bowled over, they were just beaming. (Máire USG-P)

Two teachers spoke of the opportunity to focus on the achievements of the ‘overlooked child’:

Some of them would be good and quiet and so they would be overlooked. She really came out of herself and I mean her confidence improved hugely. (Mona SC-ST)

...one student who has a really sad story about home life, and he is extremely shy...and he didn’t get picked to interview. But even the fact that he put his hand up and said, “I want to represent the group” ...that was the biggest achievement in the whole thing for me. Because he is the typical invisible child. (Blá USGSP-FG)

Pupil learning and attainments improved in four ways:

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1. Greater numbers of pupils were engaging in lessons
2. There was deeper pupil engagement during lessons. This meant that more pupils were on task, for longer periods during lessons and had more inclusive engagement
3. There was greater pupil attainment in lessons, meaning that tasks were completed more fully and pupils worked collaboratively. They took on new roles, including assessment and organising others to engage in physical activities. Often, pupils exceeded their expectations in PE
4. Pupils improved confidence and changed their attitudes to the PE programme. They behaved better in PE, showed more self-respect, respect for peers, teacher and the subject.

As a result of engagement with the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’, changes occurred in teachers’ practices. It showed how the USG functioned as a support to its members to implement an innovation. The four changes reported in teachers’ class practices were:

1. Increased inclusion
2. More pupil-centred with a greater pupil voice
3. Changes in teacher interaction with colleagues by raising the profile of PE in schools
4. Greater collaboration with principals, peers, pupils and parents.

The common theme to these changes is the development of the teachers as leaders, their ability to make change and bring people with them. All of these actions contribute to understanding how a community reflects on its practice. The next chapter studies in greater detail the practices of one teacher – my own practice.
CHAPTER 6

MILESTONES

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the third research question on my practice. In seeking to answer the extent of the impact of engaging with the USG on my practices, understandings and beliefs, it is structured thus:

1. What were the changes to my classroom practices?
2. What were the changes to my engagement in school culture?
3. What were the changes to my understanding and beliefs?

It is important to state that my changed understandings of, and changes to, my professional practice are difficult to separate. Change represents a symbiotic dialogue with practice and understanding where one influences the other. There is much overlap between the two but while each question will prioritise practice or understanding it will not exclude any reference to the other. Aspects of these changes are gleaned through the lenses of my colleagues, pupils, autobiography, and the formal sharing of my practice via presentations and posters. These four ‘lenses’ (Brookfield 1995) are used to present a ‘thick description’ (Stake 2005) of the changes in my practice and the nature of my reflections over the course of this study.

Data sources include pupil reflections, interviews with colleagues, reflection journals, and student-teacher vignettes. Pupil reflections were collected during one academic year (Sept 2012-May 2013) from two class groupings: V (second years, age 13-14); and M (first years, age 12-13). Interviews of school colleagues included: my principal (Freda USG-P); two teachers, who provided extra support for me in my PE lessons with V (Mona SC-ST) and with M (Leah SC-ST); one teacher, Anna (SC-T), who was not present in any of my classes; and Ró, (SC-SNA) a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) for a pupil with special educational needs (SEN) in V. Ró was present with me in class with Mona. My reflection journals (RJ1 to RJ8) were also included and references to two vignettes written for PME students in UL. This is followed by a summary of the key findings and provides the basis for the final chapter.
6.2. HOW DID MY CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICE CHANGE?

Two key changes occurred in my classroom practices during my engagement with the USG. These are underpinned by a shift to a more pupil-centred practice.

- Theme one focussed on a greater commitment to pupil voice in teaching and planning PE lessons. It examines my practices from the perspective of the changes I was trying to achieve in my PE lessons.
- Theme two centred on pupils having greater awareness of their responsibility for and enjoyment in PE lessons. It questions the results of the changes I was attempting to achieve largely from the perspective of peers and the pupils.

6.2.1. Theme One: A Greater Commitment to Pupil Voice in PE Lessons

Greater commitment to pupil voice included a greater awareness of student voice and allowing them to use their voice during PE lessons. I focussed on using their ‘voice’ as data for improving my classroom practices including supporting pupil learning. It also included greater use of pupil voice for lesson planning. Previously, my records on pupil attainment had a precise focus on adherence to school rules (such as having full PE uniform), offset with a vague and haphazard focus on pupil learning outcomes, improvements, and areas that required pupil attention. These were derived from observation, memory and were occasionally recorded. My use of pupil feedback was informal and ‘ad-hoc’. My evaluation and assessment feedback was not systematically organised and narrowly focussed, mostly on skill attainment and descriptions of poor behaviour (and disciplinary actions taken). It was inadequate to ‘capture’ the changes to pupils, their improved engagement in PE lessons and was insufficient to guide pupils in their learning and progression in class. The USG regularly discussed important aspects of our classroom practices regarding pupil participation and learning, leading me to realise I had insufficient data to inform my practice. Furthermore, the existing data did not focus on my changed priorities of greater pupil participation and engagement in PE.

I commenced data collection regarding pupils. I created a Pupil Reflective Tool (PRT) using ideas from an USG TPSR workshop. Creation of this tool evolved from being on loose pieces of paper, to being included in the pupils’ journal that was used daily. Later sections of this chapter (the section on changes to my understandings and beliefs) show
how my use of this tool and understanding of its contribution to pupil learning developed. Pupils used this tool to record their understanding of engagement in PE (enjoyment and participation) and track their programme content. As I could never predict when I could implement the various elements of my programme because of weather or indoor facility availability, my programme lacked continuity and pupils often claimed to never ‘do’ PE, and not to enjoy PE. This was counter to my perspective. I also wanted my pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour. I created two versions of the tool to gather pupils’ daily reflections (PRT1 (Fig 6.1)) where one allowed them to summarise their learning in PE over the course of the year (PRT2 (Appendix 4)). PRT2 included pupil learning, their understanding of their learning strengths and their recognition of areas needing improvement. PRT2 was sent to parents as part of their annual school reports. Pupils’ reflections in PRT2 assisted me to plan the following year’s programme. I kept records of PRT1 and PRT2. PRT3 was a ‘meta-reflection’ (administered a week after PRT2) used to ascertain pupils’ understandings, and feelings about PRT1 and PRT2 and to check the trustworthiness of the data from PRT2.
**Figure 6.1 Sample of Pupil Reflective Tool 1 (PRT1)**

Figure 6.1 shows one pupils’ PRT1. It demonstrates she participated in 18 PE lessons and the curricular strands that were the lessons topics. It showed her level of enjoyment and responsibility during the lessons. Pupils scored themselves on how well they participated in lessons. This pupil also personalised her PRT1 – for example her first entry for ‘Gaelic’ (Gaelic football - an invasion game) showed a sad face and a participation score of 5. Beneath this she wrote “hurt leg”. It is also clear that she really enjoyed HRA (health related activity) and included some scores on the right-hand side of the sheet. My conclusions from this were that this pupil enjoyed her PE and participated well and responsibly. We needed to look at Gaelic again to try and improve those scores – although she was enjoying herself, she could have worked a little harder.
and been more responsible. She showed improvement in her participation of Athletics. Also, when weather allowed I needed to ensure I completed the invasion games strand as pupils only completed three lessons in this strand. Compared to my personal records of lessons that had been taught, the pupil had been absent for two lessons each of AA and gymnastics, clarifying what she had missed. Sometimes I did not complete certain strands owing to poor weather or other school interruptions to the schedule, such as school assemblies. What the PRT does not show is pupil learning outcomes, which were recorded separately and not per lesson.

Scrutinising pupil reflections at the end of each lesson gave me valuable information. I knew how pupils felt about the lesson, how they scored themselves, and whether my perception of the lesson concurred with theirs. I noted the reflections of the class as a whole and where individuals were making a particular effort and engaging with the lessons more deeply and/or improving their behaviour in class, in other words their affective learning. It offered me opportunity to comment privately to pupils on this. At times the entire class would reflect on how the class went and engage in short discussions on the quality of their learning experiences (and my teaching). This valuable feedback was recorded by me in my teacher’s diary and indicated changes I needed to make to improve the learning experiences.

The data from PRT2 (n=33) and PRT3 (n=35) showed 83% of pupils indicated they enjoyed lessons. Pupils’ feedback informed me that the most popular activities were hill-walks, gymnastics and athletics, with rounders, football and Health related activity the least favoured. This gave me information on differing class groupings’ strengths, preferences and future needs, which proved valuable for planning purposes. The most common reason for enjoying these activities were that they were fun - “we walked up a hill/mountain with our friends and had great fun” (PRT2-M12). One pupil claimed the reason why she did not like an activity was “we played it too many times” (PRT2-V13). ‘Boring’ was the most common reason cited for disliking an activity. What, why or how pupils felt that something was ‘boring’, was unknown to me. This propelled me to investigate further (lesson strands were no more than six weeks in duration, and had variety) and is a continuing investigation as I evaluate pupil reflections and feedback to try and do activities that keep their interest while covering the required syllabus strands.
Pupils recognised their learning needs and could identify their strengths (skills, and participatory behaviours such as teamwork and leadership), and how they did or could improve - “I got better by practising” (PRT2-M23), “good at getting people to do a task this means I have leadership” (PRT2-V16). Pupils could identify areas needed for improvement, such as fitness, or skills - “I have to work on my swing” (PRT2-V15), but pupils also listed behavioural issues for improvement - “I do what I'm told. Sometimes” (PRT2-M14). Pupils knew their strengths/weaknesses based on their reflections - “It says it in my journal” (PRT2-V18). Regarding behaviour and responsibility, pupils were more aware of their role in this - “Because if the teacher has to stop and give out to me she is stopping the class ...from learning” (PRT3-M21).

A pupil summed up how she learned in PE, as in you - “...learn by your hands and feet” (PRT3-V15). This informed me that pupils were achieving the learning intentions, and were aware they were learning something in PE. They were more involved in the planning of my lessons arising from the insights I generated from their reflections. These reflections were honest - “Because I told the truth [about] what I did” (PRT3-M1). It helped pupils engage deeply and proactively with their own learning – “Because I could see where I went wrong and how I can improve” (PRT3-V17). The PRT helped pupils to ‘see’ themselves and identify their behaviour in school, their strengths and areas for improvement as well as their learning needs for the future. This assisted me in reflecting on my practice as it helped them to identify and articulate their needs, and it gave them a language and ownership around their needs and strengths. It allowed me to plan more ‘accurately’ to meet their identified needs. Behaviour improved and my stress in class reduced. It helped pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and behaviour and gave them the power to express this. This led to improved pupil participation, engagement and learning in my lessons. They developed greater autonomy to lead their own learning. I also have greater confidence that my aims and learning outcomes are being met, and my practice as an educator is more aligned with my values.

The principal changed her mind about PRT despite doubting its value initially:
…it’s been marvellous quite honestly... I was a bit cynical about it when you asked me to put that in the journal ...but at the time I was going through the journal and I said, “What good is this going to do? Is this going to be a waste of time?” (Freda USG-P)

The PRT was adapted and used by colleagues outside PE- “I suppose it can work in every subject” (Anna SC-T). Teachers felt that pupil reflection helped teacher reflection:

...it would be a reflection for my own teaching really. It’s less of a reflection for them, but it would be a reflection for my own practice. Like, “I thought that class went particularly well, I wonder did they feel the same?” (Anna SC-T)

It was adapted for use in SSE and DEIS imperatives to track pupil attainment and progress, such as improving homework (Appendix 4):

I’m going to use it for homework a lot next year... do they enjoy their next history class more when they’ve done the homework... (Mona SC-ST)

The principal also saw its merits in overcoming the scepticism of colleagues’ conceptions of the value of pupils’ self-assessment:

...and they see that you managing the classes right across the school so well that they must ask themselves questions... Teresa is doing it in a class where she has the whole group... frequently with ...no support... You’ll have a big class with all the weak kids...and they must be saying, “Well, if Teresa can manage that, maybe there’s something there for me as well. (Freda USG-P)

Deliberately co-planning with pupils was another change to my practice. This arose from the new pedagogies learned with the USG (such as Sport Education and TPSR). These sessions allowed me to think about the role of pupils in the planning and pedagogy of my lessons. The PRT encouraged individual reflection, which led to class reflections. These evolved to pupils’ reflecting on teacher performance and sharing their reflections with me:

5th years saying I was grumpy in second year. I said I hadn’t changed... greater discussion about the class versus just ‘doing’ the class. (RJ8-16Jan2013)

This has further developed, for example after a particularly good or poor lesson, we do a reciprocal class reflection. As well as my shared reflection with the class, pupils gave their opinions on my teaching performance as well as their understanding of how they influenced the quality of the lesson that day. We then collaborate and plan for the next
lesson and how to ensure this continues (if a good lesson) or to improve (if a poor lesson). While not all voices are equal (I am responsible for the class), I noted in my journal the possibilities for inclusion and greater participation have changed and it has been a deliberate change in my practice:

Beginning to see pupil evaluation of the lesson using the PRT in reverse. Of me and the whole class. AND for me to see the positives in my lessons. (RJ8-24Jan2013)

My reflection indicated that I engaged with the pupils in an epistemological and educational discussion on school and learning:

We were discussing pedagogy and taking a critical view of teachers’ practices and theirs. It was non-threatening. [Make a] 6 week plan to change, try out a new thing and see the result. I was reflecting WITH my class. And planning teaching with them. We were doing it and it was absolutely normal. (RJ8-09Jan2014)

Through creating space in my lessons to allow for co-planning and shared reflections, the dividend paid off in pupil buy-in to learning and to PE engagement, greater inclusion and better ability to cater for differentiation between pupils in the lessons.

My understanding of ‘participation’ during PE lessons evolved. I began with a focus on pupil participation in class activities, but now sought greater inclusion in the programme itself including their voice in the planning and pedagogy of the physical education lessons. My understanding of how to reflect on my practice changed and this influenced how my pupils reflected. The cycle and evolving nature of reflection included my reflections as well as pupils’ reflections in understanding my practice and being able to write about it, reflect on it, defend it, share it as well as live it in the classroom.

Engaging with the USG on the nature of pupil learning in PE lessons, led to a change in my understanding of what and why lessons went well. These included broader criteria of success, such as pupils staying on task despite distractions, pupils who ceased participating re-engaging in lessons after a short time, pupils’ quality reflections on good as well as poor participation, and being more positive about pupil learning and improvement during lessons.

