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Teachers' views on the construction, management and delivery of an externally prescribed physical education curriculum: Higher Grade Physical Education

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Background: The level of influence teachers have over changing developments in curricula to suit their individual schools is not matched by the influence they possess in the development of such curricula outside of the school context. Bernstein's model of the social construction of pedagogic discourse allows examination of the development, mediation and reproduction of curricula using three fields of knowledge production that he terms 'primary', 'recontextualising' and 'secondary'. Particular tensions emerge when teachers (secondary level) are expected to deliver a curriculum constructed by agents and agencies external to the school context (recontextualising level).

Purpose: To examine teachers' view towards the process of a particular curriculum innovation in Scottish secondary school physical education (Higher Grade Physical Education, HGPE), the consequent subject content and the management of the subject in schools, in an attempt to identify factors that aided or hindered teachers from supporting and delivering HGPE.

Participants and setting: Physical education teachers teaching in schools belonging to the largest local regional authority (at the time) in Scotland.

Research design: A descriptive study aiming to examine physical education teachers' view towards the process of a particular curriculum innovation in school physical education.

Data collection: A questionnaire for the attention of the physical education staff was sent to all 170 secondary schools in the chosen regional authority. The questionnaire set out to investigate teacher curriculum decision making, particularly in relation to how teachers read and interpreted issues related to HGPE.

Data analysis: Analysis was completed by manually sorting, organising and indexing the data. Comparing, developing and describing the comments resulted in the analysis of comments under three headings: (1) the process of construction and the agents and agencies involved; (2) subject content and the level of prescription; and (3) management and delivery.

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Findings: It was evident that teachers wanted to receive considerably more specific central guidance related to the delivery of HGPE with less of an appreciation that the lack of central prescription offers teachers more professional freedom to develop courses that are more appropriate to their own specific contexts. There was also a lack of understanding as to the expected roles between the recontextualising agents and those operating in the secondary field. This led to tensions in the level of support and provision provided to teachers on what was likely to produce an effective discourse and a lack of assistance and feedback concerning assessment.

Conclusions: While it is evident that teachers were not central to curriculum planning and development in this instance, it could be interpreted that many teachers did not necessarily wish to be involved in the curriculum development process but were more concerned with receiving appropriate training and resources from central agencies. However, this does not excuse the need to involve teachers in curriculum planning and development, accepting that it is ultimately teachers who decide whether or not to implement an innovation. Teachers' insights into what aided or hindered supporting and delivering HGPE are valuable in determining what should be changed, and what should be preserved, in order to encourage teacher investment in curriculum developments.

Introduction

The influences of government policy and assessment requirements over the past 20 years, that is, the rise of formally assessed and certificated courses, have significantly influenced teaching and learning in schools throughout the United Kingdom. Perhaps within physical education the emergence of formal assessment and certification has been more of a key development than in other 'traditional' subjects such as English, maths and science which have a much longer history of being formally assessed for certification (Paechter, 2000). In discussing Scottish secondary school physical education Brewer and Sharp (1999) noted a move towards 'curricula more closely prescribed by an assessment agenda outwith the formal control of the school physical education department' (p. 541). As a consequence, they were aware of possible teacher de-professionalisation through the need to implement schemes devised and approved external to the school.

Bernstein's (1990) model of the social construction of pedagogic discourse allows examination of the development, mediation and reproduction of curricula using three fields of knowledge production that he terms 'primary', 'recontextualising' and 'secondary'. This paper focuses on the relationship between the recontextualising and secondary level, highlighting the tensions that emerge when teachers (secondary level) are expected to deliver a curriculum constructed by agents and agencies outwith the school context (recontextualising level).

Teachers' role in curriculum development and teacher ownership

The level of influence teachers have over changing developments in curricula to suit their individual schools is not matched by the influence they possess in the

development of such curricula outside of the school context (Penney & Evans, 1999). Even though this appears to be the case, there has been strong agreement that teachers are central to curriculum planning and development as it is teachers who ultimately decide whether or not, or to what extent, to implement innovations (Gatherer, 1999). Teachers are more likely to accept innovations if they are deemed to be practical and do not challenge teachers' already established ways of teaching. Physical education teachers are known to be especially resistant to change (Sparkes, 1990).

The extent of teachers' formal involvement in curriculum development has been a concern of a number of authors (Fullan, 1982, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997). Hargreaves and Evans (1997) suggested that: 'It is time for teachers to be the included vanguard of reform, and not be made its marginalised victims' (p. 13). Fullan (1982, 1991) calls for teachers to be genuinely involved in curriculum reform rather than making the assumption that by involving some teachers on curriculum committees an implementation would be more likely to be accepted by other teachers. As Fullan explained, the majority of teachers are on the 'receiving' end of new policy and programmes many more times than they are on the initiating end. Hargreaves (1994) was aware of the lack of admittance from reformers that the involvement of teachers in educational change was likely to increase the success of a proposed change. Without such involvement from teachers, those involved in the construction and production of a curriculum reform are unaware of teachers' desires for change or for the conservation of their current practice.

