The Micropolitics of (Physical Literacy) Teacher Professional Development: Navigating Professional Vulnerability

Abstract

This research examines the implications of professional vulnerability during teacher physical literacy professional development, through the lens of micropolitical theory. First this research illustrates the aspects of professional vulnerability encountered throughout a teacher physical literacy professional development programme. These include vulnerabilities at the political (macro), organisational (meso) and structural (micro) levels. Second, this research explores the micropolitical realities and power dynamics (power over with and through) at play during professional development in relation to professional vulnerability.

This research adopted a constructivist, interpretivist ontological and epistemological position. The professional development programme consisted of a series of collaborative professional development sessions (n=7), lesson observations and reflections and mentoring from a physical education teacher and physical literacy expert. The research was conducted with primary generalist teachers (n=3) and secondary PE specialists (n=11) across three schools within the UK, over a twelve-week period. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture the professional development journey of each teacher. This information was supplemented by extensive supporting data including field diaries, emails, video recordings, lesson observations, lesson plans and lesson reflections. Thematic analysis and pen profiles were used to analyse and present the findings of the semi-structured interviews.

This paper calls for the contextual element of professional development to be given as much consideration as the mechanism itself. Professional development can be more effective by connecting the what and how alongside an understanding of the where and who. Micropolitical theory and professional vulnerability offer glimpses into this contextual world,

revealing a different but equally important narrative around the wider context of successful and meaningful professional development in physical literacy. The study also calls for potential transferability into the wider domains of sport coaching and sport development where physical literacy is becoming increasingly visible.

Key Words: teacher professional development, professional vulnerability, micropolitical theory, physical literacy.

Introduction

While there is a plethora of research that explores student teachers' professional vulnerability in relation to professional development (Tang, 2003; Tang et al., 2016; Wang and Clarke, 2014; Zhu et al., 2018), there is yet to be significant research into qualified teachers' professional vulnerability in relation to professional development from the perspective of micropolitical theory. Engagement in professional development and subsequent pedagogical change or adaptation is an intricate process that is situated in multiple micropolitical factors. Micro-political theory offers a unique perspective in observing teachers undertaking professional development and their construction and reconstruction of practice in negotiation of organisational power (Jokikokko et al. 2017; Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002a).

Professional vulnerability is often presented as an emerging theme (Kelly, 2013, Durden-Myers, 2020) within research rather than the central discussion. For this reason, it is important to centralise the focus on teacher professional vulnerability to understand how teachers express their vulnerability while undertaking professional development. Not to mention how professional development providers navigate the professional vulnerability of their participants. Vulnerability can be defined as "mutual responsive-ness; an active, attentive kind of listening; the exposure of the self in the presence of others" (Pignatelli 2011, p. 221). Lasky (2005) describes vulnerability as a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts. It can be perceived as both positive and negative or as Jackson (2018) articulates as a strength or a weakness.

For many teachers, teaching is more than just an occupation and is instead more of a vocation or calling. Many teachers therefore invest themselves in their work, receiving feelings of job and life satisfaction from the rewards of teaching (Nias, 1996; van Veen and Lasky, 2005). This merger of teacher professional and personal identity intertwines teaching both as a source of self-esteem but, also, as a source of professional and personal vulnerability.

Vulnerability can be heightened at certain key moments, including when considering and/or undertaking professional development opportunities. This paper discusses the significance of professional vulnerability in relation to effective and meaningful teacher professional development. It draws upon the research findings of a twelve-week physical literacy informed physical education professional development programme.

Examining how professional vulnerability mediated the impact and implementation of the professional development programme through a micropolitical lens. Recommendations for professional development providers are also presented with regards to how professional vulnerability can be navigated through the professional development process. The paper also begins to unpack lessons from physical literacy professional development in teaching to go on to suggest the potential transferability for lessons for emerging application in sport coaching and sport development. Therefore, the overarching question that guided this investigation was: *How did the micropolitical realities of teaching practicums affect teacher professional vulnerability while undertaking physical literacy professional development?*

Literature Review

Physical literacy

Physical literacy is defined by the International Physical Literacy Association (IPLA, 2022; online) as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life." The concept of physical literacy is increasing in popularity in both policy and practice in a range of sectors including sport, health, education, and recreation in several countries around the globe (Durden-Myers and Whitehead, 2018; Essiet et al., 2022; Jurbala, 2015; Lundvall, 2015). With this increased popularity, so too are the calls for research in relation to clarifying the concept and research situated in practice. As such research has begun to operationalise

physical literacy from theory into practice within a variety of fields including education (Durden-Myers, 2020; Edwards et al., 2019; Essiet, et al., 2022; Stephen and Pill, 2018). Physical literacy has also been identified as a guiding framework and overarching goal of quality physical education as outlined by UNESCO in 2015 (UNESCO, 2015). Therefore, research into how physical literacy may be operationalised within physical education practice including the role of effective physical literacy professional development is much needed (Durden-Myers and Whitehead, 2020; Essiet et al., 2022).

At present little is known about effective teacher physical literacy professional development (Durden-Myers and Keegan, 2018) not to mention the political, sociocultural, and contextual factors at play therein. This paper explores these political, sociocultural, and contextual factors at play within physical literacy professional development through the lens of micropolitical theory. This research has implications for future physical literacy professional development within education but also in relation to the wider contexts of health, sport and leisure discussed later in this paper.