My pedagogy allowed for greater pupil autonomy. My reflection journal showed that I was dubious about the consequences of handing the ‘power’ over to pupils because I
worried about the implications if they chose not to take responsibility. I found that it took time to allow pupil autonomy to develop, but the rewards were unexpected:

3 Bxxxx – a very obstreperous class. Last 2 classes on Friday before Easter holidays. Cardio-walk in park agreed to (no PE uniforms) followed by sit in the sunshine. 2 beautiful boys in the park as a distraction, I got them to go. When they sat and got bored they decided to do a Sport-Acro session, falling into their teams. Skirts tucked into ‘knickers’, they carried on – completely at their own behest. They ran the class themselves. The public stopped and looked at them. They finished with a full class balance, being careful to include everyone. Wow. (RJ1-16Jan2011)

Allowing greater pupil autonomy in lessons took time, required continual negotiation and guidance and required careful management of pupil ‘voices’. Facilitating their learning and negotiating with them around their learning required a delicate balance between maintaining my authority as teacher and allowing them agency and voice over their programme. It sometimes resulted in unsatisfactory lessons and I had to remind pupils about the syllabus requirements (and the limits of their choices):

Doing 2nd year PE (rounders as usual at start of year because the weather is good). Cxxxxy asked to do something ‘funner’. SO I decided to let her run the class – she took up the challenge. There was 5 mins of soccer, 3 non-participants. The class reflections were mostly sad and straight faces... I know it was a risk to do this (I might ‘lose’ them and they might think that they can negotiate the curriculum content). To do – put the JCPE curriculum on my noticeboard again and refer to it. (RJ8-19Sept2012)

Data gathered from all junior pupils (N=84) indicate that 98% of my pupils participated in PE. Within two class cohorts (‘V’ and ‘M’, N=33), 82% of my pupils enjoyed PE, and 6% did not enjoy PE. 85% claimed to have worked hard and took responsibility for their behaviour in PE lessons, with 2% acknowledging that they did not take responsibility. This information reassured me that the changes I had been making to my practice informed by membership of the USG were positive and gave me confidence that my PE practice was making a difference. Participation had been approximately 75% prior to this, based on the numbers of pupils that did not have their PE uniform per lesson and those removed from class due to misbehaviour (recorded in my journal). Pupils’ reflections through PRT also informed me in what areas I was teaching well and that pupils understood the learning intentions.

These data alerted me to how I should proceed on my practice research, for example where many pupils did not enjoy a PE lesson and not engaged with it, I knew change was necessary. For example, I used to teach Basketball as our main invasion game. I
changed that to Gaelic football as the pupils told me they found the skills easier to learn, the rules easier to interpret, the ball didn’t hurt them so much and they found it easier to score (pupil data for this predated PhD data collection). This feedback arose from my observations, their oral feedback as well as PRT. I was now using pupil feedback intensively and formally as a result of my engagement with the USG.

Sometimes data did not send a clear message owing to lack of consensus from the pupils, but it alerted me to become aware of issues in my lessons. These issues could be on anything such as behavioural, attitudinal, or skill acquisition. For example, pupils found that they enjoyed learning when it was fun, whereas PE was not enjoyable when it was boring (PRT3). It is not clear if the learning or the lack of enjoyment, or if the specific content was boring. I was unclear about how to interrogate ‘boring’ for my next action research cycle. I decided to be alert to a ‘teachable moment’ if this arose again. It was on ‘my radar’ for awareness in my lessons to investigate. The link between effort and enjoyment in learning was made by the majority of pupils (69%) but a sizeable minority (27%) said there was no link (PRT3). Many said they could not explain this and said that enjoyment was linked to good behaviour - “Because if you listen the teacher could be teaching us fun and enjoyable stuff” (PRT3-M21). They understood that listening was behaving, and behaving was learning versus misbehaviour meant trouble, and trouble reduced learning and enjoyment. This was something I emphasised regularly during lessons.

As well as clarifying pupil strengths, PRT allowed pupils to safely admit to challenges in certain aspects of their learning as noted by the SNA in my PE lessons:

...in PE ...they know themselves that they’re not excellent in everything, and they know ...you don’t have to be brilliant in everything. And it’s OK to go, “I’m not so good in that.” And it’s OK to kind of admit to that. (Ró SC-SNA)

My reflective journal allowed me a safe space to write about challenging lessons also:

Pm no rain – planned to do rounders. (Pupil) calling pupils who were absent, as ‘present’ during register. She objected to the ‘essay’ I wrote in her journal about this, on which she scribbled all over. She then refused to do any PE (to obey or follow any instruction). String of foul language. Refused to co-operate with her SNA. Kids hyper. Foul language. Refusals to participate by 6 who were very vocal and physically challenging and messing with others, jumping on each other. 4 threats to sue because the ground was wet and we were doing PE outside... Where does critical pedagogy help
me here? I never gave up. Whose fault is this pupil behaviour? Sometimes it is no-one’s fault and there are no answers. (RJ7-17Sept2012)

Prior to this, I would have felt that I was at fault for such a lesson, but as a result of changes in my practice, and my understanding of my practice I found I was more forgiving and less critical of myself. I noticed I was becoming more resilient. The changes refer to writing in my journal, discussing challenging behaviour with the USG and using TPSR. Other members of the USG spoke of similar changes.

Opportunities to reflect on the learning via PRT helped pupils to ‘see’ themselves and identify their behaviour in school, their strengths and areas for improvement as well as their learning needs for the future. In turn this helped me to ‘see’ what needed to be done to help them and to ‘see’ my practice more clearly. It assisted me in reflecting on my practice as it helped pupils to identify and articulate their needs, and it gave them a language and ownership around their needs and strengths. Only one pupil laid responsibility on me as her teacher for such self-knowledge - “Because the teacher is supposed to tell me how I did” (PRT3-M9). They could write about their abilities and needs because they were a focus during my lessons and they had recorded it. It helped pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and behaviour and gave them the power to express this, resulting in improved behaviour. This led to improved learning in my lessons and greater pupil autonomy in leading their learning. I have greater confidence that my aims and learning outcomes are being met, and there is greater alignment of my values with my practice. The data allowed me to have greater accuracy about what to focus on for change and what help I needed, to help the pupils. I used this information when discussing my practice with USG-teachers, and others (such as the principal, peers, parents and pupils). This has been a powerful boost to my practice to articulate detail on my pupils’ learning and engagement in PE based on pupils’ voices.

6.2.2. Theme Two: Greater Pupils’ Awareness in PE

This theme provides evidence of the results of my changed practice on pupils and their awareness of it from my colleagues’ perspectives of the pupils’ learning in my lessons. One limitation of using the pupil voice and PRT is the question that pupils may say/write what they think the teacher wants to hear and the reflections would not be entirely honest. This would limit its effectiveness as a tool to support pupil learning and
engagement in PE and for me to trust the data for use in my practice. Peer observers in my lessons said they were honest, and therefore gave accurate information:

... they are actually quite honest as well. A lot of them say, “Yes, I do affect others, I do stop other people from learning, and I have a responsibility for my own learning. I do mess, I do talk, when the teacher says to be quiet and to listen and follow instructions and I don’t”. So I thought that was good, that they are so honest. (Leah SC-ST)

Not every pupil was this honest, especially for the end-of-year reflection, PRT2, that was going to be sent home:

...well, you know, come on, and I know Gxxxxa’s smart enough to know ...her Mam’s gonna read this. And she’s not going to go, yes, I mess all the time. Because she knows. (Mona SC-ST)

Reflecting on pupil strengths with colleagues helped me to see strengths in my lessons that I had not seen or acknowledged before:

Why does Cxxxxe (pupil) do so well (taking democratic leadership)? She is superb. Maybe because she could do it and do it well. Did a critical reflection with Mona afterwards – was very positive... The influence of Cxxxxx’s negative behaviour ignored by her pals. She stopped eventually. (RJ8-21Nov2012)

Changes in my practice led to pupils being able to identify and recognise their weaknesses and especially their strengths in learning in PE lessons:

I think it’s helping some of them realise... things like ‘I’m good at that’ because she feels like she’s not so good at many things, she’s not, she’s done great work. (Mona SC-ST)

The vast majority of pupils wrote that they enjoyed PE through PRT. They also acknowledged that they took responsibility and participated well. However, pupils did not always make the connection that learning was enjoyable. Leah felt that they might not make this connection: “...well I think a lot of them are just academically weak and just too young to really understand that” (Leah SC-ST).

Many pupils understood that their behaviour in class influenced others: “Because if I’m bold I’ll influence others to be” (PRT3-V2). During my lessons, I sought to make pupils aware of their behaviour and their responsibilities toward others and their own learning. In time, pupils made conscious decisions about their behaviour, but they needed to be
allowed the time to think about and make good decisions. A support colleague in my PE
lessons observed:

> They were making the good decisions themselves... but by allowing them the time, oh
> this is not that boring, I'll join back in, they make that good decision themselves.
> Through what you kinda did with them generally in the year, they did really begin to
> think about how their behaviour affects them and other people in the class a lot more...
> and all that goes with (PRT1), you know it's brilliant. (Mona SC-ST)

My principal was initially sceptical about pupils reflecting on their behaviour and
enjoyment. She wondered “is this going to be half the class gone now with them talking
as opposed to doing?” (Freda SC-P). Her view changed as she observed changes in
pupils herself and commented:

> So I think very definitely that it’s having a positive effect, just getting them to look at
> what they’re doing. (Freda SC-P)

She then suggested we use it in the whole school but was realistic about its impact:

> ...and it wouldn’t make them marvellous pupils overnight because they will still be the
> kids. But it will improve them in school, definitely. (Freda SC-P)

Freda’s understanding about behaviour during lessons changed and she began to view it
as a ‘partnership’ between the teacher and the class, but not automatically transferable
to all class contexts:

> ...if their behaviour is improving in one place, it, like, it mightn’t improve to exactly the
> same extent elsewhere because behaviour is relative to the teacher who is in the room
> unfortunately as well, like, you know, we all, we trigger different behaviours. (Freda
> SC-P)

I began to realise that the pupils were behaving more positively for me than for other
teachers:

> June came into class and asked ‘how come they work so hard and quietly for you?’ (I
didn’t even notice this). I asked the class ‘do you?’ they said they did, but they liked to
act up for that teacher. (RJ8-19Sept2012)

I came to appreciate that planning for good behaviour was a partnership with teacher
and pupils and it took time, but yielded positive outcomes. The principal saw this also
as she noted:
There’s no question of that for any child, no matter what their level of ability is, that once they’re behaving properly, their learning improves. (Freda USG-P)

Pupil reflections are consequence-free. There is no praise for good reflections, or punishment for poor ones. There is praise for good behaviour and improvement, and the school code-of-behaviour is implemented for misbehaviour. The teachers noted improvements with pupils engaging with learning and becoming more reflective:

They don’t think about, oh, am I behaving well or am I not? They just, that’s the way they are and I think that coming in after class and doing the smiley face and evaluating themselves is making them look at... making them be reflective. (Mona SC-ST)

However, not all teachers were convinced of the value of the reflection in helping them understand their learning:

I think some of it is just because they are so young. They go outside, they are excited. They are just in the moment, they are not thinking about results or reports or you know, in other classes, they don’t have to do anything like this, any kind of self-assessment ...but because it’s done every single time... They would see it as important, but they don’t really worry about it. They would do it when they have to do it. And they enjoy doing it, and then they are surprised. But I think then they forget again. (Leah SC-ST)

Pupils, however, did notice the changed nature of my understanding and the resulting change in my practice. They understood my efforts to respect them in class and give them a greater voice:

HM (pupil) said after class – “isn’t it brilliant when we work hard together, it’s so good in PE”. That made my day. Am I changing attitudes? ...I need to keep at it – maybe I am making a difference. (RJ8-27Sept2012)

This comment by a pupil was an articulation of three changes: the value of team-work in lessons; the joy of doing PE; and pupil awareness of the lesson objective. This acknowledgement by a pupil was important to me, further motivated me that I might be making some small difference to them. I now take such a comment seriously and acknowledge to myself an important positive in my practice. It is important to link their positive reflections with my beliefs in my own practice.

Although a sizeable minority of the class did not associate learning with enjoyment, the majority of them did see the connections between learning, good behaviour and enjoyment in PE (PRT2, PRT3) provided it is addressed by the teacher systematically and regularly. The principal and I both agreed that this connection of learning and
behaviour infiltrated pupils’ tacit reflections on education and their reasons for attending school in the first place as noted by Freda:

> They have thought about it and they will say, “Well, what am I here for?” Subconsciously I think it’s in their heads, “I am here to learn and this person is only here to teach me.” So there is an effect ...and that’s important because, like, you know, that’s 90% of what we’re doing in school anyway... you know, they do the learning, but a lot of it is, we’re role modelling good behaviours. (Freda SC-P)

My changing understanding of my role as teacher and reflective practitioner meant that I was making a difference. Children learn from teachers in multifaceted ways that include not only pedagogy, or the content a teacher prioritises, or how and what she evaluates of pupil learning in physical education. Pupils also learn from the ‘lived expression’ of the teacher’s beliefs through her daily practices. Teachers ‘model’ their beliefs through the expressions of their daily practices. My understanding of having pupils at the centre of my practice changed. This comprehension was originally about offering choices to pupils, but it involved pupils having to mould themselves to my understanding of the curriculum. In other words, my practice was the opposite of what I believed it to be.

The aim of my PE programme was about encouraging pupils to be active, enjoy activity, learn about and through activity, and have a positive attitude for lifelong engagement in physical activity. This was my belief, but I also understood I was not doing that. Through engagement with the USG this changed. Through discussion with the USG, my deeply held concerns about the realities of my practice (poor pupil participation) were articulated for the first time. I started to prioritise my concerns and try to figure out a way of changing that. I thought that perhaps engaging in some kind of research on my practice might help (and the problem of where to begin), so I first looked at footwear (Clonan 2010). I began to understand that I was the gatekeeper to pupil participation and my programme was about me, not my pupils. Poor pupil participation in PE was a symptom of the problem (poor pupil engagement with PE), not the cause of the problem. This was also a step in linking theory to (my) practice, of creating a pupil centred, meaningful PE programme.

Changes in practices, understandings and beliefs began to deepen my insight in what it was to be a teacher, member of a CoP, and reflective practitioner. In time, my classroom
became a CoP: a shared domain of interest (our PE lessons); the community was the class engaging in joint, shared activities in pursuing tasks, building relationships in order for us to learn from each other; a shared repertoire, a practice together, building up experiences and stories of success and failure, developing resources such as identifying personal strengths and what that can contribute to the community and undertaking projects (such as the ‘Living-For-Sports’ Curriculum Initiative). Arising from these changes, engagement with PE lessons changed and participation improved. As my practices, understandings and beliefs of how to learn and teach changed, my pupils’ experiences did too. Their understanding of their role in their own learning changed. In other words, in the same way as I understood how the USG helped me to realise that I teach children through PE, I came to understand how pupils learn to learn through their teachers. In summary, the evidence suggested that my classroom practice became more pupil-centred.