It is widely agreed that teachers are expected by those agents and agencies involved in the construction of a specific discourse to implement such a discourse (Apple, 1982; Bernstein, 1990). The perceived degree of control that teachers believe they have encountered in the evolution of a change in the curriculum is an issue which can influence teachers in making a particular decision in relation to undertaking curriculum change. This issue is commonly referred to as 'teacher ownership'. The importance of teacher ownership of curriculum change is stressed by a number of researchers (Gatherer, 1989; Gavin, 1999; Kirk & Macdonald, 2001). Kirk and Macdonald (2001) argue that the opportunity for teachers to have some degree of control over curriculum matters, in what they call the 'local context of implementation', affects the extent of teacher ownership. That is, the extent to which the contexts in which teachers work are taken into account when making decisions, with teachers judging changes by their practicality to the contexts in which they are teaching. Gavin (1999) makes the same argument: 'The involvement of practitioners in the whole process of planning, developing, monitoring and reviewing is essential in reflecting ownership, in maintaining confidence and in influencing the direction of change' (p. 444).

Although teachers' role in curriculum development is very much restricted to the school context, they are allowed more autonomy and decision making in such a context. Writing from an English perspective, Penney and Evans (1999) agree that the construction of a school subject such as physical education has (in fact) excluded the involvement of teachers and consequently, what is to be thought of as physical education is decided for teachers. The major contribution made by teachers in educational reform is by adapting the physical

education curriculum mandates to their individual school contexts. The modification of curricula by teachers is the rule, not the exception (Kirk, 1990). However, this does not dismiss the possibility that many teachers ask for more direction and clarity from external agencies as to what and how they should be teaching (Fullan, 1982, 1991).

Physical education teachers may be less successful or interested in the implementation of a curriculum development as they would be had they felt they had been involved in an official role (Sparkes, 1991a, b; Kirk, 1992) and there are current examples of this occurring. A particular example was when teachers' lack of involvement in the development of the National Curriculum for Physical Education in England and Wales resulted in their enthusiasm for the innovative implementation being weak (Penney & Evans, 1999). MacLeod (1992), in discussing the process of curriculum development in relation to Standard Grade Physical Education (a two-year course primarily undertaken in Scotland by students aged 15 and 16 years old), reported how one particular principal teacher of physical education did not identify herself as an owner of such a development 'since she had been only implementing a received product' (p. 170). Discussing developments in Scottish physical education, Thorburn (2004) states that if we are to learn about the implementation effects of a curriculum subject, it is necessary to comment upon each step in the decision-making chain from the development of policy through to the practices of teachers at the point of delivery in schools.

The implementation of reforms within the Scottish education system, such as Higher Still, have depended on substantial input from 'intermediate' staff. Humes (2003) explains that such staff are often seconded from local authorities or teacher education institutions on temporary or part-time contracts to explain and promote, and to produce materials that will aid the delivery of, approved policies to teachers. This paper examines the role of these intermediate staff and supports Hume's (2003) concern on their level of effectiveness in such a task:

The 'intermediate' staff generally do not have an easy task in their efforts to ensure that policy initiatives get off to a good start. Their power is limited and, while they can convey concerns at local level back to the central agencies, they cannot guarantee that there will be an adequate response. They thus occupy a somewhat ambivalent position, trying to satisfy two audiences—policy-makers at national level and classroom teachers at local level. (p. 84)

Construction of Higher Grade Physical Education

The construction of HGPE involved a number of stages (Niven, 1998a; MacPhail, 2001). A paper describing the outline proposals for HGPE was prepared and submitted by a Central Advisory Group of the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) in the summer of 1990. Approval for a course was given in the autumn of the same year by the Secretary of State for Scotland (Niven, 1998a). It was the task of a Joint Working Party (JWP) to undertake the necessary work in developing the course and examination. The selection of the 10 individuals (including four teachers) who served on the HGPE JWP lay primarily with the SOED and a senior inspector in physical education. An unofficial pilot scheme was devised in 12 schools, with the

physical education teachers who were on the JWP agreeing to develop and deliver one of four elements expected to make up HGPE. A consultation document was issued for comment to a wide range of interested bodies at the end of April 1992. In light of submissions received from the consultation process proposals were amended, producing the finalised Arrangements document, which was issued to all presenting centres and interested bodies at the end of January 1993. The initial phase of dissemination took place at a national conference held in February 1993. It has been suggested that the national conference was a token gesture in an attempt to allow people to respond to concerns they had regarding HGPE, as the Arrangements document was already finalised and distributed and could therefore not be changed (Niven, 1998a). The JWP were keen to ensure that HGPE was credited as being an acceptable Higher qualification for undergraduate degree programmes and consequently pursued a commitment to using language verification through written assessments as evidence of students' underpinning knowledge (Thorburn, 2004).