Professional vulnerability

Vulnerability can be considered both a negative and a positive characteristic for effective teaching practice (Bullough, 2005). For example, many teachers invest themselves in their work (Nias, 1996; van Veen and Lasky, 2005) and receive feelings of job satisfaction from the rewards of teaching (Day, 2002; Hargreaves, 1998; Lortie, 1975). Teachers ‘‘often so closely merge their sense of personal and professional identity that the classroom becomes a main site for their self-esteem and fulfilment, and so too for their vulnerability’’ (Nias, 1996, p. 297). Professional vulnerability can also be associated with negative characteristics such as teachers or indeed sports coaching professionals losing a locus of control (Lasky, 2005) but it is also reported as an important and positive component for personal and professional growth

(Bullough, 2005). From a sociocultural perspective, Lasky (2005) describes vulnerability as a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts. However, instead of considering vulnerability as teachers' emotional feelings (Lasky 2005), Kelchtermans (2005, 2009, 2011) identifies teachers' professional vulnerability as ''a constitutive characteristic of teaching'' (p. 80) and ''a structural condition'' (p. 80) teachers find themselves situated in. From Kelchtermans' perspective, teaching is not merely a technical or instrumental job, for it involves dynamic and complex ethical relationships (2005). Teachers' professional vulnerability is related to experiences of feeling threatened, ''being questioned by others (headteacher, parents or in this case a professional development provider'' about their ''professional identity and moral integrity,'' and ''losing control of the processes and tasks they felt responsible for as teachers'' (Kelchtermans, 2005, p.997). Furthermore, teachers' professional vulnerability is often mediated by the sociocultural context surrounding them (e.g., Kelchtermans 2005; Lasky 2005). This external force recursively positions teachers' professional vulnerability within educational reforms featured by standardised tests, accountability and commercialisation. Furthermore, Kelchtermans (2011) found that there are three sources of vulnerability: (1) at the micro level (the classroom), teachers struggle with the limits of instructional impacts on students' learning; (2) at the meso level (schools), the influence of principals, colleagues and parents; and (3) at the macro level, the influence of local educational policy.

Bloomfield (2010) considers the practicum as a hierarchical struggle for power in which they ''must find a balance between conveying strength and competence and yet not posing challenge, threat or even too much expertise to the 'expert' mentor'' (p. 227). In this paper, we define professional vulnerability as teachers' self-understanding when they are constantly exposed to a multitude of external dynamics at play during professional development, such as the presentation of new research and knowledge, mentorship and practice evaluation. In

addition, internal dynamics also shape the embodiment of vulnerability, including but not limited to individual agency, which Bandura (1992, p.3) describes as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over [the] events that affect their lives”. Professional vulnerability can characterizes the ‘‘inevitable element of passivity’’ that a teacher ‘‘finds himself/herself in’’ (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 266). In particular teachers’ professional vulnerability is prone to be intensified while they are caught in dissonant hierarchical power relationships. For instance, when teachers find inconsistencies between the professional obligations that they envision and actualize (Webel and Platt, 2015), they will feel confused and insecure about what to do in the practicums. However, it is important to note that individual agency (Bandura, 1992) may mediate the response to external structures.

Professional development

Professional development is described as the specialised training or advanced professional learning intended to help teachers and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill and effectiveness (Abbott, 2014). Within education, professional development programmes provide feasible opportunities for teachers to develop and refine high-quality teaching practice in an ever-changing and multifaceted profession (Edwards, et al., 2019; Phillips, 2008).

Effecting or observing pedagogical and educational change from the perspective of changing the ‘who’ or the ‘person’ rather than the ‘what’ or the ‘practice’ is not necessarily a new idea (Carson, 2005; Dewey, 1929/1984). Yet professional development literature pays little consideration to the micropolitical practicums and power strategies of teachers and professional development providers. Moreover, often a linear relationship is conveyed with knowledge moving from the provider to the participant. Rather than a more transactional and complex exchanging of vulnerability, power, knowledge, and authority. This is supported by

Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p.789) whereby, it may be observed that "power exists only when it is put into action" knowledge is developed, and the internalisation of the subject involved occurs from a range of choices and responses.

The power dynamics between professional development providers and participants through a micropolitical lens and observing the overt and covert strategies employed to achieve the personal and professional goals is a complex phenomenon. Furthermore, professional development can also expose the political (macro), organisational (meso) and structural (micro) vulnerabilities of teachers quickly and therefore can be a challenging and threatening process. Durden-Myers and Keegan (2019) argue that physical literacy professional development should be responsive to the teachers' context and needs. Furthermore, Armour and Yelling (2007, p.177) suggest that in order for professional development to be effective "teachers in their professional learning communities or networks [need to] play a leading role". This may be helped or hindered because of the external structures, power dynamics and individual agency of teachers.

We argue throughout this paper that a greater focus on the 'how' of professional development delivery rather than just the 'what' is crucial to better understand how professional development can be more effective and sustainable.

Professional vulnerability a transferable concept

Whilst professional vulnerability appears to have conceptual and empirical contextual relevance in teaching PE it may be that it is also under exploited in the wider domains of community sport coaching and sport development (Ives et al., 2021; Mackintosh, 2021). An increasing workforce of individuals in the professional sphere of sport development are being stretched to undertake more diverse activities drawing upon new skills, knowledge and understanding that is perhaps beyond their initial training (Thompson et al., 2021). This has

been evidenced in studies of local authority sport development professionals in the movement from what Bloyce et al., (2008) refer to as the workforce transition from 'tracksuits to suits'. Vulnerability and emotions of attachment to new ways of seeing and doing roles in this area have potential parallels to PE. Indeed, Mackintosh (2012) in his later study of local government sport, development and community workers found many expressing concerns at the direction of travel which left them exposed. Specific notions of vulnerability here were around use of evidence-based practice, research-informed professional ideas and historical gaps in contemporary practice and policy insights. It is also worth highlighting that the distinct differences between subtle professional domains are central to acknowledging multiple constructs of professional vulnerabilities as opposed to a single reified concrete notion of professional vulnerability that is fixed and unchanging (Thompson et al., 2020).