6.3. **HOW DID MY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL CULTURE CHANGE?**

My professional practice in school with peers, parents and the principal changed and the nature of these changes are explored in this section. The evidence is based on analysis of interviews with school colleagues (principal, observing and non-observing teaching colleagues and SNA) and my reflection journals. While opportunities to engage with peers were not a result of USG membership, the changes in my practice were such as implementing USG projects (for example the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’) with school personnel. I also changed the manner and the focus of those professional interactions with colleagues which was a manifestation of the increased confidence, knowledge, changed pedagogies, and insights from engaging professionally with peers in the USG group.

Two themes reflect the nature of the changes of my professional engagement in school: First, was the role of classroom observation in my learning as a teacher and the changes that resulted from that activity. Second, was the shift in my professional interactions in school including mentoring peers, engagement with parents and the principal. These changes allowed me to see how they saw my teaching, and how I learned from that to inform my planning, pedagogy and assessment practices as well as my role in school.
6.3.1. **Theme One: The Role of Observation in my Learning**

In September 2012, I was scheduled with a support teacher in my classroom to assist me in the management of my class of over 30 pupils. The rationale was to help with discipline issues and learning support for pupils. When working well, this had many benefits – I benefitted from having the opportunity for peer appraisal from the observations of my lessons, some support teachers benefitted by learning from my practices, and the pupils benefitted in their PE lessons from the extra support. It forced me to articulate my needs, insights and practice as a teacher more precisely to ask for support or support others.

The role of support teacher was new and not clearly defined in our school, and teachers needed to negotiate with each other how this was to be done. Three colleagues supported my PE practice (observed it directly) where I taught class cohorts of over 30 pupils: Mona (SC-ST) and Ró (SC-SNA) supported me with ‘V’ class; and Leah supported me for 40 minutes (of an 80 minute lesson) with ‘M’ class. Anna (SC-T) was not in any of my classes but taught the class cohorts another subject. None were PE specialists. Ró supported a specific pupil with assessed SEN. She also integrated with the remainder of the class when the pupil was engaging independently in the class. During and after these lessons, I asked for advice and feedback from the SNA and the teacher-colleagues informally. They also performed certain tasks for me as I taught, such as noting the behaviour or work of specific pupils or groups, and sharing them with me. They acted as extra ‘eyes’ in my classroom.

Peer appraisal allowed me to ‘see’ my practice through their eyes:

> The [pupil] teams work very well... They know exactly what jobs they are doing... And it was very organised and they were taking their own scores and timing themselves and so I thought that was good, it was good teamwork... a lot of them said that they are surprised that they are so good at sports... They think about it a lot. (Leah SC-ST)

Sometimes getting support from colleagues required the ability to articulate precisely one’s needs and how support could be made. This meant a delicate balance of explaining what was needed and commitment from the colleague. This was not always achieved as the role (and responsibilities) of support teachers were ambiguous:
My support teacher simply stood inside the doorway out of the wind and didn’t come out to help. I went over to her but I need to be more proactive to get her to help me do what I want. (RJ8-2Oct2012)

Critical conversations after lessons required structure and a ‘buy-in’ from colleagues. Some were not helpful- “Nola said ‘very good’. I want more than that” (RJ7-13Sept2012). Another challenge was having different support personnel for one out of a double lesson, leading to a lack of continuity and perhaps reducing lesson quality:

I have to explain everything to everyone as they come in – this makes support disjointed and might mean reflections are also disjointed and fractured the effect of my practice and student learning and behaviour. (RJ9-18Feb2013)

Support colleagues benefitted from what pupils learned in PE, in their lessons. Pupils took their learning from PE into other areas for other teachers:

I think the way they were working away in their teams... Like when we did that bake-sale... It was really spur-of-the-moment... And I was thinking, ‘Oh my God, this is going to be a nightmare’ ...They just got on with it. They just all worked together... You know, it gave them something that they could excel at, and for a lot of them they don’t excel at a lot of things in school. (Mona SC-ST)

Colleagues’ ideas of PE were changed through observation (and how holistic my programme was), and I got insights into their classrooms – how they felt pressurised to complete their ‘packed’ curriculum. This made me realise the degree of autonomy I had over the curriculum without having a terminal exam:

...their PE class is far more than a PE class, from what I would have thought of traditionally as a PE class. There’s far more life learning going on, and it’s great because in a lot of classes you don’t get that because you’re trying to squeeze in a curriculum... And you don’t get the time to spend five minutes talking to them, ...or how they deal things or taking responsibility for things, really in a lot of classrooms there isn’t that opportunity. It’s fantastic. I’m gonna (ask) can I be in again next year. Definitely. (Mona SC-ST)

Colleagues saw the pupils from a different perspective and saw their other strengths. PE allowed them to be ‘actively good’ and the tutor of ‘V’ class saw the advantage in this:

I just like to see them in this other side to them. This non academic class, a chance for them to see their other skills, to see Cxxx being a leader and seeing Lxxy really encouraging and Cxxxxxxa saying you know, come on in and try it. And you know it gives me a chance to see this lovely side... And in other classes they are far more sitting down and either they’re paying attention or they’re not and... they’re really good in that class and ...that’s more passive goodness... whereas this allows them to actually show off other skills. (Mona SC-ST)
Support teachers got ideas on how colleagues dealt with issues or used different pedagogies, or how differently the pupils behave. This helped them to ‘see’ their own practice. Consequently, I realised that I had some good ideas:

...it gave me really great things I could work with them and I could think that was brilliant the way you did that. (Mona SC-ST)

The support led to more positive lessons and helped me to see the positives in my practice (I was not always aware of these, as they are so tacit) as well as having support with the negative aspects of poor behaviour and not being able to ‘see’ everything going on. My principal heard conversations about my practice and noticed that my understanding of PE and learning had changed and pupils were allowed greater possibilities for participation:

...you have expanded the definition of what happens in the class... there are note-takers, there are, you know, whistleblowers... there are different roles... there’s other leadership things that they can do or team-playing things they can do without it being sporting, so you don’t have to love sport to be doing a sport-related activity. (Freda USG-P)

I also had better ability to help pupils with SEN by being able to have improved engagement with them through their SNA. Ró (SC-SNA) provided support for a pupil and by extension, supported the teacher to help meet the pupil’s needs. Her perspectives on how the PE programme influenced her pupil provided me with invaluable information on how to have greater inclusion and differentiation in my teaching to meet her needs. This helped all three of us to fulfil our roles well. Ró explained that this relationship led to improved behaviour and learning:

...because she felt comfortable within the class. She felt, I think the fact that you were giving her responsibility that not a lot of people would have chosen her. I think she has taken a lot of that on board, you know, that she was kind of encouraged more so ....within the PE class to be the team leader. While in other subjects, she wouldn’t be the one student that you would really pick to be a team leader or to be a role model. And she just shone from it... and I think her confidence just grew. (Ró SC-SNA)

It also gave Ró something to remind her pupil of her strengths and the positive feelings that gave her in order to encourage and motivate her and allow her to ‘see’ herself in a balanced light:

...you can kind of reflect on that day and say, “...remember how well you felt that day?” You know, kind of bottle that feeling up, and you can do that every single day, whether
it’s a PE class or not. ...I think that was a great learning curve for her. (Ró SC-SNA)

Ró also used pupil reflection patterns established in PE lessons using the PRT to help plan, organize and motivate pupils with SEN over the whole school day. This helped the pupil and the SNA:

...throughout their nine subjects for each day, and they have to score themselves on their behaviour and their responsibility for learning in each class. And it has been fantastic. It has made my job easier... we will discuss what marks they have got, and whether they can improve in the next class or not. And definitely, which has maybe surprised me a little, is that they are very honest in their markings. They don't fool themselves... it’s a great tool for me to say, “Right, let’s try and up the score in the next class”. (Ró SC-SNA)

It also helped the pupils to see their good behaviour and have a record of that, and to try and continue with it:

I think with my particular student, it has definitely improved her behaviour and classroom management... they could have a run of three or four classes and they have been excellent... because when they’re reflecting on their behaviour, it benefits them a huge deal. (Ró SC-SNA)

The giving and receiving of support, especially of SNA’s (whose role may be overlooked in schools), is a reciprocal relationship: “Co-incidence today – M and S (SNA’s) said I gave them HUGE support and therefore they gave me huge support” (RJ7-13Dec2011).

6.3.2. Theme Two: Interactions as a Professional in School

This theme explores my professional interactions in school with peers, parents and the principal. I got the opportunity to mentor colleagues formally and informally. Observing teacher practices was another catalyst to changes in my practice, my role in school and my understanding of my practice.

I was able to give support to school colleagues, formally (mentoring students on placement) and informally (helping colleagues who were doing post-graduate studies). Conversations in school about my changed practice through changed pedagogies and my action research cycles (using PRT) changed my role among my school colleagues. Some teaching colleagues were completing action research projects and essays for
postgraduate courses. I volunteered to support them (for example, Ber, a colleague) as I wrote in this diary entry:

Was at Ber’s CoP meeting... and I helped her... but I also see myself trying to... evaluate critically what she’s doing. I felt right at home though, in discussing practice and pedagogy. (RJ8-15Jan2014)

School colleagues asked to discuss their ‘action-research’ projects informally with me. Being perceived as a ‘go to’ person for such projects, along with my action-research with my pupils led me to realise

I am a ‘research helper’ in the school. This was an ordinary day with extraordinary things happening as run-of-the-mill. Is this part of the totality of the role of the reflective practitioner? ...I am reflective and being reflexive but so also are my pupils and school colleagues. (RJ8-9Jan2014)

These actions and conversations were a ‘natural’ extension of the types of conversations we had in the USG. My honesty and preparedness to admit strengths and challenges in my practice and how I went about trying to overcome them acted as a catalyst to similar conversations in my school with colleagues. In our conversations, we shared and learned from each other and I valued them. My understanding of our capacity to support our CPD, changed:

Having the opportunity to engage with a colleague who understood the action-research process and the purpose of my project allowed the research to become more meaningful and the outcomes more fruitful. (Ber RJ8-9Jan2014)

Coincidentally, having a PE pre-service student (PST) on placement gave me the opportunity to have my first conversations with another PE professional in my school context in 28 years. Although my learning around mentoring is beyond the scope of this thesis, I had to articulate specific details (many had been tacit) about my programme. At times students were observing my practice, and I began to see what they saw in my practice:

How do I get to look at this from outside as well as inside? How do I get to know what I look like (like happened in PE class with the observers from HEI – Lxxa (a pupil with SEN) and the shot-putt competition – and see what they see and therefore see my practice. (RJ1-18Apr2011)

Reflecting on practice and articulating needs is challenging, but is helped when you can ‘see’ your practice.
My approach to parent-teacher meetings (consultations) has changed fundamentally. Pupils attend parent-teacher consultations with their parents. They use PRT1 and talk about their learning, experiences and feelings towards PE, based on the reflections they have systematically built. Now, I rarely say much. This has proven to be very powerful for parent, pupil and teacher. What is striking is that the pupils refer to their PE reflections for their ‘report’: they are usually accurate; they speak about strengths; and areas for improvement that they identify themselves; confidently, and they do this fluently; with appropriate language. They generally do this with pride, and their parents are usually very clear about their child’s progress in PE and understanding of their progress in PE. I offer clarifications or suggestions to parents during these dialogues where necessary. The exchange of information is direct, targeted on specific curricular strands, and based on evidence. This is one of the most significant manifestations of change in my practice arising from membership of the USG, where pupils can give such a clear evaluation of their progress. I see my role as PE teacher changed to that of a facilitator of pupil learning.

Before the USG I felt stressed and challenged in my practice and wondered if there was a solution to having a better professional life with my pupils:

> I’m sure there’s an obvious solution, or a ‘thing’ I could be doing to make this a better experience for all of us in this place. Something I just can’t see. Something they would all love. Am I doing the right thing? Who can I talk to (no one)? (Vignette 1)

I felt isolated, stressed and frustrated that I couldn’t help myself to improve the situation. My solution lay in removing the ‘problem’. This was noticed by my principal, who was also frustrated about my response to ‘troublesome’ pupils:

> ...you seemed to end up in, not rows, but just that, you know, you took certain ones [pupils] and others were just thrown out. (Freda USG-P)

Some pupils did not want to participate in class either, and at times involved their parents as the principal reminded me:

> ... getting their mothers to write them a note... that was normal for years... Because I remember fighting with kids and I was saying, “But that’s nothing to do with whether you can take part in PE or not.” And you know, you might as well beat your head against the wall. (Freda USG-P)
I was focussed on the immediate concerns of my practice and, although I knew it had some positives, I struggled. It was stressful for all concerned with no solution in sight. The USG provided me with the opportunity to ‘vent’ my frustrations and ask how they overcome specific problems (such as pupil misbehaviour and non-participation). I adapted the TPSR model to meet the needs of pupils and myself in school. TPSR gave us a language to enable pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and effort during lessons. Gradually changes were noticed in my practice and my confidence began to grow. My principal noticed the profound changes in my relationships with the pupils:

One, you’re managing them really well, but two, they’re actually not asking to leave the class. They’re not seeking permission to get out of PE anymore, and they haven’t been for the past number of years... I have had no notes and no parents ringing up, “Oh, Mary-Ann doesn’t want to do PE today”... It doesn’t happen. (Freda USG-P)

Pupils were not seeking to leave lessons or involving their parents to facilitate this. I was not removing them either nor did I perceive these pupils as a ‘problem’. My understanding of what it meant to participate in my PE lessons as observed by my principal had changed:

...even if they’re not feeling 100%... there’s going to be another role in there for them, and it’s important. So I think they definitely have changed their perspective on it, definitely, for the better. (Freda USG-P)

These changes reduced the stress I felt during lessons. Pupil participation in lessons improved not only from the perspective of participation and behaviour, but also enjoyment. I became more innovative, resilient, ‘braver’ and willing to try out new things such as the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’. The significant change in my practice was that it became more pupil-centred through learning new pedagogies and discussing practice with my USG colleagues. Prior to this, I had not got the conceptual tools, knowledge or language to identify pupil needs:

The focus of my practice as a teacher has changed over the past number of years. Through the USG I realise many things including that I must take my context and theirs into the learning situation and take them as they are. I must adapt the programme to meet their needs and not vice versa. The identification of those needs by me is maturing (and improving, I hope) as my understanding of needs other than content knowledge of the students deepens. (RJ1-13Jan2011)