Higher Grade Physical Education

HGPE is the Scottish 'equivalent' to the A level examination in Physical Education and Sport Studies in England and Wales and the Senior Syllabus in Physical Education in Queensland (Australia). Although all three target the same age group (17 and 18 year olds), Higher Grade study has, until the introduction of the Higher Still development (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994), normally been completed within one year compared to two years for A level and two years for the Senior Syllabus. HGPE aims to develop concepts that are introduced within Standard Grade Physical Education (SGPE), although SGPE is not a pre-requisite for pupils wishing to undertake HGPE.

The discourse of HGPE is detailed in the *Arrangements in Physical Education Higher Grade* document (Scottish Examination Board, 1993), commonly referred to as the HGPE Arrangements document. The four Key Features of the HGPE course (at the time this research was conducted) were Performance, Analysis of Performance, Investigation of Performance, and Personal and Social Development. The first three features were assessed for certification. Performance was assessed internally and had a weighting of 40% towards the final grade while Analysis of Performance and Investigation of Performance were assessed externally with a weighting of 40% and 20% respectively. Two activities contributed to the assessment of Performance and pupils were therefore to study a minimum of two practical activities. Analysis of Performance was subdivided into four main areas that were Structures and Strategies, Preparation of the Body, Skills and Techniques, and Appreciation of Action. From the four areas, schools selected three areas they considered to be most appropriate to the activities chosen for Performance. The Investigation of Performance required the pupils to produce an Investigation report on a specific aspect of performance in one or more physical activities. The integrated nature of the course was reinforced in the recording of an award. No award was possible unless the assessment requirements for all three Key Features were met. Consequently, if pupils scored

exceptionally well in Performance but failed either the Analysis of Performance examination or the Investigation of Performance, they failed to gain any acknowledgement for what they had scored well in.

With the introduction of the Higher Still initiative (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994) to Scottish secondary schools, the format of HGPE has since changed. Higher Still was launched in 1999–2000 and brought together subject qualifications into one multi-level framework for pupils in years 5 and 6 of secondary education (17 to 18 years of age) and beyond into further education (Bryce, 2003). Higher Still Physical Education (HSPE) allows pupils to pursue five course levels resulting in a range of National Qualifications—Access, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. Changes from the original HGPE syllabus include the weightings of the components, the loss of the Investigation of Performance and the terminology of the four main areas of Analysis of Performance (Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, 1997). The assessment of HSPE (above Intermediate 1) has a minimum 50% weighting towards written forms of assessment and the weighting for Performance has moved to 50% in HSPE from 40% in HGPE. This paper is concerned with the HGPE innovation before it was subsumed into the Higher Still initiative and became HSPE.

Bernstein's construction of pedagogic discourse

Bernstein (1990) introduces the fields for the production (primary), recontextualising and reproduction (secondary) of pedagogic discourse and consequently discusses the relationships between the three fields (how they can be linked to each other) and the rules of the pedagogic device. The 'primary context' tends to be where the 'intellectual field' of the education system originates. New ideas are selectively created, modified and changed to result in developing specialised discourses. As Bernstein emphasises, this field is concerned with the production of non-pedagogical knowledge rather than the reproduction of educational discourse and its practice. The 'secondary context' entails the selective reproduction of educational discourse involving various levels, such as tertiary and secondary. The non-pedagogical contexts of the primary field undertake a pedagogical form in the secondary field. In this paper schools and teachers occupy the secondary field. The 'recontextualising context' is concerned with the transfer of texts and practices from the primary context to the secondary context, that is, the transformation of non-pedagogical knowledge to pedagogical knowledge. This context involves those in the administration of educational programmes, that is, in Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) (which emerged in 1997 after the dissolution of the Scottish Examination Board, SEB) and those with a remit to provide support, resources and staff development, that is, the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) (now subsumed within Learning and Teaching Scotland). Within each of the stipulated levels there can be some degree of specialisation of agencies. HGPE in the school context is the result of recontextualising principles that have selected and delocated what constitutes HGPE from the primary context of the production of discourse

and relocated and refocused HGPE in the secondary context of the reproduction of discourse. Figure 1 illustrates the three fields for the production, recontextualising and reproduction of pedagogic discourse and the agencies and agents specific to HGPE working within each field.