The field of sport and active recreation has been quantified as having between 300-400,000 employees (CIMSPA, 2021; Mackintosh, 2021; Sport England, 2018). Likewise, the parallel, and often overlapping delivery area of sport coaching has as many as 2.4 million qualified and unqualified volunteer and employed coaches in the United Kingdom (Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2018; Sport Coach UK, 2021). It has been estimated that 94,000 of these coaches are in some form of paid employment (Statista, 2021). In a recent study of the professionalisation of coaching and the landscape of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) it was identified that professional vulnerability by coaches was a reason for non-progression through the pathway of coach education (Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2018; Mackintosh & Carter, 2018). Furthermore, multiple studies have identified the precarious nature of employment in this sphere of sport development (Gale et al., 2021; Ives et al., 2021). Norman and Rankin-Wright (2018) specifically examined the precarious nature of female coaching employment and highlighted the underpinning lack of clear professional pathways and support as drivers for such characteristics. The recent Mackintosh and Carter (2018)

national study of 1500 coaches, 46 NGBs, higher education providers and 12 national stakeholder agencies showed that technology, changing policy and professional environments alongside diverse expectations from coach education of very different audiences can induce a sense of vulnerability. It is apparent that coach education and coaching professional practice research has started to tentatively engage with the notions of professional vulnerability (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Gibson & Groom, 2021; Harman & Doherty, 2019) alongside wider research that has examined coaching vulnerability, precariarity of employment and emotions (Ives et al., 2021; Gale et al., 2019). In areas of this relatively new body of work implications similar to those in this PE teacher research are identified around performance of identity, role management and in several of the empirical studies exploration of front stage and backstage identities through using Goffman's work on dramaturgy (Ives et al., 2019; Ives et al., 2021). This could perhaps be a useful theoretical synergy for the work in this area, especially where individuals 'embrace', 'mask' or hide such vulnerabilities as is discussed later in this paper.

Core to coaching and sport development are the 150,000 voluntary sector sport clubs in the UK, with an estimated 70,000 in England and their associated membership, participants, volunteers and ad hoc helpers. Consistent research has shown that the volunteer base in the UK and abroad experiences aspects of concern in their 'practices' (Mackintosh, 2021; Mills & Mackintosh, 2021; Nichols, 2012). Other domains of research have also begun to explore the precariousness and vulnerabilities of refereeing in sports such as football where emotions of fear, anger and loneliness are exacerbated and, indeed, amplified by engagement in officiating (Potrac et al., forthcoming). Such conceptual ideas explored in this paper around professional vulnerability may be helpful in examining ideas such as those raised by Nichols et al., (2012) and how they question whether we are now 'selling' or developing our volunteers in sport and physical activity policy spaces. Furthermore, an ongoing concern in this vital policy implementation space in the UK and abroad is the ability to retain volunteers (Cuskelly et al.,

2006; Harris et al., 2009; Mackintosh & Mills, 2021). Physical education, volunteer-led sport provision, community sport development and sport coaching practice all seem to be areas that offer opportunities to empirically and conceptually explore professional vulnerability. In many ways primary teachers are asked to step out of the 'crowded policy space' (Houlihan, 2000) that is school sport development. This perhaps opens a window for asking more nuanced and pointed questions as to the challenges faced by those that step into what appear ever more interchangeable areas of professional expertise. It could be assumed that skill sets are fluid and interchangeable, but that in evermore cases such as the few identified above we begin to see tensions and fissures in professional identities expressed (or not) through professional vulnerabilities. The paper draw attention to the vulnerabilities expressed by teachers when undertaking physical literacy professional development using micropolitical theory theoretical lens.

Conceptualising experts and expertise

We define experts in their essence as having specialised knowledge from training and experience in a specific professional field (Gardiner, 2021). We also support the view that the knowledge base that delineates expertise not only legitimises experts' position, but it also influences what problems are visible to teachers and what range of solutions are entertained in relation to PE and the classroom pedagogy (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). In this paper we question the role of such expert trainers in a physical literacy in-service education programme and how experiences and the meanings derived from this shape vulnerabilities and sensitivities. Berliner (1988) in a seminal commentary around experts, expertise and development of knowledge across multiple fields including sport, nursing, education, physics and pedagogy suggested limited was known at this time 35 years ago. A core point made here was that knowledge is fragmented due to it depending upon what behaviours, skills and knowledge are

selected to be researched to evaluate expert status. The theory proposed by Berliner is a linear, rationale developmental model from stage one to five from novice to expert. We question such a construct. The expert teacher trainer they call for is intuitively aware of where to be and what to do. This long held assumed position is not what we acknowledge. Indeed, experts in developing expertise in physical literacy in this programme are varied in their positionality with the teachers they worked with but assumed to be co-producers in knowledge. He does, however, argue for the experts and who they work with in on-going teacher training having to play their role in 'acknowledging the complexity of teaching and encouraging the acquisition of a broad set of understandings and abilities, rather than a formulaic set of behaviours that is not ultimately useful' (Berliner, 1988; 113).

Other authors have highlighted that experts in training have core features such as credibility with participants, shorter preparation time and limited learning curve in the content of delivery (Trautman and Klein, 1993). Again, this inherently assumes a master-novice power relation. Furthermore, in the context of this study we suggest that those deemed experts are in fact the deliverers of the physical literacy training and established as expert by the professional development vocational field. We support the view that 'another area that warrants further exploration is the value that an advanced level of proficiency adds to the learner and to the organization' (Williams, 2001; 95). But here we view this more critically in the sense that vulnerabilities, power relations and sensitivities may need to be considered, and not simply that experts 'add value' unproblematically.