Pupils continue to display very challenging behaviour, but my response to these challenges has changed:
I ask the SNA to watch out for her student when she shows leadership within her group... One pupil comes over to me and says she is refusing to do orienteering today. I tell her to join her team and see what she can do to help it. She refuses, and goes to sit down. I remind her quickly about our levels of responsibility and she sits, but does not disrupt the class. After the first relay, she forgets herself and joins her group, taking over the ‘recording’ job. I see her laughing... (in) the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative, they will be ‘teaching’ adventure activities and team challenges in their ‘old’ primary schools later in the year (God help us!). They are still quite disruptive at times, but I can see chinks of light. Later on that evening I will have my CPD ‘fix’ with my CoP, the Urban Schools group. We will be doing a workshop led by one of our newer younger members using the ipad and iphone in PE class. (Vignette 2)

It is important to note that some of the changes were structural such as the inclusion of SNAs, collegial support in class, and the availability of meaningful CPD was out of my control. Both contribute to the changes in my practice, but quality CPD through the USG has given me the capacity to include the support meaningfully in my lessons rather than viewing them as intrusions to my teaching space. I also began to be more reflective and aware of my role in the development of lifelong attitudes to PE and PA, and taking a broader view of the PE teacher’s professional role. I question how much of a difference we as teachers really make to pupils:

I was chuffed the seniors wanted the sports day. Is there an improvement in ATTITUDE to PE? (one swallow doesn’t make a summer). Has this been as a result of changes in my PE programme, adapted work, support from USG and changes in me and my attitude? Has it? Or is it the natural wavelength pattern of career over time?...Can a teacher’s personal motivation ...and a solo teacher really, really influence pupil participation (perhaps lifelong) in PA? This is very scary – as the lifelong over-the-country lack of PD opportunities may have had a profoundly negative impact on the PE/PA of the nation – or is this too big and too foolish to say? (RJ7-22Oct2011)

My professional development with the USG was not a continuing smooth progression and there were many setbacks:

The dread. The dread. The dread. The knife in the belly again. The thoughts of being back in school, teaching PE again. The weather is crap, they’re giddy and I haven’t the mental resources to be on top always. The dance ‘gangnam-style’ was disastrous. (RJ8-10Jan2013)

I also noticed an increasing degree of criticality and inclusion in my practice by including more members of the community from outside the classroom –such as parents, pupils from the primary school, pupils from senior classes mentoring junior pupils, engaging with senior citizens - in my PE lessons. And despite having quality CPD through the USG, there was both confusion and confidence and progression and
stagnation in equal proportions in my practice but my response to setbacks were more short-lived:

Reached a lull in my action research project – and frankly not knowing where to go next. As claim to social justice and my claim that to get to attitudes, to get to parents (children who are inactive have parents who are inactive). SO have some PE classes with parents. Improve their attitude to PA and see how it goes and perhaps improve a social justice agenda. (RJ7-18Dec2011)

6.4. HOW DID MY UNDERSTANDINGS AND BELIEFS CHANGE?

I saw enormous changes in my school practices (with parents, pupils, peers and principal, and through action-research) and my self-confidence as a professional. The subsequent change in my role (and identity) as colleague and mentor (in the USG and school) came from membership of the USG that offered a space to vent, build capacity and share. There were changes to my understanding of my role as a professional and my sense of how my priorities for teaching and teaching PE changed over time. This is presented as a series of milestones to generate insight into how my understandings about teaching, young people and what is important to achieve in PE changed. The milestones give context into what happened to make me take notice, a rationale as to why the issue became important to me, the actions I took to address it and the learning I took from it. Making research presentations at conferences contributed to my changed understandings. They helped create the conditions to accelerate the development and articulation of my thinking as I engaged with the thinking of others. Preparation for and interactions at these were important media by which I came to know and understand these changes.

6.4.1. Milestone 1- My PE Policy Excluded Pupil Participation in PE

Context

I had removed pupils from PE lessons who were not dressed appropriately in line with school code-of-discipline policy (non-participators tended to misbehave in the PE lesson). Consequently many were not participating regularly in PE. Health and safety considerations were my grounds for pupil exclusion. Participating pupils had better PE lessons. My principal’s attitude to pupil misbehaviour challenged me:
I often say it’s a kid’s job not to behave nearly, ...it’s a kid’s job to break the rules, ...and it’s up to us to try and keep them within the rules. (Freda USG-P)

With large classes, being sole practitioner, an unsuitable indoor (small) space, behaviourally challenged and (unsurprisingly) unmotivated pupils, inadequate support to manage them, I was very stressed and frustrated and unable to see a way to improve this situation. I dreaded class often. My principal felt frustrated about my actions and despite acknowledging poor facilities, she did not consider it to be a significant problem:

I would have sympathy for you at one level, but I would be so annoyed on another level, because you’re throwing the problem out ... And again, I would appreciate the lack of facilities ... But ... I’m not saying it was a huge burden at all by any manner or means. But I did see ... that ... you took certain ones and others were just thrown out. (Freda USG-P)

**Rationale**

A conversation with my USG colleague (Daisy) spurred me to think about my PE priorities. She focused on the lessons, not the clothing, and it removed that unnecessary stress. I identified a need for change.

**Action**

I began to gather evidence on my practice and explore how I might solve the problem of pupils’ non-participation in PE and PE clothing. I photographed pupils’ PE footwear for one week, and questioned the links between their clothing and participation rates. I hoped to benefit from others’ wisdom at PEPAYS to help overcome my problem. I made a poster presentation at the Jun 2010 PEPAYS conference (Clonan 2010 (Appendix 5)) entitled ‘PE uniform policy can exclude students from participating in PE’.

**Learning**

An opportunity to discuss this issue with PE professionals at the conference allowed me to explore new ideas. Their response was more discriminatory than my exclusionary stance, saying ‘it depends’ on the context. It changed my view about my teaching. I realised I was a gatekeeper to pupils’ levels of participation. It helped me to realise I needed to change despite fear of litigation through pupil participation in inappropriate
clothing. I also articulated my PE priorities and found evidence contrary to my espoused values of promoting PE participation. I decided to allow pupils to participate without PE uniform as long as they were willing to take part in the lesson. The problem of misbehaving non-participators remained unresolved.

6.4.2. Milestone 2 - “I Teach Children Through PE”

Context

I shared publicly for the first time my experiences of isolation and negativity before being involved with the USG. I co-presented with colleagues at a professional conference. The preparation forced me to articulate some of the changes taking place in my practice.

Rationale

I was asked about the single most important change I had experienced as a result of USG membership.

Action

Not having considered this before, I responded that I had changed from trying to mould my pupils to meet curriculum requirements, to moulding the curriculum to meet their needs.

Learning

My response “I realise I don’t teach PE, I teach children through PE” (RJ1-17Apr 2011) was a reflection that I first made explicit in the discussion. It was a pivotal moment in my realisation of how my engagement with the USG was helping to change my classroom practice from a subject centred to pupil centred approach and my teaching priority.

6.4.3. Milestone 3 – Using Pupils’ Reflections in PE Lessons

Context

Three events preceded my understanding of what a pupil-centred practice meant. First, I observed Alice collaborating with her students as “a partner in learning with her
students” (RJ1-17Apr2011). I saw a reflective practitioner whose “research, practice and reflections were all ‘seamless’ – no barriers. They were not separate” (RJ1-30Apr2011). This helped me to see the role of research in a professional’s practice.

Second, I had my first ever conversations about PE with another PE professional in my school context (a PST) in 28 years. The challenge was to make explicit the adaptations I made, reflecting on, evaluating and articulating aspects of my practice with another person. Third, the USG had been introduced to two pedagogical models – TPSR (Hellison 1995) and Sport Education (Siedentop 1983) in 2009/2010.

**Rationale**

I was realising how much I had prevented pupils from participating in PE not just from the perspective of clothing, but how and why they engage in PE lessons. These gave me the means to try and overcome the problems of pupil misbehaviour and non-engagement during PE lessons, with or without appropriate clothing.

**Action**

I designed a Pupil Reflective Tool, PRT1 (Figure 6.1) that was included in each pupil’s school journal. This also reflected the change to my practice of using TPSR as a pedagogical model in my lessons. I gathered the data from PRT1 at year-end from my pupils, and found that pupil participation had increased (Clonan 2011). I also found that the majority of my pupils enjoyed PE (Figure 6.2).

![Pupil Enjoyment of PE Classes](image)

**Fig 6.2. Pupil Enjoyment in PE**

I concluded that pupils became aware that they enjoyed PE as they added up their totals for my records, lessons were less adversarial, and that my scores and pupil scores
concurred in most cases. I could say with confidence that my pupils enjoyed PE and even they could not dispute that, as it was a self-report. I shared my research findings with a poster presentation entitled “No you cannot do PE today” at an international conference (AIESEP) in June 2011 (Clonan 2011 (Appendix 5)).

Learning

I had not anticipated the power of having this evidence – either for myself, for evaluation of my programme, for parents or pupils themselves. It encouraged pupils to think about their participation and behaviour and we could monitor their improvement. My practice was focussing on behaviour and the changes needed for pupils to think about how they could change. I reflected that it had potential for discussions with parents and might influence pupil attitudes (RJ1-1Jun 2011). My understanding of scholarship and the importance of evidence for understanding my practice was changing. I realised that “scholarship is a frame of mind, not a thing you write” (RJ1-15Aug2011).

My priorities and understanding of the role of reflection in my learning (as well as my pupils) were changing. I wondered about the role of reflection in improving practice and I questioned “how do we know reflection (especially of experienced teachers) improves your teaching?” (RJ2-22Oct2011). I realised that my evaluation of pupil learning was limited because I focussed on skills based learning (RJ2-2Jan2012). My practice and understanding of my practice was changing as I made explicit ‘my way’ of understanding them and re-prioritised what I considered important. I began to be more aware of whose ‘voice’ influenced my practice and my perceptions of those influences were broadening:

I observe pupils more keenly than I did before and note how I can help the ones I can... more confidently that this has meaning and is part of their learning and education... I’m seeing one thing 4 ways: my way; my understanding of my way; the kids understanding (and perhaps their parents’) and Grace’s (the outsider researcher’s view). (RJ2-2Jan2012)

I became more aware of the importance of the pupils’ voice in my practice, and how excluding them to the degree that I had, contributed to the difficulties in my practice (such as misbehaviour and non-participation). I began to think more carefully of the real meaning of a pupil-centred practice.
6.4.4. Milestone 4 – Making learning Explicit – ‘Finding our Voices’

Context

One pupil’s participation and engagement in PE lessons was good but she rarely had her PE clothing. When I challenged about this at a parent-teacher conference, her response was “I hate PE”. Asking her to explain her PRT1 to her mother, she counted her lessons and ‘smiley-faces’ and exclaimed “I never knew I loved PE”. Both she and her mother were surprised at the evidence.

Rationale

Feedback given by me on pupil progress and learning at parent-teacher-pupil conferences was focussed on clothing, skill attainment and behaviour. Pupils had no meaningful contribution at these conferences.

Action

I designed PRT2 (Appendix 4) to generate and utilise insight from pupils on their learning, understanding and attitudes. Written by pupils, it is sent home annually with school reports. This acted as a catalyst for my learning about pupil attitudes and understanding of their participation in class. When confronted with evidence they gathered themselves (their personal, ‘consequence-free’ reflections), pupils became aware of their actual experiences in PE (mostly enjoyable). I became aware that their lived experiences seemed to make little difference to their attitude, and changed only if it became explicit by them. This proved very powerful and had two consequences for my teaching and my planning for teaching and learning. First, developing awareness of enjoyment, learning, and the effect of quality engagement on the lessons (reflexivity) now features as part of the reflection routine which is built into my lessons. Second, pupils now talk meaningfully about their progress at pupil-parent-teacher conferences using PRT1 for evidence.

Learning

This helped me reflect on my practice in a more balanced way that used the pupils’ voice on their needs. Pupils, regardless of ability, were articulating their learning, enjoyment and participation in PE based on systematic gathering of evidence. They
could identify their strengths and areas for improvement. They knew why they enjoyed PE and what behaviour contributed to a positive learning environment, how they contributed to the learning environment as well as articulated their learning challenges and needs. It gave rich information on pupils’ understandings of their PE programme. This has developed my understanding of how to include pupils’ voice in the planning of my PE programme and is further developing a more pupil-centred practice. My focus now is to change long-term negative attitudes to PE, learning and participation in physical activity of pupils.

My appreciation for evidence-based research to improve my practice was growing and my scholarship was improving. This was a significant change to my practice. I made an oral presentation at AIESEP (Clonan 2013) using similar evidence - “Yes, you can learn in PE today”. The different title reflected my growing understanding of my role in pupil learning. When asked how my engagement with research had changed my practice, I reflected it had helped me find my voice as a professional, which in turn has helped my pupils find their voice (RJ3-5Jul2013).

The key theme of this section is that ‘sharing is learning’. Sharing accelerated the learning from reflections – either pupil or teacher reflections. This resulted in change to my understanding of my pupils’ learning, their understanding of their learning, what I wanted pupils to learn and my understanding of my role in their learning. It also developed my confidence and knowledge base about teaching and learning. Sharing those understandings formally was central to rethinking my role as a teacher. It motivated me to move forward to try other initiatives, such as the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative. Each resulted in a deeper understanding and change to my practice, my identity as a PE teacher, what it meant to be a PE teacher and my vision for PE.

The next chapter draws together the findings from my work with the USG in general, the Curriculum Initiative and my school practice and discusses key themes based on what is known in the literature.
CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This research supported that of Borko et al 2000; Deglau 2005; Deglau and O'Sullivan 2006; and Parker et al 2010, who found CPD based in collaborative communities sustained change to teachers’ practice. In this case, teachers’ engagement in CPD professional practice changed and resulted in perceived changes to classroom practice. The research extends Rovegno and Dolly’s (2006) assertions that changing teaching practices requires much time, reflection, experimentation, critique and a contextual understanding of how change can be delivered in practice. The research findings also concur with Armour et al (2012) and Casey and Goodyear’s (2015) suggestions that opportunities for situated learning can encourage reflection and reflective practice and help to sustain teachers’ efforts to review and improve their practices. It provides an additional perspective on how teachers learn the language of sharing knowledge (Jacobsson 2014), and how that is an important contribution to the body of knowledge in PE (Casey 2014; Casey and Goodyear 2015). This research provides some new insights into how a collaborative community reflected, managed and sustained change and how engagement with other communities facilitated that change.