The SEB and SCCC were primarily involved in managing the dissemination of HGPE and in order to understand their official position it is worthwhile discussing the recontextualising context more. The terms SEB and SQA are used interchangeably throughout this paper. While it was the SEB that was involved in the construction and production of HGPE, it is now the SQA who is Scotland's national body for qualifications at schools, in the workplace and colleges (Bryce & Humes, 2003). The SQA has almost identical duties and powers as those held in the past by the SEB. Its responsibilities include all secondary school external examinations. It is the job of the SQA to monitor qualifications and make sure they meet people's needs, are relevant and valued, aiming to make sure that everyone who has a stake in education and training in Scotland is consulted about developments (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 1999). The SCCC is expected to support and promote curricular developments, providing curriculum back-up to the assessment system for which the SQA has responsibility, with one of the SCCC's main responsibilities being to issue guidance on the curriculum to local education authorities and to schools (Clark, 1997; Bryce & Humes, 2003). Reference to the SCCC will be used throughout the paper, as it was the SCCC that was primarily involved at the time of the research before being subsumed within Learning and Teaching Scotland (MacBride, 2003).

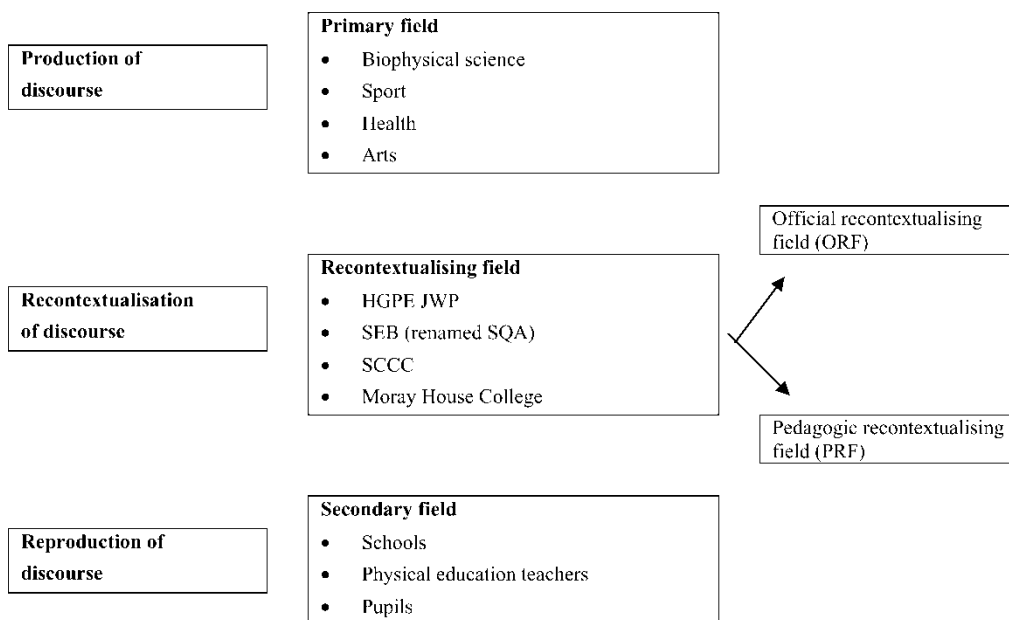


Figure 1. Bernstein's construction of pedagogic discourse (examples of agents and agencies operating within each field given in relation to HGPE)

In discussing the positions of ‘producers’, ‘reproducers’ and ‘acquirers’ in the pedagogic field, Bernstein dismisses that one can occupy only one of the mentioned positions at any one time, pointing out that there is a tendency to separate producing and reproducing functions institutionally. The occupancy of a group in more than one of Bernstein’s ‘production–reproduction’ sites will become evident in this paper by illustrating that the SEB fulfilled the roles of ‘producers’ and ‘reproducers’ in relation to HGPE.

Methodology

Bernstein’s three fields of knowledge production and reproduction informed the construction of a questionnaire. The initial interest was in teachers’ views regarding the level of involvement and assistance from the recontextualising agents, such as the SEB and SCCC at the time, in informing their decision to offer, or not offer, HGPE (MacPhail, 2004). This paper focuses on teachers’ views on the process of the construction of HGPE, the subsequent subject content and the management and delivery of HGPE in schools.