Theoretical Framework

This research paper draws upon micropolitical theory to inform how teacher professional vulnerability is navigated during professional development (Blase & Anderson, 1995; Blase & Bjork, 2010; Blase & Blase, 2002; Kelchtermans & Ballet 2000, 2002a). This framework has been applied with student teachers (Zhu et al., 2018) but has yet to be utilised with qualified teachers across both primary and secondary contexts. Micropolitics ‘‘is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves’’ (Blasé, 1991, p. 1). There is conflict, tension, rivalry, and struggle at one end of micropolitics, and at the other end, there is cooperation, collaboration, and coalition-building (Blasé, 1991; Tan 2015). Micropolitics act in overt and covert ways within organizations, as individuals and groups seek formal and informal powers to achieve their goals (Tan, 2015). This implies that micropolitical behaviours have identifiable patterns and can be recognized introspectively. Through the lens of micropolitical theory, becoming and being a teacher is a political endeavor which involves the continuous negotiation of organizational power (Jokikokko et al., 2017; Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002a). According to Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002a, p.756), micropolitical literacy is how teachers learn to *read* the micropolitical reality and to *write* themselves into it.

Micropolitical theory has been widely applied in school leadership (e.g., Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1989; Blase & Anderson, 1995), educational reform (e.g., Blase & Bjo¨rk 2010), administrator–teacher relationships (e.g., Blasé, 1989), teacher education (e.g., Hodkinson and Hodkinson 1997), and teacher collaboration (e.g., Achinstein, 2002). Ehrich and Millwater (2011) distinguished three categories of power strategies: ‘‘power over,’’ ‘‘power with,’’ and ‘‘power through’’. Table 1 below illustrates Ehrich and Millwater (2011) power strategies and identifies a range of examples for each.

[INSERT TABLE 1]

Moreover, Ehrich and Millwater (2011) argue that internships are inherently micropolitical, which involves ‘‘juggling’’ of powers, influences, and relationships. This too could be said for professional development as an ongoing process of enhancing professional practice. Despite wide applications of micropolitical theory, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, currently, there is no research on teacher professional vulnerability within professional development from the perspective of micropolitical theory. To fill this gap, this paper examines the micropolitical realities of the participants as they navigate professional vulnerability when undertaking (physical literacy) professional development.

Methodology

This research adopted the ontological position of constructivism. Constructivism asserts that the social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman, 2008). A constructivist approach acknowledges the interconnected nature of the social phenomena and social actors. As Kemmis and MacTaggart (2008, p.277) highlight "if practices are constituted in social interaction with people, then changing practice is also a social process". Throughout this research social interaction took place with various social actors including: interaction between and among teachers, and the professional development provider therefore, constructivism was adopted as the most suitably aligned ontological position.

This research also adopted the epistemological position of interpretivism. Interpretivism requires social scientists to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2008). An interpretivist approach allows for the researcher to work more closely with participants in the professional development process (Kirk, 2010; Armour and Yelling, 2007). Interpretivism considers the existence of multiple realities and is relevant to this study as the participant teachers are actively involved in constructing their 'reality'. This approach supports the exploration of social phenomena by investigating reality from the perspectives of the beings living, acting and thinking within it (Schultz, 1962).

The professional development programme consisted of a series of collaborative professional development sessions (n=7), lesson observations and reflections and mentoring from a PE teacher and physical literacy expert. The content of the professional development session is outlined in the table below:

[INSERT TABLE 2]

The research was conducted with primary generalist teachers (n=3) and secondary PE specialists (n=11) across three schools within the UK, over a twelve-week period. The impact of the professional development was captured using semi-structured interviews prior to the professional development commencing, immediately after the professional development period and participants were then interviewed again after a period of three months. Semi-structured interviews as well as extensive field notes, lesson observations and evaluations were analysed using abductive thematic analysis and key themes were represented using pen profiles. Pen profiles were used to represent the analysis (MacKintosh et al., 2011) in relation to micropolitical theory including the structural (macro, meso and micro) and power (over, with and through) themes.

This research adheres to the ethical requirements set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2018). Ethics was granted by the supervising University. Participant anonymity is preserved by using pseudonyms in the research findings.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research are presented in two sections: (1) structural professional vulnerability and (2) micropolitical professional vulnerability practicums.

Structural professional vulnerability

Professional vulnerabilities were identified when exploring the barriers to implementing physical literacy within the participants' practice. Within the responses it was possible to observe a structural relationship between their concerns (expressions of professional vulnerability) at the macro, meso and micro level.

[INSERT FIGURE 1]

Political (Macro Level)

Amy described how she had received very little training in PE initially and over her career to date, despite feeling under confident in her teaching of PE.

> *"We have never ever had, and this is why I'm petrified, any PE training, ever, never, I qualified this is my fourth year in teaching, so I qualified like 5 years ago, and we had like 2 hours during my PGCE and that's it." [Amy: Opening Interview – Primary Teacher]*

Traditionally, PE teachers have engaged in comparatively little professional development. PE, in both national and international contexts, has been viewed as a low-status subject (Ennis, 2006; Dowling Næss, 1996; Moreira et al., 2002) and this may indicate that funding and time for professional development have, both presently and in the past, been difficult to secure (Armour and Yelling, 2007). Nieto (2009) also highlights the limited availability of high-quality professional development opportunities that are both meaningful and relevant to the individuals, but also move beyond traditional one day delivery, which is reported to be ineffective (Armour and Yelling, 2007; Edwards et al., 2019). When PE teachers engage in professional development opportunities they are often delivered by a plethora of different providers, ranging from government agencies, sport specific organisations to individual consultants. Armour and Yelling (2007) argue that fundamental questions about PE teacher development, its impact upon pupil learning, and the nature of effective PE professional development are long overdue. The low status of PE and the lack of understanding of the impact of effective professional development on students' learning, have together compounded the

lack of opportunities, funding and time to conduct professional development. This highlights a conflict, tension, rivalry, and struggle at the macro and meso end of micropolitics, suggesting that there is a lack of cooperation, collaboration, and coalition-building (Blasé, 1991; Tan 2015) between subjects and the equity of provision.