The theoretical frames informing this research are Lave and Wenger’s (1991) Social Learning Theory, reflective practitioner theory (Schön 1983) and critically reflective practitioner theory (Brookfield 1995). The latter two theories provide a critical lens through which teachers’ professional practices, characteristically messy, confusing and challenging, can be examined. They offer a teachers’ lens on the problems of practice and how these are articulated. The former theory presents the concepts of communities of practice and a landscape of practice (LoP) which consists of a “complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between them” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015 p.13). This research is a story of change within a group and across their landscapes of practice. Their learning trajectory began with peripheral participation in a community to active engagement within the national and international context of the physical education profession (as in their Landscapes of Practice). The
implications of examining the USG as a CoP that is part of the PE LoP (LoPE) allowed for a better understanding of the roles and influences that contributed to the learning of the USG members on their journey through the living landscapes of their professional practice. Put another way, it could be seen how a CoP navigated the PE profession’s ‘body of knowledge’ which “contributed to the continued vitality, application and evolution of the practice” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015 p.13).

‘Community of Practice’ theory, ‘Landscape of practice’ theory (ibid) provide an interpretive framework for this research.

This chapter discusses the findings regarding the changes in USG through the concept of the LoP and how the USG, the Sky sub-group, and I changed over the course of the study as members of the CoP. There is inevitable overlap between these themes as they are closely related. This is followed by recommendations, conclusions including the limitations of the research, and what this research adds to the literature.

7.2. DISCUSSION

There are four key aspects that provide some detail on what it means to know and be competent as a member of a CoP: Knowing in practice (the regimes of competence of the CoP); A body of knowledge as a landscape of practice (the political, local and diverse nature of practice and the boundaries of practice); Knowledgeability in a landscape of practice (learning as a journey through the landscape of identification and dis-identification with related communities); and knowledgeability in a nexus of identification (accountability and expressibility of identification).

7.2.1. Knowing in Practice and the Regimes of Competence of the CoP

This first theme examines accountability and expressibility in a CoP. It discusses the learning within the USG as a CoP. It examines the processes of participation in this social system. It is followed by an examination of changes to pupil learning.

To be respected as a professional CoP, there must be confidence that it provides the service that is expected of it. In ‘active phase’ (Wenger 1998), the USG had an engagement with activities, creating resources and a commitment to task with a shared history of participation. Concurring with the research of Deglau (2005) and Deglau and
O’Sullivan (2006), the CoP supported teachers to change their classroom practices (in this case reported changes), through collaboration (Armour and Yelling 2004) in urban schools (Ward and O’Sullivan 2006). USG-teachers perceived their competency within their classroom was increased with alignment of their classroom practices with the aims and goals of their PE programme. Contrary to Sugrue (2011) and Armour (2010), this CPD was adequate to help meet the teachers’ needs.

Competent engagement in the USG entailed USG-teachers’ perceiving their classroom practices to be a legitimate provider of service to their pupils – they felt they were serving their pupils better. They established competence by addressing the opportunities and challenges of teaching PE in DEIS contexts. Their participation in the USG evolved to self-regulation and established and delivered on their own learning/support priorities.

Accountability in the USG

This research expands on the conceptualisation of an ‘authentic’ self-led community (Parker et al 2013). The power to define competence resided with the community and not by others outside it. The USG was a CoP that accomplished its objectives with issues identified and resolved by the group on a continuous basis. The priorities for meetings did not always suit all members at all times. Some USG-teachers felt left out if the dominant item on the agenda was not part of their school practice and it required a delicate balance of leadership (not always reached). This created some marginalisation and silencing within the USG. This tension was ever-present and modulated by efforts in self-monitoring, sharing leadership and sticking to an agenda. The competency of facilitation and leadership within the group was a work-in-progress. Further research may yield deeper understanding on this phenomenon.

USG-teachers’ capacities developed in multiple ways that were important to them and they held themselves accountable to share, lead and mentor. It could be seen that competent engagement within the USG evolved and extended from their local school practices to reshaping their PE programmes to align with national learning outcomes for PE while remaining faithful to their students. This resulted in an improvement in the trustworthiness and respect that USG-teachers felt towards their practice locally and within their landscape of practice.
Commitment to trust and candour is a ‘pillar’ of the discipline of CoPs (Wenger 2009). USG-teachers shared challenges (without feeling incompetent) and offered solutions to challenges like the findings of Deglau and O’Sullivan (2006). This was a feature of USG interactions, where “trust becomes a property of the social learning space not merely of individuals towards each other” (Wenger 2009 p.6). Active participants in the USG knew each other’s strengths, challenges, and school contexts with ‘positive peer-pressure’ exerted to help progression. The USG was not always a benign community. When USG-teachers perceived a threat to their practices, understandings or beliefs, they actively resisted would-be participants from engaging with the community, despite what those people may have to offer. This could be because they felt their support would be taken for granted, or the teachers had differing school backgrounds/cultures. Another perspective could also be that they were not confident enough to include participants whom they did not know, or if they did, that they did not trust (made them feel inadequate). With increased confidence, they invited more people to the community, but have always been somewhat protective of their community and classroom values. This ‘vetting’ of access to the community could be seen to support the conservative nature of CoPs to reproduce what it values and is uncritical (Hughes 2007).

Through experience of working as a CoP, USG-teachers became more discerning and efficient in their activities. They culled irrelevant resources after the initial ‘frenzy’ of gathering and sharing. Efforts to filter the cull by inclusion of newer and older members resulted in repeating some of the workshops. This seems to address what Parker et al (2010) remarked was a challenge for CoPs to provide positive meaningful long-term engagement in CPD for teachers and their pupils. It could be seen as representative of their changing understanding of competent engagement.

Technology made multiple contributions to the USG. First, it allowed members with specific skills to articulate their competency within the CoP and mediated their learning trajectory from peripheral to active participation (such as NQTs). Roles were nuanced and multifaceted as suggested by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015a) and no single person had all the expertise. Second, as members shared examples of their classroom practices, it offered evidence of pupil learning and the results of teachers’ initiatives. Third, technology also acted as a barrier to full participation (such as difficulties with ‘Drop-box’, lack of equipment) with stories of success and failure
(Wenger-Trayner 2015) of technology and stories of success and failure through technology. It acted as both an enabler and inhibitor to competent CoP participation and helped to broker legitimate peripheral participation with the research community through sharing via publications and presentations at conferences.

Expressibility in the USG

To be fully realized, Knowledgeability in a landscape of practice requires that accountability in one location to be expressible in another. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.25)

This means that competent engagement in the USG needed to become knowledgeability through the expressibility of those competences elsewhere. Expressibility of practice within the USG was seen through their deliberate efforts at democratic processes for sharing tasks and problem solving, characterised by a shared reflection on tasks and finding solutions. Leading workshops did four things:

1. It forced teachers to articulate their practice (‘what works’, rationalising it, structuring it on paper, creating a workshop and then sharing) in order to express their experience of it. This forced them to make their tacit understandings explicit, for negotiating a shared context of experience (concurring with Jacobsson 2014);

2. It offered them an opportunity for peer observation and to engage in dialogue on the workshop enabling others to frame and reframe their stories of practice. Robust discussion and feedback were features of this peer observation that moved beyond polite conversation (Fullan 1992). This offered increased opportunities for evaluation, reflection and feedback as a community where they articulated and discussed their personal theories of practice and to link theory to their practices and their practices to theory (Schön 1983, 1987a). This concurs with Bechtel and O’Sullivan 2006; Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; Ní Chrónin et al 2006; Opfer and Pedder 2010; Parker et al 2010; and Tannehill et al 2013. It supported them in their capacity to learn concurring with Makopolou and Armour 2011 and Tannehill et al 2013. Thus it was an epistemological community. It supports Parker et al’s (2010) warrant that well facilitated CoPs support knowledge and teacher capacity building. It also supports Hislop’s (2013) claim that such efforts improve teachers’ capacities to make change,
based on evidence. These efforts are an essential feature for improving learning and achievement (Hattie 2009);

3. It created a common ‘practice’ of the USG on which a history of engagement was being constantly built and overcoming isolation. Initial reluctance to leading workshops gave way to an expectation of leading (quality) workshops. Teachers changed their involvement in CPD (acknowledgement of their expertise and ability to make changes), their role and understanding of CPD and were learning how to lead their own learning. This may also have changed their understandings of learning;

4. They created a regime of competence of sharing and reflecting on practice which acted as a ‘workbench’ for developing the competence to broker other practices within the community more broadly in the Landscapes of Professional Practices in which these teachers operated. This represents a change in their understanding of teachers’ competence, expressed by an identity-change as leaders of CPD. This concurs with the research of Parker et al (2013) on the learning potential of an ‘authentic CoP’ and Tannehill and MacPhail (2016) on how that was manifest in teacher empowerment.

As Deglau (2005) found, collective reflection made finding solutions to problems of practice manageable and solutions could be translated to their school contexts. By being prepared to engage and to lead and share, their ability to express what they believe and what they have done, improved. Thus competences gained through USG activities resulted in an expressibility of practice from the USG to classrooms.

**Pupil engagement in PE**

One aspect of the regime of competence was in delivering on experiences that allowed pupils to learn. However, this learning was equated with pupil engagement in learning tasks, affective learning goals and was teacher self-reported. While not a focus of the USG exclusively, there was evidence that this happened in a number of ways that served to give USG-teachers a growing sense of their own competence as professionals.

This research shows positive improvements in pupil learning from teacher CPD (contrary to the research of Armour and Yelling 2004 and Ko et al 2006). USG-teachers provided opportunities for pupil engagement that included pupil goal-setting and
reflections that helped in evaluating pupils’ learning and planning for PE. Therefore teachers perceived that they provided more opportunities for learning, as well as improved pupil learning. This expands Hunuk et al’s (2012) research that showed a CoP influenced pupil learning. This research did not focus on prescribed pupil learning outcomes. It focussed on affective learning, so important for pupils of disadvantage (Milner 2012a), through quality of pupil participation and engagement during lessons, and pupils’ understanding of their role in this. They learned how they influence the quality of their learning experiences. Changes to teachers’ practices, understandings and beliefs built teachers’ capacity for making adaptations to meet a range of pupil’ needs. There was a recursive symbiosis of USG-teachers’ ability to engage competently as a CoP and the resulting changes to their classroom practices.

Within my classroom practice, changes to pupil learning meant that pupils had opportunities to experience more success. This was evidenced by a greater percentage of pupil participation and depth of participation – they engaged for longer - and with more resilience over learning modules. I stopped viewing non-participating pupils as problems. Pupils were able to engage with the language of reflection, share their reflections and had the capacity to identify their learning needs and successes. The greater autonomy for choice in PE lessons required a delicate balance between pupil agency and my authority. Pupils’ systematic reflections helped them build evidence of and recognise their learning and it gave me accurate evidence of their learning. This was a change from informal ‘ad-hoc’ use of pupil feedback, my class observations, memory and occasional records, and narrowly focussing on skill attainment. These were inadequate to ‘capture’ the changes to pupils, their engagement in PE lessons and insufficient to guide pupils in their learning. Feedback to pupils became more accurate and evidence-based and it resulted in a changed role with parents- talk about learning by pupils was based on evidence. Pupils were engaging as competent participators in their classroom CoP. PRT also allowed me to change pupil attitudes to PE to align with their experiences. Using my class as a CoP allowed me to ‘see’ my practice more clearly using their voice. These have changed my understanding of reflection and its power to change how people think. The change represented a symbiotic dialogue with practice and understanding influencing each other. These changes to my practice align with Wiliam’s (2011) ‘Embedded formative assessment’ that confers the skills to learn new
things on pupils. It used evidence of student achievement as feedback to support pupil achievement and helped to activate pupils as owners of their own learning espoused by Hattie’s (2009) ‘Visible Learning’ research. It expanded my notion (and perhaps that of some pupils’) of learning.

7.2.2. A Body of Knowledge as a Landscape of Practice

The second theme discusses how members of the USG were part of multiple communities including the USG itself. These constitute their landscapes of practice. Through developing their competence in the USG they were able to engage across them with greater competence. Examples of the work done by USG-teachers include the leading of workshops, the mentoring of each other, the engagement in research and the presenting of the work orally at PE conferences and in publication are specific examples of their competence. This section discusses the impact of competent engagement in the USG across the professional landscapes of teaching and PE teaching in particular.

Brokering boundaries

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) stated that “relationships between practices are always a matter for negotiating their boundary” (p.16) and competence in one community may be relevant (or not) or transferrable in another (the boundaries are too different to be negotiable). I suggest that the skills learned in boundary crossing activities are competences that can help individuals (and communities) further broker other communities. This is evidenced from three USG activities. Firstly, the patterns of participation and competence enabled the USG to broker the SSLFS community followed by the USG brokering SSLFS for the PE community in Ireland. Secondly, the boundary of the research community was successfully negotiated, brokered by Alice and Teresa enabling participants to write academically and meet research specific cultural requirements. This resulted in participants engaging with accredited CPD courses in universities - a successful brokering of the academic community boundaries. Thirdly, a less successful boundary brokerage was by pupils who were engaging with the ‘Living-for-Sports’ Curricular Initiative. Some exceptional pupils brokered these boundaries, for example the pupil who improved his literacy levels to, in turn, improve his overall performance in school. Many pupils (not all) were not able to bring these regimes of competence into other lessons in school. Perhaps these competences were
irrelevant in other lessons or the boundaries of participation in other class communities were too inflexible and pupils had no capacity to broker that access.

USG boundary-crossing activities were the mutual story-telling learning partnerships, especially through self-led workshops. Their reflections and learning increasingly were based on evidence from their classroom practice. Thus understanding what counted as evidence, gathering it and knowing how to use that evidence was a change in practice. These were a key feature for exploring the boundaries of USG activities and their school-based practices. They triggered reflection processes about the practices on either side of the boundaries, mediated by in-depth questioning and answering during workshops, followed by teachers trying the ideas out and returning with feedback and more questions and answers. What supported the boundary crossing was the freedom and confidence that USG-teachers felt they had to ask about any problem at any time, scheduled or unscheduled, formal and informal. These created points of focus for engaging multiple perspectives on the initiative, or new ideas. Also, as there was a shared competence within the USG, initiatives that worked in one school context could be translated. Boundary crossing was the focus for each teacher to their school practice rather than the assumption that workshops were applicable without problems. Competences developed in boundary crossing were then used to broker more boundary crossings.

My classroom became a CoP also by having support teachers and SNAs in my classroom along with mentoring PST students. This represents a distinctive contribution of my research to the literature as this has not been written about by a practitioner before. It forced me to identify and articulate what I was doing in my lessons and why, to make explicit my tacit understandings of the larger and smaller nuances of my practices. Challenging as it was, the peer observation that accompanied these collaborators in my practice helped me to see the positives and issues that needed addressing. I brokered their access to my classroom CoP to their participation in it. This in turn triggered ideas for their classroom practice. My practice also evolved to become more pupil-centred and inclusive. My changed understanding of participation was followed by my changed understanding of learning (my pupils and my own). The pattern of the literacy of knowing how to author our own learning established in the USG, was being mirrored in my classroom (unintentionally, but this evolved). It
enabled increasingly competent engagement by more pupils into my classroom practice, the PE learning community and by extension, the LoPE (such as in the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative). My classroom became an ‘authentic’ CoP (to the extent that a classroom can, bearing in mind my role as the responsible teacher).