A single-stage sampling process was used where access to the names of 170 secondary schools, in the largest local regional authority in Scotland at the time, was available through a regional mailing list. Special schools and fee-paying schools were not included in the sample. A questionnaire was addressed to the head teacher of each school asking if they were willing to allow a member of their physical education staff to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire set out to investigate teacher curriculum decision making, particularly in relation to how teachers read and interpreted issues related to HGPE. Patterns of responses were examined between teachers’ extent of agreement about particular issues relating to the teaching of HGPE and how their interpretation of the discourse of HGPE influenced their decision in either choosing to offer, or refrain from offering, HGPE (MacPhail, 2004). A 93% response rate was achieved, with 87 (almost 58%) returns from schools offering HGPE (denoted as ‘Teach’ in the following sections) and 64 (42%) from schools not offering HGPE (denoted as ‘Not teach’). This paper deals only with the qualitative comments that teachers chose to write at the end of the questionnaire when asked for comments related to the questionnaire items or to express additional comments. Analysis was completed by manually sorting, organising and indexing the data before comparing, developing and describing the comments that had been received (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Results and discussion

Without prompting to discuss particular issues on completion of the questionnaire, teachers’ comments primarily focused on three areas. Firstly, the process that was pursued in constructing HGPE and secondly, the consequent subject content that arose. The third issue was concerned with the relationship between agents and agencies in the secondary field of managing the delivery of HGPE. This issue is the

strongest in identifying factors that aided or hindered teachers from supporting and delivering HGPE and is discussed in greater depth.

The process of construction and the agents and agencies involved

Historically in Scotland decision making regarding structure, syllabus content and examinations in relation to school innovation has been centralised (Philip, 1992). Scottish physical education teachers involved in this study were critical of the process of constructing HGPE and the agents and agencies that had been involved:

As always a bare framework is set out with so called efforts from Moray House College [the only physical education teacher education training institute in Scotland at the time], who have never taught the course being brought in to develop courses. There should be a coherent approach to teaching. Why do all the physical education teachers have to re-invent the wheel? (Teach, 20)

In my opinion there has to be a far more national-based course, prepared by a knowledgeable working party who understand what goes on in schools. (Teach, 29)

The above comments encapsulate three main concerns that are raised in relation to the HGPE Arrangements document being the intended text for teaching the subject. The first concern is that the framework is inadequate and will consequently lead to different teacher interpretations. Second, that those involved in constructing the text were too removed from the secondary context to have experienced the needs of students and the delivery of such a course. A third concern, related more to the management of HGPE, was that teachers were spending time duplicating work that they believed should have been produced and made available nationally along with the HGPE Arrangements document. Time is at a premium in schools (Hargreaves, 1994) and teachers do not have the luxury of being able to afford time to produce materials. Teachers currently appear unable to afford any substantial amount of time away from their day-to-day teaching activities.

Such comments highlight the disparity between the recontextualising agents (in this case representatives from Moray House College, an institute responsible at the time for the pre-service training of physical education teachers, and the SEB) and agents in the secondary field (physical education teachers) in the process of curriculum change. The implication from such comments is that teachers are expected to implement a change in the curriculum produced by people who are not primarily involved in teaching that specific curriculum in schools.

The level of power, in terms of the construction of the HGPE syllabus that recontextualising agents exercised in relation to agents in the secondary context, was incomparable. The production of the HGPE syllabus was regulated directly by specialised departments and sub-agencies of the government, controlling what text and support materials were made available. The recontextualising agents involved in the more recent Higher Still reforms for physical education also appear not to have addressed the issue of the extensive preparation of work in the secondary field necessary for the delivery of a physical education programme (Freel, 1998; Thorburn, 2004).

The consequent and continuous involvement of the SEB in relation to the regulation of the HGPE course in the secondary context illustrates the level of power that this recontextualising agent maintains in the reproduction of the HGPE syllabus. The SEB was not only involved at the conception of HGPE but also continued to prepare examination papers, mark the examination papers, moderate the internally assessed Performance element and determine the national pass rate.

Subject content and the level of prescription

The SCCC supported the view that national curricular guidelines did not form a curriculum specification but rather a framework within which teachers should think for themselves (MacBride, 2003). This premise is evident in reading the HGPE Arrangements document, that encourages teachers to create a version of HGPE that meets the needs of schools. While this does not advocate the involvement of teachers in the production of the instructional discourse of HGPE, it does acknowledge the impact that local school contexts can have on the transformation of text between the recontextualising and secondary field. It was evident that teachers wanted to receive considerably more specific central guidance related to the delivery of HGPE with less of an appreciation that the lack of central prescription offers the teachers more professional freedom to develop courses that are more appropriate to their own specific contexts. However, in this study no teacher voiced support for the flexibility encouraged in the HGPE Arrangements document, with teachers believing that the HGPE Arrangements document was inadequately prescriptive:

Arrangements . . . are vague and open to misinterpretation. (Teach, 7)

Staff have to develop own ideas from general headings. (Teach, 12)

It [HGPE Arrangements document] was very vague and much (too much) was left to individual members of staff on their own to sort out. (Teach, 18)