Similarly, Harris (2014) found Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) to be inadequately preparing future PE teachers to promote healthy, active lifestyles. Tremblay, Pella, and Taylor (1996) also found that the lack of teacher preparation was the greatest barrier to quality PE programs. PE teacher education has been described as inadequate in many countries worldwide, including the United States (McKenzie et al., 1998), Britain (Carney & Armstrong, 1996), and Australia (Moore et al., 1997).

Unsurprisingly, teachers recommended that professional training and continuous professional development needed to be improved to adequately equip teachers in the delivery of PE. Olivia stressed that this would only happen if a renewed value was placed on PE from the highest level (government).

> *"I think if the government changed what they were looking for, in schools so that it wasn't just literacy and numeracy focused then that would feed down and would feed down to schools and then it would feed down to universities teaching teachers and they'd get more time, and there would be more CPD opportunities and then when the teachers are on board it passes down to the pupils and it's on the news, the parents" [Olivia: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This highlights that initial teacher training and professional development seems to be prioritised in proportion to the value the government places on specific subjects. For example, time would be allocated for numeracy and literacy in the primary context and GCSE PE in the

secondary context as these are directly linked to school based and public facing accountability measures (Ennis, 2006; Green, 2005; Thorburn, 2007). Opportunities do exist for core physical education, but it is inundated with a plethora of 'one-shot' professional development courses. Often these are undertaken away from the classroom or school context, without specific follow-up and delivered by non-PE specialists such as National Governing Body (NGB) coaches. Armour and Yelling (2007) and Connolly and James (1998) argue that these one-day professional development courses are unlikely to have a lasting impact upon teachers' practice. However, this is precisely the kind of activities that has, to date, characterised much of the professional development available within PE, particularly in the UK (Armour & Yelling, 2007).

Organisational (Meso Level)

Overwhelmingly, there was a clear consensus across both primary and secondary contexts that PE was not considered a priority in schools. Amy highlighted how PE does not have the same priority as literacy and numeracy.

> *"PE is not as high a priority as literacy and numeracy" [Amy: Opening Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Stephen argues that because of this lower priority, professional development opportunities are not sought out or regularly offered and encouraged in PE.

> *"The amount of PE CPD that teachers get, certainly in primary school, isn't huge. And from a school's point of view how much time do schools actually give to CPD training for PE? You know, it's all very well to say "Well, no-one's giving us these*

opportunities," in how many schools do you go and seek those opportunities? So while schools are quite happy sending people out for assessment training and maths and literacy and all those sorts of things... Certainly we've not the culture here where we've actually sought PE courses to send people out on; or encouraged teachers to come to us and say "Look, I'm really not sure about teaching netball, what can I do?" [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]

Finally, Andrew described how there is a lack of value of PE because students are being taken out of lessons.

"Kids in Year 10 and Year 11 are taken out of PE because it's not valued." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]

There seems to be a disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality of PE philosophy and practice. On the face of it, PE concerns itself with the holistic development of the individual, contributing to health, wellbeing and social development. In reality, this vision is overshadowed and engulfed by a dominant and overpowering discourse around academic examination performance within both the primary and secondary school contexts (Ennis, 2006; Green, 2005 and Thorburn, 2007).

Structural (Micro Level)

Structural themes included buy-in and accountability, confidence, competence and a lack of professional development, extra-responsibilities, leadership role, capacity, time and stress. Joe and Andrew both described how teacher buy-in is incredibly important.

"No, I just think, obviously, buying into it" [Joe: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]

"I feel like I bought into it then, and why haven't I bought into it now? We're not doing it. And that is lack of engagement for us, and I think it comes from buying into it. I think at the start some of us were really like "Yeah, let's do that." And I know other things happened, people have babies and people are off sick and people change roles in departments and stuff like that; but we haven't mentioned it." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]

Buying-in to the concept is essential if it is to become part of a teacher's own belief and values system and therefore part of their practice. Without clear buy-in or perhaps accountability it is unlikely that there will be any long-term change in practice (Durden-Myers, 2020). Stephen and Olivia expressed how their own, and other teachers' competence and confidence can also affect the operationalisation of PL.

"My own competence at the moment. But I know where I need to go with that, so that can improve… In the primary school setting and for the teachers it is subject knowledge and being PE specialists. I mean, when we talked before about the training that I've had, that's over 15 years, you know, it's minimal." [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]

"I think, like the teachers knowledge sometimes can affect because I don't feel too badly about knowledge in PE but I don't know really that much and some people are even just like know less than me, and I imagine if that was the case then you're going to be like not very confident at all, not going to want to teach it, so that would defiantly be a

barrier because you'd be restricting the children because you didn't know" [Olivia: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]

Teacher confidence could be an even more prevalent issue moving forwards given that, increasingly, primary PE is being outsourced to coaching companies (Evans and Davies, 2014; Parnell et al., 2016; Williams and Macdonald, 2015).

Stephen, Andrew and Luke alluded that core PE lessons can be seen as a low priority in relation to a teacher's planning and workload. Stephen, Andrew and Luke who all had extra teaching responsibilities and leadership roles and stated that their practice had been detrimentally affected by their other priorities.