**Entering and exiting learning spaces**

The USG was originally convened because of rejection by teachers of initial government CPD efforts for the JCPE syllabus (Tannehill and Murphy 2010, 2012). They rejected the suggested regime of competence as it was disconnected from their school contexts. They had little influence on the PE profession’s definition of competence within the Irish LoP as efforts to broker the boundaries between them were largely unsuccessful. Prior to this, USG-teachers had few opportunities for discourse on their experiences of professional competence and there was limited legitimacy placed on their understandings of competence. Their place was limited in the ‘discourse of truth’ (Foucault 1970) regarding competence as a PE professional.

There is a knowledge hierarchy among practices (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b) and these teachers felt their position was low on that hierarchy. When initially convened, they were defensive of their position and challenged the facilitators’ position on USG-teachers’ knowledge (Tannehill and Murphy 2010, 2012; Tannehill 2014). It took time before the USG-teachers recognised and legitimised their own body of knowledge (Tannehill and Murphy 2010, 2012) and accepted their claims to competence. These led to further opportunities to successfully broker greater access to the body of knowledge in the LoPE, for example: engaging their pupils with the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative; and support agencies (teacher centres, PDST, PEAI). Through the latter, USG-teachers rendered the boundary to the Sky sports project flexible enough for other PE teachers to participate. Their position within the LoPE facilitated greater access to the boundaries of greater numbers of communities.

Social artists (like Alice and Mary) “...create social spaces where meaningful learning can take place” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.10). Their leadership was subtle, invited participation and helped USG-teachers experience themselves as learning citizens so that collective and individual learning blended. These social artists were facilitated by a structure that enabled them to begin the process to convene the
USG. Maggie, the national facilitator’s vision for teacher CPD was critical and in sympathy with social learning. She envisioned a LoP where each CoP might broker others in the pursuit of an improved body of knowledge of PE teaching in Ireland. This concurs with and extends the Tannehill and Murphy (2012) and Tannehill and MacPhail (2016) research on how teachers were empowered as a result of a CoP and beyond the CoP, into the LoPE.

**Impact of competency development**

As the USG developed its competency, it influenced teachers’ professional practice within the CoP and outside it, and it transformed their practices. Deglau (2005) described teacher competency as a “discourse of fluency in referring to what they had learned and how they modified what they had learned” (Deglau 2005 p.181). With multiple opportunities for sharing stories of experience, USG-teachers developed their language of competency, and became more literate in the discourses of their practices. This aligns with Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999); Sugrue (2004); and Glazer and Hannafin (2006).

The language of sharing became more nuanced and specific and could be considered to represent a greater literacy in their practice discourses. It facilitated USG-teachers to recognise, explain and share pupil learning to themselves, with each other, and with other communities. It helped to make explicit their tacit knowledge and make their personal practical knowledge available to others (Polanyi 1966, 1969; Clandinin and Connelly 1998). It helped them to develop and convey their publicly established concepts of excellence within and outside the USG, concurring with Kirk and Kinchin (2003).

Developing this literacy had two effects. A deeper engagement with theory ensued and a re-positioning of the USG on the PE landscape of practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) suggested that engaging with the body of knowledge in a LoP, practitioners take theory as a critical stance towards practice, and then conversely use practice as a critical stance towards theory. This was a development of competent membership within the USG for example in discussing TPSR, the challenges of
appropriate PE clothing, or the continuing (as yet unresolved) challenge of pupil inclusion and differentiation.

The change in teacher’s literacy resulted in a greater ability to advocate for PE (supported by the research of Deglau (2005) and Parker et al (2010)) and justify their PE programmes (and as a result, themselves) within and beyond school. This literacy helped them to lever the quality of their participation in the LoP from marginalised peripheral to an active performer. It also helped them to locate themselves with greater clarity in their LoP. The impact of developing competent engagement within the USG, was to extend this competence beyond it. This facilitated USG-teachers to have their contribution understood and recognised in other communities when they shared their experiences, either as mentors, workshop leaders or oral presenters/publishers. This deepened USG-teachers’ reflections through their engagement with the reflections of others within the USG and outside the USG:

It is difficult for communities of practice to be deeply reflective unless they engage with the perspectives of other practices. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.18)

It took considerable time for USG-teachers to develop a common sharing repertoire to broker the boundaries of the research community. It was through the participation of key members who helped the USG to broker this boundary. This changed the position of the USG from peripheral participants in the landscape to being more centrally engaged, contributing to and crossing more boundaries within it.

Penney (2003) and Vescio et al (2008) argued that CoPs were not transformative and were sources of acquisition instead. This research counters that argument and adds to the evidence of Parker et al’s (2014) research on the importance of boundary crossing. The practices of teachers changed – their participation in the USG as CPD leaders and mentors, their self-reported practices in the classroom as teachers changed and in the school as colleagues, and for some members their engagement with the research community and PE profession. Within the USG, the role of leadership/facilitation initially reflected structures outside the community (CPD facilitators from the PDST and university). This changed to reflect ‘ordinary’ membership within it (Wenger-Trayner 2016). These changes could be considered as a ‘fundamental reordering’ of the professional practice and beliefs of some USG-teachers (including mine) and perceived
as transformative (Brookfield 1995; Mezirow 1997, 2000). Allied to this is the LoPE itself. This research questions the argument that CoPs are reproductive of power relations and uncritical (Kirk and Macdonald 1998; Travers and McKeown 2005; Billett 2007; Hughes 2007). I argue that landscapes of practice (such as the PE profession) also consist of competing voices that can be reproductive of power relations:

A landscape consists of competing voices and competing claims to knowledge, including voices that are silenced by the claim to knowledge of others. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.15)

I suggest that as the USG developed its ‘voice’ (its literacy), it brokered more boundaries of practices, placed itself more centrally in the landscape and began to have its voice heard. That in effect, it changed the landscape of practices comprising it. As CoPs manoeuvre their positioning on the LoPE, this in time may also lead to its transformation.

7.2.3. Knowledgeability in a Landscape of Practice

The third theme examines how personal experiences of learning can be thought of as a journey through the LoP. In the previous section, engagement with a CoP and LoP, entering and leaving different practices and brokering the boundaries between CoPs was discussed. Learning trajectories arising from significant events on the journey such as crossing significant boundaries can be a major transition. This learning can cause a change in identity “whose dynamic construction reflects our trajectory through that landscape” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.19). It shapes who we are and guides who we become. This section examines how teachers within the USG defined themselves and managed their identification at the multiple levels of scale in which they encountered the different communities in the LoP. It is examined through three modes of identification: engagement with the practice(s); constructing an image of the LoP to help them understand where they were in it; and alignment of the rules within the LoP and the degree of compliance to the intentions and meanings of the practice. Being knowledgeable about the practices in a LoP does not require competency in all of them but is a study of what practice had relevance to the community and translating it into meaningful moments of service.
Engagement

The story of USG-teachers’ identity is a story of substantial change. USG-teachers identified as being marginalised and isolated at the start of their learning trajectory with the CoP. They identified with their pupils, less so with their school communities and dis-identified (did not identify with, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.22) with the PE LoP. The latter was linked to their feelings of being ‘doubly’ marginalised. Engagement with the USG offered direct experience of regimes of competence through participation, for example through talk, creating resources, leading workshops and trialling ideas. There were enough observations of positive change from pupils, principals and peers to warrant that the workshops and activities of the USG resulted in improved teacher practices in school and within the community.

The story of identity change is not only about changes to practices but also about changes in their understanding and beliefs. These came about through increasingly competent engagement with the USG. They reshaped their PE programmes and their engagement with their pupils, peers, parents and the principal. Engagement with the USG produced evidence of substantive shifts to what it meant to them to engage productively as a member of a CoP, recognise quality CPD and develop responsibility to contribute to the CoP. Their identity about what it was to be a PE teacher changed. This resulted from the USG-teachers operating within a community of learners which offered them a landscape of practices to support their development as teachers and teachers of PE. The landscape provided them with an infrastructure to develop themselves as professionals. Participation in the USG and engagement with it gave direct experience of the regimes of competence. This offered them the opportunity to learn and this included learning the language of discourse on professional competence through this engagement. In time, their engagement translated as deeper alignment with the regimes of competence within the USG (for example see section 7.2.2).

Engagement with their pupils and the school community also changed to become more aligned with the competent engagement learned from the USG. Teachers reported that pupil participation in lessons changed. Through the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative, their engagement with the school community changed though it was less clear if that engagement changed the school practice in any meaningful way. This begs the
question of how much the extent of change needs to be for it to be considered a
difference. Much of the research on how teachers make a difference (Hattie’s (2009)
meta-analysis of pupil achievement) focuses on improvement in standardised testing.
Thus, it is difficult for PE teachers in schools to measure improvements in pupil
achievement and difficult to locate themselves in the school LoP and the educational
LoP without some agreed standardised achievement metrics for learning in PE. It could
be said, therefore, that this aspect of the LoPE is relatively ill-defined. This means that
teachers have difficulty in locating themselves within the PE professional landscape and
the PE profession is unable to effectively pinpoint their position relative to the
education LoP.

USG successfully engaged with other LoPE communities (such as the Living-for-Sports
Curricular Initiative, PEAI, PE research community). They did not engage successfully
with other LoPE communities (such as Sky ‘ambassador’ and PDST facilitator roles)
because the opportunities to do so did not materialise. This denied them the opportunity
to share their expertise and knowledge and learn other regimes of competence. The
importance of structures to afford engagement by professionals in other practices is
central to building competence within communities and developing the ‘body of
knowledge’ in a LoP.

Alignment

As members of a CoP, USG-teachers developed their knowledgeability. Co-ordinating
plans and collaborating on shared goals and challenges represented identification with
the USG through alignment with its functions, structures and meaning. Within the
broader landscape, this could be shown when the USG-teachers aligned (or perhaps
submitted to) the authority of the national PE curriculum and national priorities such as
promoting literacy. Their alignment with school functions and meanings occurred
though the ‘Living-for-Sports’ Curricular Initiative (remembering that only some USG-
teachers aligned with it) in some circumstances. This posed a challenge as some school
functions and meanings were not always in alignment with USG-teachers’. I do not
believe that schools changed their alignment to meet USG-teachers’ identification of the
teacher-pupil learning relationship. Rather, the school alignment could be seen to have
been with the potential to showcase pupil achievement in the school and community. It
acted as a disruptive pedagogy/curriculum in schools and offered the opportunity for greater positioning of USG-teachers’ PE programmes but it is not clear to the extent to which schools shifted their alignment to USG-teachers’ practices and the competencies valued in their practices. This is further evidenced from the relatively poor boundary crossing to other classroom practices.

Another way to view alignment was the recognition of the achievements of the USG by multiple communities in the LoP. This ranged from:

1. Recognising the different types of learning and achievements by pupils (by USG-teachers and others) (Chrysalis 2014);
2. USG-teachers recognising (or ‘seeing’) their work (and its qualities and challenges);
3. Recognition by the PE research community (through publications);
4. Awards won by USG-teachers in the pursuit of their work chiefly through the ‘Living-for-Sports’ Curricular Initiative.

Recognition was important because it helped practitioners recognise the qualities of their practices evidenced by the alignment of that quality by those (possibly more powerful) in the LoP within communities and across boundaries. This is an important alignment to the ‘body of knowledge’ in a LoP. They can act as ‘landmarks’ for practitioners to aid their learning trajectory through the landscape. The benefits and alignment can be both ways – individual communities can be seen to have increasing alignment to others in the LoP. Another is the alignment of some communities in the LoP, especially powerful ones (such as government agencies) to the practices of a community. These help to clarify their position in the landscape (and possibly reimagining the landscape itself). Recognition is a key part of the reflection process (for individuals, communities, boundaries between them and the landscape). It is also bound up with the importance of sharing and how opportunities for sharing and making change facilitate identities of competence and knowledgeability across communities and landscapes.

Whereas Fenton-Creevy et al (2015) wrote about failure and resilience at the boundaries of practices, this research shows the effect of failure and resilience at the boundaries and within practices. Through engagement, USG-teacher competence in the classroom, in
school and as a colleague in a CoP was recognised. It also manifested itself in a new joy in teaching, enthusiasm and increased resilience.

Resilience is recognised by Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) and Zeichner and Yan Liu (2010) as important for supporting reflection in teaching which requires courage to pursue their beliefs. It strengthened USG-teachers’ alignment to their identity as PE teachers and members of a CoP and LoP for the future as well as the present.

**Imagination**

Recognition of practices facilitated the USG and other practitioners to have a clearer image of their location on the landscape, in other words to make the landscape itself more recognisable and have signposts to considerations of quality. USG-teachers saw themselves from different perspectives. The effect was that they recalled the competences valued by the community (including stories, workshops, leading) and linked them to future and present projects. It manifested in identity beyond the USG (such as ambassadors for the ‘Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative’). This shifting imagining of perspectives was essential to their changed interpretation of themselves within the LoP from peripheral participants to active participants. Through straddling many different boundaries within the LoP, it gave the USG multiple points of reference that reflected their changed trajectories and facilitated a ‘global positioning’ on the LoP. Schön’s metaphor (1983) of the ‘swampy lowlands’ blends with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner’s (2015) landscape of practice. The latter suggests a variety of ‘viewing platforms’ (including swamps, valleys and hilltops) from which to imagine different perspectives on practice challenges. It also considers the importance of the learning journey itself to help position the learner (as an individual within a community or the CoP itself) within the landscape.

Another example of identification through imagination is how I used peer observation within my classes from support personnel to help me ‘see’ and recognise my own practice, its positives and what needed improving. Having feedback and discussion with (non-specialist) peer-observers in school (knowledgeable about pupil context and valuable in its immediacy) was balanced and improved with peer-observation ‘by proxy’ (with USG-teachers) when I presented my workshops. Both gave different and helpful insights and helped me reflect and explore new ideas. These extend findings on
teacher empowerment, creating knowledge, developing curriculum, developing capacity to learn and improving the PE ‘field’ from sustained engagement with an ‘authentic CoP’ (Parker et al 2013; Tannehill and MacPhail 2016).