As always a bare framework is set out . . . There should be a coherent approach to teaching. (Teach, 20)

Teachers are all working on their own in the preparation of materials without proper guidance. (Teach, 29)

The above comments hint towards a possible link between teachers' reading of the proposals for the HGPE syllabus as not being prescriptive enough and a lack of support materials being made available. Numerous comments were made in relation to the latter issue:

Most schools have had to soldier on with their own developments. (Teach 8)

Almost no useful information on syllabus construction has been produced in the three years of HGPE. Staff has little or no idea what to teach. Staff has to develop own ideas from general headings—no one available to advise on material being used in the course. (Teach 12)

There were no exemplar materials available for the Investigation or Analysis of Performance which proved difficult. People were in fact working blindly on these elements. (Teach 15)

As at the start of SG [Standard Grade] each school is basically left to their own devices. (Teach 20)

It is evident that Scottish physical education teachers were in favour of a more prescriptive document. There is a fine line between teachers favouring a level of flexibility that acknowledges the impact that school contexts can have on the transformation of text between the recontextualising and secondary field and the plea for a more definitive document. Requests for a definitive document such as a textbook or a less informal recognised text covering the syllabus have been made by teachers (Douglas, 1998). The following comment from one teacher confirmed Douglas's perception that a less definitive syllabus makes the teaching of a course more difficult:

Initially, as usual, much was expected by the [physical education] department staff to set up and write the course with in my opinion little support in in-service development. I did not want my department to go through the programme blind as to the pace, programme, assessments without a clear idea of expected performance particularly in the written elements. (Not teach, 20)

The recontextualising agents' role in the formulation of the HGPE Arrangements document seemed to be perceived by teachers as being inadequate. Teachers appear to have made their judgement on not being able to deliver the HGPE syllabus without having to carry out a substantial amount of work on 'fleshing out' a 'skeletal' syllabus (Not teach, 23). Although the HGPE Arrangements document allows schools a high level of independence in planning their courses, the amount of work that such independence involves appears to be unacceptable to those in the secondary context. Due to the gradual increase of curriculum developments that teachers now have to deal with, the preference for 'fully fleshed out teaching packages' (Not teach, 6) may be deemed more valuable in terms of saving time. Such a disparity between the recontextualising agents' expectations of the time teachers could commit to 'fleshing out' the proposals and the reality of the actual time teachers had to prepare a school programme could have perhaps been addressed before the Arrangements document reached schools. For this to have happened it would have required teachers to have played a more prominent role in the formulation of the proposals in the recontextualising context where HGPE was constructed.

The management and delivery of HGPE

Numerous teachers commented on the difficulty of evaluating the learning and teaching approaches they had taken towards HGPE without adequate feedback from the SEB:

Failure of the Exam Board to disclose details of Analysis of Performance and Investigation marking detrimental to course evaluation. (Teach 5)

Difficult to evaluate your approaches to the teaching of HG as you are not given a breakdown regarding the Investigations submitted and the actual exam results. Totally unsatisfactory and a failing of the Scottish Exam. Board. A position they don't seem prepared to change. (Teach 8)

The national results from HGPE indicate that something is far wrong but sadly the

majority of teachers do not know where they have gone wrong. Until teachers become more informed, the future of HGPE is not looking too bright. (Teach 29)

Incorporated in the above selection of comments is the belief that the situation regarding feedback is not going to improve, perhaps implying that teachers are beginning to accept that the SQA is not prepared to, or is unable to, disclose details of pupils' marks. Information received from the SEB was statistics on how the school had done in relation to other schools. The only element that teachers can be confident about having marks for is the internally graded, and externally moderated, Performance. Consequently, teachers are working blind:

Difficult to evaluate your approaches to the teaching of Higher Grade as you are not given any breakdown regarding the Investigations submitted and the actual exam results. (Teach, 22)

[There is] Far too much uncertainty as to where and what is required of a student. If as during in-service provision, professional teachers are unsure of what is required to answer, and indeed understand, already undertaken papers, what chance do youngsters have? (Not teach, 25)

Teachers offering HGPE do so despite the lack of communication from agents and agencies in the recontextualising field. There was clearly a lack of support and provision from agents and agencies operating in the recontextualising and secondary field regarding adequate assistance on assessing HGPE:

Having taught HGPE since its inception, I am, at present, really frustrated, confused and slightly disillusioned because of the distinct lack of feedback from the SEB (they give you no idea how each individual student performed from the Analysis of Performance exam and Investigation), the erratic availability of courses, appropriate guidance for the Investigation, and the lack of exemplar questions and proper marking instructions for Analysis of Performance. (Teach, 29)