"My role since January has just been changed, so taking on more sort of leadership management responsibility, has just meant that Fridays get knocked on the head. I'm just not in the class as much. And I think that's the biggest barrier for me at the moment, is how much actual contact time I've got with the children; that I can't just rearrange things the way that I could previously" [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]

"Me, personally, being dragged into different parts of the school for different reasons over the last couple of weeks has meant that I haven't planned or taught a proper lesson I think for two weeks." [Andrew: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]

"Other responsibilities that are put on you can sometimes hit the focus off maybe focusing on the physical literacy." [Luke: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]

These comments are related to the final structural theme identified, which was teacher capacity, time and stress. These factors have implications for the delivery of high quality and meaningful physical education experiences as well as having capacity to undertake professional development to understand and implement new initiatives and concepts such as physical literacy (Durden-Myers, 2020; Robinson, Randall and Barrett, 2018). This is supported by Amy who describes how she has relatively little time to plan all of her lessons to the same standard of numeracy and literacy.

> *"I know it sounds a lot but when you only get half a day to plan all your literacy lessons, all your numeracy lessons, all your guided reading lessons, there isn't much time left for science and topic, and PE and everything else. It's just time, I suppose." [Amy: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This view is reflected by Joe who stated that due to the pressure and accountability placed upon teachers with limited capacity prioritising key stage 4 lessons often takes priority.

> *"I suppose it's like anything isn't is, it's a very pressured job, and there's a lot of work to get done, and sometimes maybe, for a lesson you might not think about it as much as you would do in terms of maybe a key stage 4 lesson, or, a lesson that your being judged on a bit more, so the only barriers for me is obviously managing time to make sure all my lessons are using physical literacy and obviously developing that as much as possible" [Joe: Opening Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Dave and Charlie both alluded to how teacher capacity is limited and in order to fit everything in your need to be able to prioritise your workload.

"It all comes down to time. You can probably tell that everybody's pretty busy here in the way that we've missed so many lessons, it's bonkers. Because to survive in this place you need to prioritise." [Dave: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher].

"This has been the most difficult year I've had since I've been there. And that is partly due to staffing being a little bit stretched." [Charlie: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]

Teacher workload is well documented as an issue in the profession (Higton et al., 2017; DfE, 2018). It is important to understand and acknowledge this because it can be a barrier to operationalising physical literacy. In order to be able to undertake professional development or even have the time and space to improve lessons teachers must have the capacity to do so.

Micropolitical Professional Vulnerability

When exploring the relationship between the professional development provider and the participants a range of micropolitical practicums were observed.

[INSERT FIGURE 2]

Power Over

Relationships are often built upon mutual trust and respect. The nature of the researcher, coupled with their expertise, led to the researcher being perceived as a credible expert which then produced productive relationships that empowered teachers to improve and develop their practice. Gimbert and Nolan (2003) stress the importance of trust in supportive professional

development relationships in facilitating mutual synergism that supports the professional growth of the participant. This trust may have been achieved through an appreciation of expertise of the researcher this is supported by Olivia who stated how the researcher was clearly an expert in the field.

> *"like you're like the expert and like you had, like every time if there was something that I didn't know you could just give me an idea like off the top of your head, like google" [Olivia: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Jamie also stated how the combination of researcher expertise as well as disposition was beneficial in his development.

> *"I think it's just your expertise. The CPD's really helped as well, but I think if I was to pick one thing it would be the feedback… It's just that you're always helpful, you're always willing to provide feedback or just go above and beyond to help us, so nothing's too much or nothings too less, and I've really enjoyed having you around the building… Like I know other teachers have said it's really useful. I just want to thank you for coming as well because I've learnt a lot off you, so it's been really beneficial for me." [Jamie: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Jamie and Olivia highlight how the researcher needed to have both expertise and interpersonal skills to be effective. Developing a safe and supportive professional development environment is key to nurturing teachers' confidence and competence.

As described above, this was not a judgemental process but instead was just a genuine attempt to make each participant a better practitioner by improving their practice. Stephen highlights how he found the professional development challenging and valuable.

> *"I would just say that I have found the process challenging, but challenging in a good way… It's nice that something that comes along that you think "Do you know what, that actually makes sense. Why didn't I know about that? Why haven't we been doing that?" And then the biggest thing for any teacher is that you want to see an impact, a positive impact, on the children, isn't it? And I think, or I know, that the more I go down this route, the more positive it will be for the children and the better their experiences for physical activity will be. And, you know, starting to realise the knock-on effects that that could have. So, yeah, I found it challenging but I enjoyed it and it's been good. So, thank you." "I think I've really valued the process. I think... ideally have more time to do this." [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

As Stephen highlights, improvement in teaching practice will only take place if professional development is both meaningful, effective and enjoyable. The first thing the researcher/expert set about establishing was their credibility as both a teacher and a researcher. The expert wanted to identify with the participants so that she could build rapport and a relationship with the teachers. In order to establish credibility, the expert positioned herself as an experienced PE teacher by introducing her previous experience within primary and secondary education. The expert then also positioned herself as a physical literacy expert, embarking upon research that was a first of its kind in the field. This meant that the expert simultaneously and continually positioned herself as 'one of them', an insider with knowledge and experience as a PE teacher, and as an outsider, a researcher with an 'elevated'

understanding and experience of PE and physical literacy. This could also be observed as the researcher exerting power over (Ehrich & Millwater, 2011) the participants, with an 'elevated' understanding knowledge of physical literacy. Establishing credibility was important in generating buy-in from the participants, as teachers are more likely to accept advice and guidance once convinced by the researcher's credibility and expertise. For example, Joe (Secondary 1) asked the researcher to write a reference that he could include within his professional records, detailing his involvement in the research. This is a clear example of how the researcher was perceived as credible by the participants. Power over can be associated with negative characteristics such as to co-option or coercion (Ehrich & Millwater, 2011) but it is clear in this example that when approached sensitively power over can lead to teacher empowerment.