7.2.4. Knowledgeability in a Nexus of Identification

In the fourth theme, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) asked how the different modes of identification link to become a coherent experience of knowledgeability for practitioners. Being productive depends on managing them, whether they co-exist, compliment, enhance or conflict with each other and translating these multiple experiences into meaningful practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) acknowledge claims to knowledgeability have political consequences and require controlling and balancing (‘modulation’) identification. This takes into full account all the elements of teachers’ practices that are different to the conceptualisation of teachers’ practices being centred in the classroom and school (TC 2012):

Learning to become a practitioner is not best understood as approximating a better and better reified body of knowledge. Rather it is developing a meaningful identity of both competences and knowledgeability in a dynamic and varied landscape of relevant practices. (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b p.23)

Through engagement with the USG and the LoP, USG-teachers learned to negotiate their roles (as teacher, learner, leader, broker, convener, organiser) and optimize their contributions (enhanced by positive peer pressure). They discovered and shared where relevant sources of knowledge were (and found they were significant sources). They became adept at bringing various sources of knowledge on various unforeseen ambiguous situations (such as managing challenging behaviour, supporting pupil learning through embedded formative assessment (Wiliam 2011)).

Identification: accountability and expressibility

Identification is a key part of knowledgeability because it implies accountability, and to be fully realised, knowledgeability in a landscape requires that accountability to one location be expressed in another (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b). The following four examples show how USG-teachers (as individuals and a CoP) were accountable to their identities and how membership of the USG facilitated expressibility of that identity.
As teachers of specific class groupings, USG-teacher accountability to this identity was strong and took the form of engagement, imagination (as they broadened their curricular offerings) and alignment (with national curricular imperatives). Accountability to this identity was always centrally expressed to the practice of the USG. Knowledgeability was demonstrated outside the USG in advocating for PE in their schools and the community, and sharing their practices with the PE profession. Two teachers convened CoPs in their school (the highest act of learning citizenship (Wenger 2009)). The common theme to these changes is the development of the teachers as leaders, their ability to make change and bring people with them. All of these actions contribute to understanding how a community reflects on its practice. Thus USG-teachers could be seen to have a change in their identity (concurring with Armour and Yelling 2004; Deglau and O’Sullivan 2006; and Parker et al 2010) not only as competent in the USG, but also as knowledgeable in others such as schools, and the research community.

USG-teachers’ accountability to their identities as leaders of CPD and collaborators in driving initiatives was a struggle initially but became stronger. The learning trajectory on their accountability to their identities from what was initially perceived as more distant aspects of their practices (such as engaging with research, liaising with sporting organisations) changed. Their accountability strengthened with increased engagement as the USG’s regimes of competences developed. For some USG-teachers, this accountability to research (and using evidence and feedback as an important element to their classroom environments) changed significantly. Knowledgeability was evidenced by sharing these competences (such as how they worked together to successfully pilot the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative in Ireland) with other communities, such as the PEAI.

Regarding my practice, research became a central, transformative part of my practice through PRT. My learning trajectory was shaped by the formal sharing of my research on my practice. My confidence improved and I started rethinking my role as a teacher which became more research oriented and what I used as evidence. I had a changed understanding of competency within the classroom and how I could act as a peripheral participant in other communities. My understanding of my professional role changed. This concurs with Armour and Yelling (2004) that teachers need support to build their confidence to make changes. With changed identity (as a researcher and teacher), my
accountability to the research community became stronger. This was through my engagement and greater alignment to the research community and their traditions and cultures of academic sharing. Imagination of how research can be part of my practice (and others) as contributors to the ‘body of knowledge’ is now fully aligned with my conception of what it is to be a teacher.

An example of a challenge to accountabilities to professional disciplines on the LoP was an unsuccessful boundary crossing with a state service provider for supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. USG-teachers perceived the attitude of the providers as being non-accountable to their practice contexts. The service providers were accountable to sharing state guidelines and aligned with them, but did not demonstrate any engagement or imagination regarding how supports could be used in PE lessons. USG-teachers took little accountability to the service providers and strengthened their accountability to the group as a source of solutions to the challenges of pupil behaviour.

Modulating identification

Modulating the identification of USG teachers as leaders of their learning, and others’ learning has proven to be a challenge. The packed agenda of meetings and the possibilities for future directions of CPD are huge. Efforts to provide direction have to be regularly monitored and managed. It is a delicate balancing act. The very aspect that makes the USG successful as a CPD provider and source of reflection for its members is also the very aspect that could make it degenerate into aimless, time-wasting activity. It needs careful stewardship. Another example of challenges to modulating identification is modulating the status of PE within schools. USG-teachers identified strongly with PE and its teaching/learning possibilities, but it endured low status. As such, it was ‘hostage’ to school culture (Sparkes et al 1993; Deglau 2005) which has a meditational effect on the beliefs and understandings teachers hold about the status of their subject matter. The opportunity provided by the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative helped to disrupt and resist the status of PE within schools, community and the PE profession. But once the allure of the ‘Living-for-Sports’ Curricular Initiative reduces, the alignment and engagement with PE brought on by ‘Sky’ will reduce and USG-teachers will have to manage that.
My own challenges in modulating my identity as a teacher, reflective practitioner, CPD leader and researcher continue. To me now, the excitement of teaching in a school with potentially endless research possibilities for trying to improve my practice for helping to improve pupil attainment, leadership and joyful participation in physical activities for life is something I never thought I would have. But this must be modulated with fulfilling curricular mandates and offset with my increasing critically reflective practitioner approach to my practice which can be at odds with the former. Also, the impact of engaging deeply with my own reflections on practice like Attard (2012) can be disheartening if one thinks of how challenging it is to effect real change and I consider whose rights are prioritised in school practices. I have to carefully manage my myriad roles, otherwise accountability to these identities may become frustrated by not being expressible through illness or burn-out.

7.3. CONCLUSIONS

This research sought to examine/explore how a CoP reflected on its practice. It sought to examine how engagement with a CoP had on the teachers’ practices, understandings and beliefs. Four conclusions are drawn from this research.

7.3.1. Community of Practice as a Continual Reflection on Practice

The power of this community was in the sustained nature of the dialogue and a willingness to share with and mentor each other. Using Social Learning Theory, learning is manifest in a change in identity and the development of competence (Lave and Wenger 1991) and knowledgeability in a landscape of practices (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015b). Participants engaged in a collective reflection in and on practice to solve problems and improve practice (Wenger-Trayner 2016). Reflection helped them to ‘heal the splits’ between theory and practice and practice and theory (Schön 1983), and by engagement with peers, pupils, theory and their personal stories of practice, they engaged as critically reflective practitioners (Brookfield 1985).

In common with these theories, is the importance of reflection with others, to use multiple different perspectives within communities and across boundaries on practice to ensure deep and critical engagement with the problems of practice. Learning (participation) in a CoP was only possible with reflection, as individuals responded to
each other in their discourse about practices. In a CoP (and by extension a LoP),
participation was enabled by talk about practices that develops into a linguistic
repertoire of meaningful data. This developed into a literacy of meaning that was
possible only through continuous reflection by competent and knowledgeable
engagement in the USG and across boundaries. Participants developed a ‘reflective
literacy’ in order to engage with the community. Therefore, a CoP reflects on its
practice by its engagement in participatory activities, and changes in identity and
competences is the manifestation of those reflections.

Solely reflecting on one’s own or others’ practice is insufficient for critical reflection
(Moon 2006). A CoP represents unparalleled opportunities to critically reflect.
Participants continually strove to reflect on their practices using their own and others’
experiences to collectively find solutions. CoPs offer beacons of possibility for
reflection, difficult in our ‘crowded schools’ (Lyons 2010a, 2010b).

7.3.2. Significant Changes to Teachers’ Practices, Understandings and Beliefs

Competent engagement with an authentic CoP led to significant changes to teachers’
practices, understandings and beliefs. Knowledgeability is not an individual
characteristic but rather a relationship. This relationship within a landscape of
“knowledgeability” can change individuals’ or groups’ identities as professionals. Every
member of the USG reporteded changes to their practices, understandings and beliefs
and teachers perceived impacts on their pupils’ learning opportunities. Not every
teacher’s change was identical, and not every teacher’s change was to the same extent.
But in general, the more they engaged with and aligned with the values of USG, the
deeper the changes. For me, it was transformative. The engagement impacted on
teachers’ identification as teachers, leaders, experts, brokers, CPD leaders, and their
roles in the landscapes of professional practice. There was a shift in how the teachers
positioned themselves on the landscape of practice from marginalised to active,
knowledgeable participants. Conway (2002) stressed teachers who represent
marginalised groups (of pupils), ought to challenge patterns of marginalisation. The
USG-teachers were the marginalised group who challenged the patterns of
marginalisation. As a result, their pupils also began to articulate their own abilities to
challenge patterns of marginalisation.
7.3.3. Conceptualising CoPs as a Model of CPD over the Career Span.

Calls for meaningful CPD over the career span of teachers offer very few examples of how this might be possible. This research is an insight into one way it may be conceptualised. Within the USG, teachers felt that they could competently engage with different aspects of their professional practice and had support whenever it was needed and regardless of career stage. The breadth and depth of participants’ experiences within the USG was important and helped to broker entry to a variety of communities. Although a CoP functions for as long as the participants feel it serves a purpose this is an example of a CoP that has lasted for 9 years.

The provision of CPD through communities of practice in Ireland as advocated by state government is focussing on school-based communities (Hislop 2013). The nuances of CoPs need to be understood so that they do not become a social technology for learning as critiqued by Hughes et al (2007). The inequalities of the education system may be reproduced through the enactment in a school-based only approach to CPD. The USG which has membership across a range of challenging schools also provided opportunities for peer-observation by-proxy that provided rich CPD possibilities. These could be developed by the TC (2016).

7.3.4. The Importance of Trust in a CoP

Trust is a powerful aspect of a quality CPD. It is not to be under-estimated in a CoP or LoP. The importance of mutual engagement in a CoP cannot be over-estimated, especially where there are personnel from different backgrounds and agencies involved (for example CoPs comprising school teachers and university personnel). This took some time to develop and was pivotal to the success of the USG. Agendas need to be clearly laid out. Trust is written about but not studied well (Jones and Barry 2011a, 2011b) and can be the fulcrum on which the success or failure of a CoP is levered.

7.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are three main limitations that I identify within this study: the usual challenges to qualitative research and bias of participant researchers; the challenge that the CoP was
self-led and mostly unsupported; and the epistemological challenge to the knowledge and learning within the CoP. All three limitations are described in more detail in this section.

7.4.1. Qualitative Research and Researcher Bias

Simultaneously the main strength and limitation of this research is that the author is a member of the CoP while also the chief instrument of the qualitative research (Le Compte et al 1992). I have extensive knowledge of the CoP and the groups within it. I acknowledge this and state this at the outset:

“All research is necessarily constrained and influenced by the subjectivity of the investigator and I acknowledge the biases and limited perspectives of the researcher self” (LaBoskey 2004 p.859).

This is limited by the efforts at triangulation listed in chapter three as well as my supervisor’s experienced ‘gaze’ to elucidate these biases (and my subsequent efforts to minimise them).

Any conclusions and observations that are made in this study are made with an open mind to alternative viewpoints and I recognise and name my uncertainties throughout as these are “an important step towards not only establishing rigor in the research process, but also displacing the indomitable authority of the author” (Mullings 1999 p.349). The reader will undoubtedly decide about the strengths and limitations on this study based on their own worldview.

7.4.2. Self-Led CoP

This is a study of a specific, time, place, context and group of people. It was within the CPD structures in Ireland (through the support of the local education centre and their ‘discretionary’ funding). It was outside the main CPD structures and therefore much of the work of the USG was unrecognised by these government structures. This has implications for the perceived role of CoPs by state policy (such as with ‘Cosán’, TC 2016). The role of CoPs in providing CPD is recognised within Education in Ireland such as for continued registration with the Teaching Council (TC 2016), the expected research ‘profile’ of schools through School Self Evaluation through CoPs (DESI 2012), and the increasing expectation for each teacher to provide evidence based
research (TC 2016) on practice. However, these CoPs are perceived to be set within existing school and CPD structures. The research surrounding one CoP that was so ‘outside’ the indomitable authority of standard education structures may not necessarily translate to those within it that are accountable to its regimes, expectations, rules and structures.

The data could be said not to represent the entire CoP as not all members participated in all activities or to the same degree. The data are more representative of USG-teachers who were central participators. However, it is in the nature of CoPs to have different levels of participation and engagement (Lave and Wenger 1991; Team BE 2015), and core participants represent the core elements of the CoP in terms of activities, values and priorities. Methodologically this was limited with a range of types of data gathered and opportunities to gather the data.

Membership of a CoP does not automatically ensure competent membership of a CoP. It may be dysfunctional or its members may engage in dysfunctional behaviours within the CoP (MacPhail 2014). Therefore, the assumption of competent membership within a CoP requires further study and is not a feature of this research. For example, competent engagement with the USG through efforts to engage with the national PE curriculum does not indicate a critical appraisal of the national curriculum or standardised testing, and to what degree they benefit marginalised pupils.

7.4.3. Epistemological Challenges

There are three epistemological challenges inherent in this story. The first is how knowledge and learning is understood and researched in CoPs. The second concerns how changes to pupil learning is conceptualised and researched arising from teacher engagement with CPD. The third centres on the relationship between talk, language and knowledge development and how that influences teacher learning.

Engagement with a community of practice (CoP) includes instrumental technical knowledge but also “...the ability to find meaning in activities and to engage competently with other people involved” (Wenger 2009 p.4). Knowledge and the knower are not separated (Wenger 1998). Participation is done through language, stories, role-models, alignment (or not) of perspectives, setting goals, actions, and
collaboration with colleagues (Wenger 2010). Members express their stories of experiences of practice into the learning space of the community to serve as the substance of the learning in the CoP. As practice is dynamic and complex, stories may not be coherent and have tacit constituents and members explore what they know, do not know and what they could do to learn together (Wenger 2009). Competent engagement is the learning within the CoP. An important aspect of professional learning therefore is learning how to engage competently with a CoP. The challenge (for CoPs, researchers and educational leaders) is to decide what competent engagement is. It also exposes the critical challenge of who names and prioritises the regimes of competency within a CoP and from what positions of power they do this. The changes in teachers’ practices were mostly self-declared by the USG-teachers. They included others who observed the changes (such as principals, the original facilitators of the USG, and peers in the case of my practice). This could be perceived as limiting the strength of my findings. However, this research was not an experiment, and changes to teachers’ practices may be observed by others and they may not. Changes to understandings and beliefs may not result in a change in practice.