Again, the above comment includes a number of points in relation to the lack of understanding as to the roles both are expected to fulfil between the recontextualising agents and those operating in the secondary field. Firstly, the teacher voices concern that there is a lack of assistance and feedback from the SEB concerning the disclosure of detailed marks for individual pupils who have completed HGPE. However, the SQA does not identify with such a role and consequently the trend is the same for every school subject. Also, the plea for marking instructions for the Analysis of Performance examination is a request that the SQA is unable to fulfil. Questions or areas of the question papers that have elicited a particularly poor response from candidates, and the overall distribution of marks scored in the paper, can affect the final pass mark decided by the SQA. Consequently, the marking instructions as they appear on the actual examination papers may not be accurate in relation to the final mark attributed to the paper. The SQA does give a very brief summary every year in its Annual Reports on how pupils have performed in the three Key Features of HGPE that are assessed, that is, Performance, Analysis of Performance and Investigation of Performance.

Secondly, 'the erratic availability of courses' is read as referring to the number of in-service training (INSET) courses that were offered in relation to teaching HGPE.

The lack of INSET provision appeared to result in two teachers abstaining from undertaking HGPE for the time being:

Still not prepared to take on HGPE without adequate training. (Not Teach, 28)

Staff now wish re-training (all Diplomas). (Not teach, 29)

However, it was up to individual regions, usually under the guidance of physical education advisers, and not the SEB, to decide how they would disseminate information. This may have led to the availability of INSET courses being referred to as 'erratic' in the likely scenario that some regions secured more resources and funding to support such courses and consequently were able to offer more courses. The provision of INSET courses related to the teaching of HGPE was previously reported as inadequate (Niven, 1998a, b).

Thirdly, as mentioned previously, it is the SCCC, and not the SQA, that has the remit to promote information between the recontextualising and secondary fields. Niven (1998b) commented on the appropriateness of the HGPE exemplar materials provided by the SCCC, believing that the selection of topics that had been developed for exemplar materials did not match the kind of information requested and required by teachers. She believed that the lack of relevant documentation discouraged many teachers from implementing HGPE initially. Teachers' apparent disregard towards the exemplar material may also have been promoted by their lack of involvement in the construction of the HGPE curriculum. As Humes (2003) stated:

Teachers can be provided with all kinds of support and staff development to acquaint them with the requirements of new programmes—but that is not enough. They need to be convinced that the reforms which they are asked to implement are sound in principle and consistent with their own professional standards and values. (p. 84)

Time has been reported as a perennial issue in the innovation literature. Time is at a premium in schools, especially when changes to the curriculum take place, and as Fullan (1982) pointed out: 'time spent on materials development—on re-inventing the wheel, for example—takes time away from classroom application' (p. 123).

Expectation of roles in managing HGPE and (potential) teacher de-professionalisation. The lack of understanding regarding the roles expected to be upheld between those in the recontextualising and secondary fields is not encouraging towards the possibility of merging the agents in both sites, and consequently teachers fulfilling the role of 'producers' as well as 'reproducers' of knowledge. The agents operating in the recontextualising field produced the proposals for the HGPE syllabus and then were unable (or unwilling) to disclose information deemed useful by those operating in the secondary field. It appeared to be the case that the SEB had completed *their* task in producing the proposals and that it was now the teachers' task to reproduce the knowledge contained within it. This is illustrated by the following comment made by a teacher:

Questions put to them [SEB] were given [a] standard reply—'Refer to the Arrangements document'. As if this cured all. (Teach, 15)

Consequently, teachers' lack of involvement as 'producers' of knowledge may have constituted a number of problems they were now facing in a bid to successfully reproduce the HGPE syllabus in the secondary context. Problems highlighted in this paper include a lack of supporting material and the inability to evaluate the learning and teaching approaches.

Such a level of control over the dissemination of information and feedback from the SEB leaves teachers with no direction on how teaching and learning approaches can or should be changed in order that more students complete the HGPE course successfully. This may also contribute to teachers using rote learning with students in a bid to prepare them for the externally assessed elements of the course (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 1998, 1999; Brewer, 2003; Thorburn, 2004) and subsequently result in a de-professionalisation of physical education teachers' work. Hargreaves (1994) explained the notion of teachers' work becoming more routinised and deskilled:

Teachers are depicted as being treated almost like recovering alcoholics: needing to adopt step-by-step methods of instruction, or to comply with imposed tests and curricula in order to be effective. (pp. 14–15)