Power With

Providing opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, coalition and collegiality featured in the discussions. Stephen describes the collaborative nature of the professional development.

> *"Myself, Amy and Olivia have started to discuss it a bit more and the idea of us all doing it at the same time on a Monday came out of the fact that we were in our own little bubbles. You know, I did my PE, and Olivia did hers and Amy did hers, and we never really talked about it." [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Joe also highlights how the professional development has encouraged professional conservations and group planning with his colleagues.

"I think its informed some of the planning that I've not been observed on when I've been teaching with other members of staff who have been involved like Jamie, because I teach with him two times a week erm we've been having a discussion about well, are we going to do it this was or can we do it, so yeah its defiantly informed discussions about our planning as well." [Joe: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]

Both the Primary one and Secondary one contexts expressed how they had, as a subject community, become closer discussing their practice as a team as a result of the professional development. This finding supports the notion that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.31) and people learn and develop their practice through being participants within a community (O'Sullivan, 2007; Wenger, 1998). However, when working with Secondary two, the researcher found it very difficult to identify an initial collective identity or indeed create a team ethos or shared philosophy during the intervention. It felt much more like a collection of individuals rather than a team dynamic. This is possibly a result of the additional responsibilities and structure of the department. For instance, there was not a PE department office where all staff were located; they had desks in a range of offices across the school. Two members of the PE department had whole school responsibilities for attainment which appeared to take precedence over their PE responsibilities. One member of staff was part-time, which left the head of department and second in department leading a team with priorities elsewhere. What can be taken from this research is that collaborative professional development can provide opportunities for meaningful discussions between teachers about physical literacy and physical education which in turn may develop their own and each other's practice (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2007). It does not however necessarily create a community of practice, whereby a group of people "deepen their knowledge, understanding and expertise in an area by interacting with one another on an on-

going basis" (Wenger, et al., 2002, p.4). In order to achieve this first an established community or the development of a subject community is required.

Power Through

The relationship between colleagues in a community of practice is an important factor. But so too is the relationship between the researcher and the teachers. Teachers identified the importance of the relationship with, and expertise of, the researcher. Stephen described the importance of having a supportive expert; one who you feel confident in sharing your ideas with.

> *"I think you need to have a relationship where you feel confidence with the other person and quite happy to openly share something. I think you've got that, that yes, you're the expert but you don't come over as someone going "Well, this is wrong, you need to do this" you've got that balance of understanding where we're coming from, and our skill set, and you sort of feeding in your knowledge to improve us. So, yeah, as I say, I didn't at any point think about Fridays as an "Oh no!" type thing, and I never felt in the reflection bit that I was being judged. [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Adam also highlighted how the researcher made everyone feel at ease.

> *"you've made everyone feel at ease, no one's really worried about the lessons anything like that, because they know its beneficial and it's not judgemental at all, so I think that's what's been good." [Adam: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

This was supported by Andrew who states how the researcher was supportive throughout the whole process.

> *"I think you broke me in gently and were very supportive throughout the process. I didn't feel judged at any point. You never said, "That was outstanding!" or "That needs improvement," or "You're at risk," or anything like that. It was a very supportive process in helping me understand what physical literacy is and how it can be embedded in our lessons." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Relationships are key to any learning whether that be between the teacher and the student or the researcher and the teacher. The teachers in this research all expressed how there was a strong relationship between themselves and the researcher. This could be due to the insider / outsider effect (Merton, 1972) and/or the empathy and emotional intelligence of the expert navigating the experiences sensitively in conjunction with expert credibility. This dynamic lead to the establishment of rapport and a secure professional relationship. This success was due to the professional development provider carefully considering her 'power through' the professional development and when to transact or facilitate, challenge or support and critique or praise.

Conclusion

This research examined the implications of professional vulnerability during teacher physical literacy professional development through the lens of micropolitical theory. As Kelchtermans (2009) describes, teachers' professional vulnerability is prone to be intensified while they are caught in dissonant structures and powers. For instance, when teachers find inconsistencies between the professional obligations that they envision and actualize (Webel

& Platt, 2015), they will feel vulnerable in their practicums. This is particularly pertinent to the effectiveness of physical literacy professional development, with current professional obligations and practice not necessarily being aligned with physical literacy informed practice. To that end, when implementing any change or new concepts within practice it is advised that professional development providers are sensitive an empathetic to the vulnerabilities of teachers as part of this process.

Durden-Myers and Keegan (2019) highlight that effective physical literacy professional development should make a long-term impact on teacher's pedagogy and understanding of physical literacy, as this provides clear evidence of the influence of the professional development. While this is true, it is also pertinent to understand and affect the systems and structures that either help or hinder this long-term impact. Using micro-political theory as a theoretical framework it offers a lens through which this political, sociocultural, and contextual world may be observed.

As the findings of this research identified, professional vulnerability is a multi-structural phenomenon. Participants may express their vulnerabilities in multiple or singular structural levels (macro, meso, micro), which may be helped or hindered in relation to the external and internal structures, such as but not limited to, power dynamics and personal agency. An awareness and appreciation of power structures including how they can be both supportive and/or unsupportive in facilitating long term impact is essential for professional development providers. This means that the objectives, outcomes and design of professional development interventions must consider the why, what, where, when and who of the content and the context. Professional development providers should where possible therefore lay the groundwork for facilitation, collegiality, collaboration, and coalition and empower teachers (power over, with and through) with the long-term in mind.