Linked to teacher change were the warrants of changes to pupil learning. These were made by improved participation as observed and commented on by teachers, principals, peers, through pupil self-reflections and an external evaluating body for the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative (Chrysalis 2013). The changes to pupil learning were not measured by experiment, such as a ‘before and after’ test of improved transmission of knowledge and improvement in specific skills. This could be considered as a limitation, especially by those for whom this type of knowledge is their key ontological and epistemological perspective in doing CPD work. Teachers in this research study used these forms of evaluation and assessment (including within my practice) as well as those mentioned above but they did not form a central part of the data collected. This could be part of the data collected in another study on this group.

Piaget (1973) emphasised the close relationship between thought and language and their influence on the construction of knowledge. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) stated that we assimilate the words of others as part of our development and learning, and the more words (discourses) we can choose from, the more opportunities we have to learn. This gives a place and importance to voice (Sugrue 2004). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999)
acknowledged that CoPs required time and opportunities for dialogue to form new visions of teaching and learning. A joint construction of contextualised (situated) knowledge of teaching practices is possible through CoPs (ibid) that can improve knowledge about teaching (Borko 2004). Glazer and Hannafin (2006) recommended that teachers had greater opportunities to lead their own learning through talk, storytelling and support through CoPs. With such emphasis on language, a perceived limitation could have been that there was no discourse analysis on the ‘talk’ of the USG and the changes to that ‘talk’ as the USG changed over time. Although discourse analysis would probably yield fascinating insights on the development within this group, this was not the intention of the research question.

7.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three main recommendations arising from this research.

7.5.1. Better Understanding of a Teacher’s Practice

As the economic success of nations and the changing nature of knowledge and education are being understood, the increased importance of the role of teachers is visualised and exhorted (Hattie 2009). The role of the teacher is changing and increasingly complex in their landscapes of practice. This requires a clearer understanding of their functions as a classroom teacher, professional colleague and a learning citizen. The TC (2012, 2016) acknowledges the multiple roles of the teacher, but much work needs to be done to allow teachers to grow and develop into their roles including those as teachers, colleagues and team members. Some teachers act autonomously and do not perform well as colleagues. Those in initial teacher education and CPD also recognise these multiple roles and need to assist teachers to work in these roles.

As teachers are increasingly expected to be part of CoPs, research by government agencies (such as the TC, the inspectorate, teacher educators, CPD providers) is also needed to examine the impact on pupil attainment by CoPs. This ought to include CoPs across the continuum of CoPs (Parker et al 2013). Not all CoPs can be successful, and this needs to be examined.
7.5.2. Structures to Enable Learning Citizenship

There is a need to build structures within the teaching profession that recognise teachers’ quality learning citizenship, and support professional communities of practice that support such learning. This is needed in the fabric of the Education in Ireland landscape and support should be national, regional and local by school or subject. Teachers’ changed roles have implications for structures that enable learning citizenship. The USG’s opportunities to broker boundaries into the Living-for-Sports Curricular Initiative community as ambassadors, or as CPD facilitators with the PDST, were frustrated because of structural problems. These structures should be imagined to allow the brokering of boundaries of myriad professional communities within teaching, teacher education and CPD.

This could also counter what Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) state as the difficulty “for communities of practice to be deeply reflective unless they engage with the perspective of other practices” (p.18). There must be intentional moments of boundary crossing for the body of knowledge in PE or education to be productive. This could only serve to enhance the potential learning to be harvested from brokering multiple communities.

7.5.3. More Social Artists

Social artists (like Alice and Mary, the facilitators working with the UGS members) are crucial to the success of the professional communities of teachers in the future. Their leadership skills in this study were both a subtle ‘pull and push’ in the citizenship of learning (Patton and Parker 2014) among members of the CoP. More social artists are needed to engage with teachers and help them prepare for the increasingly demanding and complex education environment in which teachers work. This requires a shift by the DES and all education stakeholders to understanding learning as an everyday activity within education, schools and all those who participate in it. Teachers’ roles as learners are on a par with that as teachers. This requires a reimagining of CPD as it is currently provided by the DES.
REFERENCES


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Herold, F. and Waring, M. (2011) “So much to learn, so little time...: pre-service physical education teachers' interpretations and development of subject knowledge as they learn to teach” *Evaluation and Research in Education* 24(1), 61-77.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Parker et al’s (2013) Continuum of Learning in the Landscape of CoPEs in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANDSCAPE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>Collections of authentic teachers</th>
<th>Established groups</th>
<th>CoP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Acquisition of new ideas</td>
<td>Accomplished objective + empowerment</td>
<td>Accomplished objective + empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideposts</td>
<td>When together</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator role</td>
<td>External/internal leaders and workshop leaders. Dispenser of knowledge</td>
<td>Internal leaders and workshop leaders: some shared facilitation</td>
<td>Shared facilitation and workshop leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadblocks</td>
<td>Leader attempts to sort issues arising</td>
<td>Issues identified by group; solved by leader or shared facilitators</td>
<td>Issues identified and solved by the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Change in isolated classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change school culture and physical education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning is deeper, direction more focussed, and growth is stronger
APPENDIX 2

Ethical Approval Letter

From: Anne.O'Brien
Sent: 07 March 2013 14:13
To: Mary.O'Sullivan; marieclonan@gmail.com
Subject: 2013_02_03_ EHS

Dear Mary, Marie

Thank you for your amended Research Ethics application which was recently reviewed by the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The recommendation of the Committee is outlined below:

Project Title : 2013_02_03_ EHS Developing teachers as reflective practitioners
Principal Investigator : Mary O’Sullivan
Other Investigators: Marie Clonan
Recommendation: Approved until June 2014

Yours Sincerely

Anne O'Brien
Administrator, Education & Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Ollscoil Luimnigh / University of Limerick
Guthán / Phone +353 61 234101
Facs / Fax +353 61 202561
Ríomhphost / Email: anne.obrien@ul.ie
Gréasán / Web: http://www.ehs.ul.ie
## Appendix 3

### USG Priorities and Initiatives Adopted

Table of USG meetings/workshop agendas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes code and date</th>
<th>Attendees (+visitors)</th>
<th>Topic A (T=Technology)</th>
<th>Topic B</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Location home (h) or away (a)</th>
<th>Insider or outsider presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A 22 Mar 2011</td>
<td>10(1)</td>
<td>(T) internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University(a)</td>
<td>Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 05 May 2011</td>
<td>06(1)</td>
<td>X-box</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>(T) Youtube</td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 06 Oct 2011</td>
<td>10(2)</td>
<td>Adventure activities</td>
<td>Focus Grp interview</td>
<td>Uni (a)</td>
<td>Out</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D 21 Feb 2012</td>
<td>14(2)</td>
<td>Sport Ed dance Special needs plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>Out + in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E 27 Apr 2012</td>
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<td>Ultimate Fris Retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>Out + in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 27 Sep 2012</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ED Centre(a)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 19 Nov 2012</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tag Rugby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H 19 Feb 2013</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed Centre(a)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I 15 May 2013</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(T) Ipads               Planning (Dublin CoP PDST)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed Centre(a)</td>
<td>Out + in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J 24 Sep 2013</td>
<td>12(2)</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed Centre(a)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K 14 Nov 2013</td>
<td>14 (2)</td>
<td>Fusion dance            (T) ‘aps’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 13 Feb 2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 01 May 2014</td>
<td>13(2)</td>
<td>Skipping</td>
<td>Spikeball</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>School (h)</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 meetings</td>
<td>134 = total 10 = mean 7 practical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 visitors</td>
<td>4Technology</td>
<td>6 home</td>
<td>6 out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 meetings 134 = total
10 = mean
7 practical
6 home
6 out
7 visitors
4Technology
4EdC;2away
10 in

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## Initiatives Adopted by the USG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Fully adopted</th>
<th>Somewhat adopted</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Not adopted</th>
<th>Not attend workshop</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Acrobatics</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag rugby</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spikeball</td>
<td>USG member</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted games</td>
<td>USG member</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>Outsider</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>TPSR</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skipping</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>USG member</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Box-Kinnect</td>
<td>USG member</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Pupil Reflective Tool (PRT)
Background information: The PE curriculum includes a number of areas of study representing a range of practical activities, each with particular characteristics and contributes to the overall aim of PE. This aim is to prepare students for a life of autonomous well-being.

After every class, you draw a ‘face’ that represents how you enjoyed this class. Also, beneath that square you marked yourself out of 5 on how you participated in class. For example 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = getting there, 1 = made no effort and 0 = didn’t participate. This is to help you think about how responsible you are for yours and others’ learning. It is important not to prevent others from learning in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary information</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Fraction</th>
<th>Percentage%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of PE classes this year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I enjoyed PE classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of smiley faces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of straight faces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sad faces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well I participated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I scored 4-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I scored 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I scored 1-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I did not participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I scored 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of times I had no PE uniform for class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My fitness scores are:

- Height
- No. of laps in 15 minutes X 400m
- Standing high jump
- Sit and Reach
- Right hand strength
- Left hand strength
- Balance test
The activities we have done so far this year are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My favourite activity is</th>
<th>Because</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My least favourite activity is</td>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My strength is</td>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area where I would need to improve is</td>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I take responsibility for my own learning?</td>
<td>I know this because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I prevent others from learning?</td>
<td>I know this because</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Junior Cycle Physical Education Record of Learning.

Name: ____________________________  Class: __________  Date: ________

Please answer these questions on your self-evaluation report.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you like PE?</td>
<td>How do you know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you work hard in PE?</td>
<td>Explain this answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you learn anything in PE?</td>
<td>Explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Who is responsible for your behaviour?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Who is responsible for how hard you work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you think your behaviour can influence how well you learn in PE?</td>
<td>Explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you think your behaviour can influence how well others in the class learn in PE?</td>
<td>Explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Is learning enjoyable?</td>
<td>Explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Is there any link between how hard you work and your enjoyment of learning?</td>
<td>Explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Did writing your own report help you to answer these questions?</td>
<td>How</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adapted PRT

Name: __________________________________ Class: ____________________

Subject: ____________________________ Teacher: ____________________

Date: __________________________

Homework profile.

This homework profile is to help you record your homework and learning reflections. Hopefully you will be able to see if you are doing regular homework and if this can help you in improving learning. This is to help you understand if doing homework regularly helps you in doing well in school.

Please fill in the boxes below at the end of each class: ✓ (yes); ✗ (no); O (absent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework completed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>☺ ☺ ☺</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework given</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework completed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>☺ ☺ ☺</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
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<th>Subtotal</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework completed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>☺ ☺ ☺</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test score at start of homework profiling _______

Test score at end of homework profiling _______

1. Was there any difference in your test scores? ____________ Why? ______________

2. Were classes any more enjoyable when you did your homework? __________

3. Can you suggest a reason why? _____________________________________________

4. Is there any comment you would like to make on homework? ____________________
Appendix 5

Conference Research Posters

Poster PEPAYS 2010
AIESEP Poster 2011

No You Cannot Do PE Today!
How school PE policy can act as gatekeeper to pupil participation in class
Marie Clonan, Margaret Atwood Community College, CDVEC

"What is the use of a book?, thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'" (Why the use of theory or bullshit aims in PE nevertheless, without the wherewithal to implement them, or evidence that they make any difference?)

1. INTRODUCTION
This research attempts to contrast theory with practice and my personal ideology in my hosting context (school and urban). Why? I wanted to find my students reflect on their participation experiences and effort in PE and Physical activity (PA). I also wanted to receive a 'buy-in' from peers in the school. Between my aim as a PE teacher to have an enjoyable quality PE programme and providing Making It Fun on our one hand, and preventing participation, based on clothing on the other. This links with the collective theme on my professional theme of pupil participation in PE and clothing PA.

PA girls participation in PE declines sharply during adolescence (National Taskforce on Obesity, 2005). Education level, gender, family and peer group can determine Physical Activity (PA) levels and enjoyment results. In increased Physical Activity (Callanan, 2005) provide background to my research.

The research charts a one-year stage within a cycle of action research. Furthermore, with my Urban Schools Initiative colleagues in POSTUL Community of Practice, with common strategies – poor PE teachers, 6th school, challenging pupils in engaging pupils who don’t have appropriate PE clothing. I aim to look professionally for 10 years in all girls school and therefore some small school.

2. UNINTENDED OUTCOMES
- Values of recreational information
- Evidence of enjoyment and participation
- Evidence of parent teacher meeting
- Evidence of pupil effort
- Evidence of parental participation in PA
- Evidence of PA in the community

3. PREVIOUS POLICY + PRACTICE
No PE uniform = No PA
- Record kept of age not bringing in their PE uniform over the school year
- The children will have no PE uniform.
- Reminder from homeroom teacher to wear appropriate PE uniform.
- Pupils sent to other class to do PE written work.
- Head of Safety, form.informed the class.
- Occasional, various participants in class (disconection, absence, harassment).
- STREETWEAR pupils and me, two comments; advertorial in nature.

4. INITIATIVE
- Record kept as better on PE system
- Determined as giving as better but not adversarial.
- Programme modelled – inclusive adapted TPE uniform and adapted (Physical Education) activity
- Responsibility for participation shifted to pupils.
- Pupils with inappropriate PE uniforms were allowed out of activity activities, but not punished.
- Pupils studied attitude from activity and relate as they work, but were encouraged to be involved.
- Pupils attended classes after class was established.
- Pupils had limited choices with activities.
- Pupils record personal PE participation and enjoyment level in journal after each class.

5. RESEARCH METHOD
- Random post participation rate of James-Cycle pupils (1G) by year 1 to year 2 (2010 to 2011)
- Instrument new initiative
- Classroom participation rates, enjoyment and pupil effort.
- Compare with pre and post initiative participation rates.

6. RESULTS
- Participation levels increased.
- PE uniform did bring increased same rate.
- More available of context, pupil participation, enjoyment and effort.
- Majority of pupils enjoyed activities.
- Positive correlation between enjoyment and effort as to connected last time and no effort.
- Pupils made and myself believe in a more realistic approach.
- Positive sense of being as they improved related to year end.
- Conclusion of pupil evaluation scores among two in vast majority classes.

7. CONCLUSIONS
- School policy can act as gatekeeper to participation degrees to which may surprise me.
- Important feedback for pupil, parent and teacher on participation, enjoyment and effort.
- Evidence of pupil improvement at times.
- Encouragement to pupils and myself, have records and information to guide PA programmes and progress.
- Positive impact on knowing classes were free and enjoyable on pupils and myself.
- The adapted programmes were sustainable and implemented.
- Relating self-esteem to clothing and participation completing satisfactory in a health promoting school.

FURTHER INFORMATION
- Further information can be found on our website: http://www.postul.org

REFERENCES

[Images and text}