Hargreaves's comment is relevant in reviewing the *SQA Annual statistical reports* for 1998 and 1999 (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 1998, 1999). Withholding of information by the SEB appears to have resulted in teachers consequently being very cautious about straying from the text in reproducing the syllabus in order to fulfil the requirements set by those in the recontextualising context. Both reports state that a rather prescriptive and limited approach has been adopted towards the Investigation of Performance element of HGPE and that there was evidence that candidates had been preparing for the Analysis of Performance examination through rote learning of answers. The significance of this is that teachers' sense of ownership is minimal, having to teach the subject in a prescriptive way that they believe is more likely to result in a pass mark for the candidates (Bryce, 2003). Bryce (1999) believed that assessment in Scottish schools had become 'more conspicuous than curriculum' (p. 657) and Brewer (2003; see also Brewer & Sharp, 1999) discussed how the effects of external assessment procedures on physical education influenced teachers' practice of primarily teaching to fulfil the knowledge and understanding obligations of SGPE and HGPE syllabi. McGowan (1993) reinforced the notion of the de-professionalisation of physical education teachers' work in relation to the delivery of HGPE:

we [the physical education profession] are now subject to centrally produced curricula and teachers are cast more in the role of curriculum implementors than curriculum innovators, evidence perhaps of a move towards de-professionalisation of teaching. (p. 29)

Helping students pass the exam has become the major preoccupation for teachers with the worth of the subject matter taking second place (Kirk, 1988; Thorburn, 2004). In discussing the English examination system over 20 years ago, Woollam (1979) believed that rather than examinations serving the curriculum, the opposite has happened in physical education where syllabi have been written to meet the requirements of the examination board. Even today, this appears to be the situation where the end product is deemed to be more important than the learning process.

Conclusion

This paper examined how teachers' views towards the way in which a curriculum innovation was constructed impacted on their views of the consequent subject content and the management and delivery of the subject in school. Returning to Bernstein's (1990) theoretical framework of the social construction of pedagogic discourse, he notes that the major activity of the recontextualising field is constituting the 'what' and 'how' of pedagogic discourse. Subsequently, if teachers are not involved in constructing the pedagogic discourse it can only be expected that they will require specific knowledge to deliver the particular discourse. Tensions and conflicts between recontextualising and secondary agents and agencies are likely to be heightened when teachers' interpretation and reconstruction of, in this case, HGPE in the secondary field differ from the way they were expected to be delivered by those operating in the recontextualising field. As Paechter (2000) believes, 'it does not pay to introduce an educational innovation without thinking about what it would feel like to be on the receiving end of the changes, either as a teacher or as a student' (p. 156).

The implication from this study is that the curriculum appears to be shaped in the secondary field in relation to the amount of information and assistance from the recontextualising field. The relationship between agents in the recontextualising field and secondary field was very much one-way, with many individual teachers asking for more direction and clarity from external agencies as to what and how they should be teaching. The SEB set out the proposals that teachers were expected to follow and did not appear to entertain any concerns or feedback on the proposals from teachers. Consequently, it might be suggested that the SEB exercised both direct and indirect power over the teaching and assessment of pupils in relation to HGPE. More recently, authors have begun to link the general construction of Higher Still policy, and physical education teachers' involvement in the policy-making process, with the teaching and assessment practices of physical education teachers and the learning and assessment experiences of students (Brewer, 2003; Thorburn & Collins, 2003, 2006; Thorburn, 2004). Thorburn (2004) has more recently challenged the notion that physical education teachers continue to be removed from the implementation of physical education curriculum development in Scotland. He reports two incidents where he believes critical decisions have been made during the development of HSPE in response to requests by 'chalkface' physical education teachers.

There is a lot of support in the literature for teachers to be central to curriculum planning and development, accepting that it is ultimately teachers who decide whether or not to implement an innovation. In reality this is rarely pursued. An alternative way of addressing the management of a syllabus in the secondary context and transferring the power of agencies external to schools to those operating in schools, that is, teachers, has been developed in secondary schools in Queensland, Australia (Kirk & MacDonald, 2001; Thorburn & Collins, 2004). The Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) Senior Physical Education in Queensland encouraged a high level of teacher involvement in the design and implementation of a new

physical education syllabus, acknowledging that considerable teacher involvement and ownership is critical to increase the success of proposed changes and innovations. In discussing changing school cultures, and similar to the BSSS Senior Physical Education development, Fullan (2004) proposes deep (professional) learning communities at the school and local community level, with networks of schools continually engaging to support each other on ways to manage curriculum innovation and change. It is necessary for those operating in the recontextualising field to understand teacher and school conditions that strengthen or weaken the efficient and effective implementation of syllabus. There is a need for an overall strategy that will result in the construction of physical education being a collaborative venture between all interested parties in education systems worldwide. This in turn may lead those with a remit to construct and support the implementation of curriculum to be concerned with making sure everyone who has a stake in education and training is consulted and involved in curricular developments.

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