As a direct result of this process and the learning within this research we have recognised the issue with the use of the term 'expert' in elevating one person above another, further perpetuating power imbalances (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Gardiner, 2021). In future research and professional development, we advocate that the lived experience of all participants be recognised and that through collaboration, coalition and collegiately as a community we together find new and more effective ways of working, without elevating or privileging one form of knowledge over another. This mirrors the call to action for PE professional development providers by Armour and Yelling (2004; 110) 'to redefine a niche in the changing teacher development landscape and to find new ways of both conceptualising and providing expertise and support'.

This paper calls for the political, sociocultural, and contextual element of professional development to be given as much consideration as the professional development mechanism itself. Professional development can be more effective when connecting the what and how alongside the where and the who. Professional vulnerability when observed through a micropolitical lens can offer glimpses into this contextual world, revealing a different but equally important narrative around the wider context of successful and meaningful (physical literacy) professional development.

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Table 1: Power Strategies

Category	Examples
"Power over"	Coercion and cooption, and empowerment
"Power with"	Cooperation, collaboration, coalition and collegiality
"Power through"	Facilitation, transaction and negotiation

(Ehrich and Millwater, 2011)

Table 2: Professional Development Content

Week Number	Primary 1	Secondary 1	Secondary 2
0	Professional Development / Research Overview		
1	Physical Literacy Introduction		
2	Physical Literacy Philosophy		
3	Domains of Physical Literacy and the Physical Domain		
4	Affective Domain		
5	Cognitive Domain		
6	Physical, Affective and Cognitive in Practice / SWOT Analysis and Action Plan		Physical, Affective and Cognitive in Practice / Curriculum Design SWOT Analysis and Action Plan
7	Charting Physical Literacy Progress		No Session

Figure 1: Structural Professional Vulnerability Pen Profile

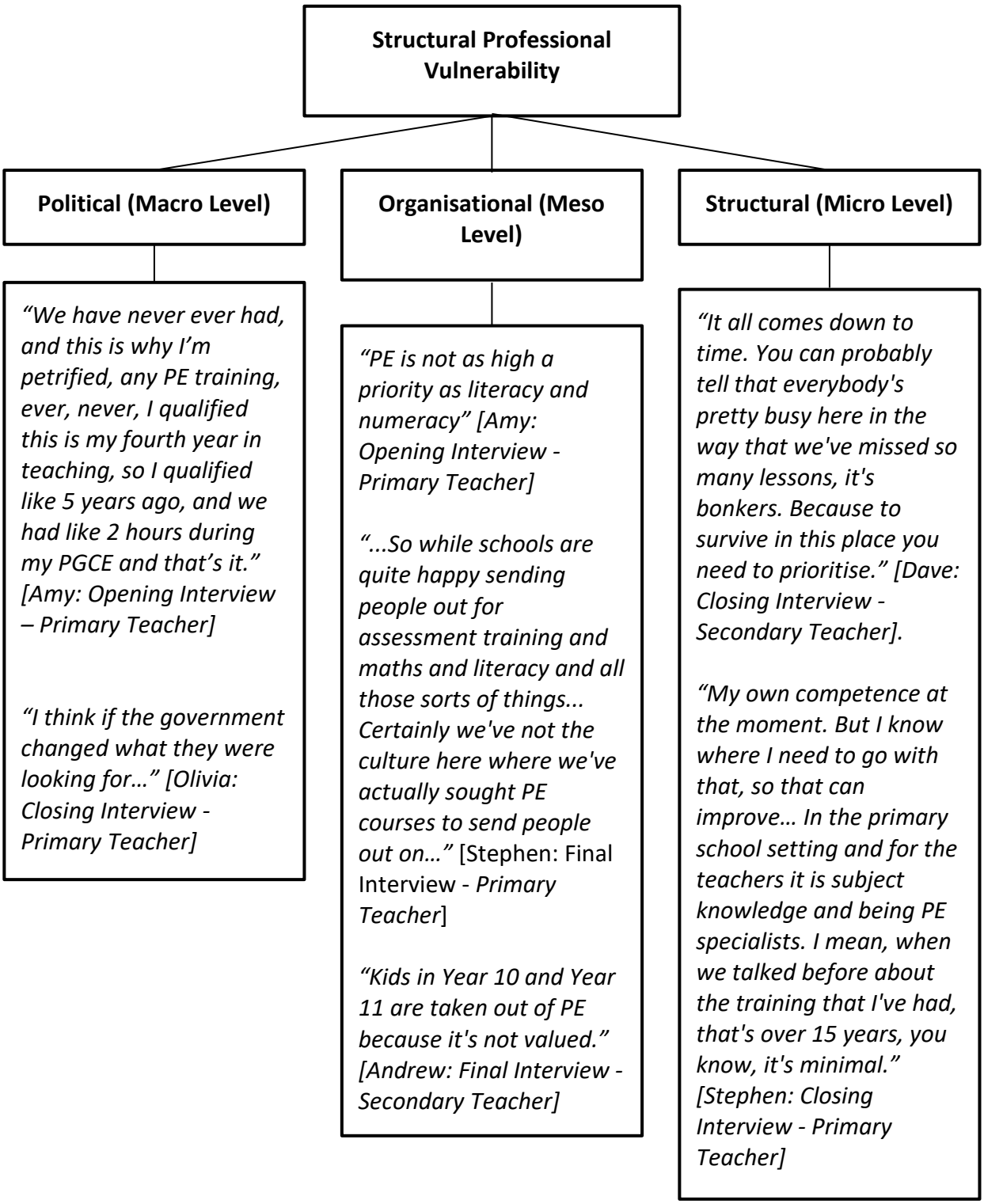

Figure 2: Micropolitical Professional Vulnerability Pen Profile