

## Reframing Teacher Knowledge: A model for professional knowledge development

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In January 2012, 14 Expert Subject Advisory Groups (ESAG) were established in England, funded by the Department for Education. These groups became sector led, with a remit to provide guidance and practical support for teachers, schools and teacher educators when implementing the 2013 National Curriculum. As a member of the Physical Education ESAG, I was concerned with how new teachers entering the primary education profession would become equipped with the knowledge required to teach the physical education programme of study. With unquestionable belief that a teacher is the critical factor in the education of young people, I developed a Professional Knowledge Model (PKM) for physical education with an explicit focus on teacher knowledge.

In this article, I present a non-subject-specific version of the PKM to highlight two points. The first is that the development of a teacher's knowledge is an iterative process — complex, ongoing and not simply determined by number of years teaching. The second is that anyone involved in the education of young people must be mindful that knowledge needs reviewing, i.e. an experienced teacher may need to return to learning from an earlier phase of their career. The PKM is a tool intended to help practitioners to reflect upon the breadth and depth of their knowledge and help signpost future professional learning needs.

### WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE?

A specialist body of knowledge is common to any definition of a professional, with the application of this knowledge often being unpredictable and requiring a level of judgement and decision-making (Furlong et al., 2000). What sets education and teaching apart from other professional contexts is that the knowledge required must be geared towards the learning and the knowledge creation of others (Hegarty, 2000). Determining what knowledge teachers need, however, is not straightforward, as epistemological viewpoints may vary from one professional to another.

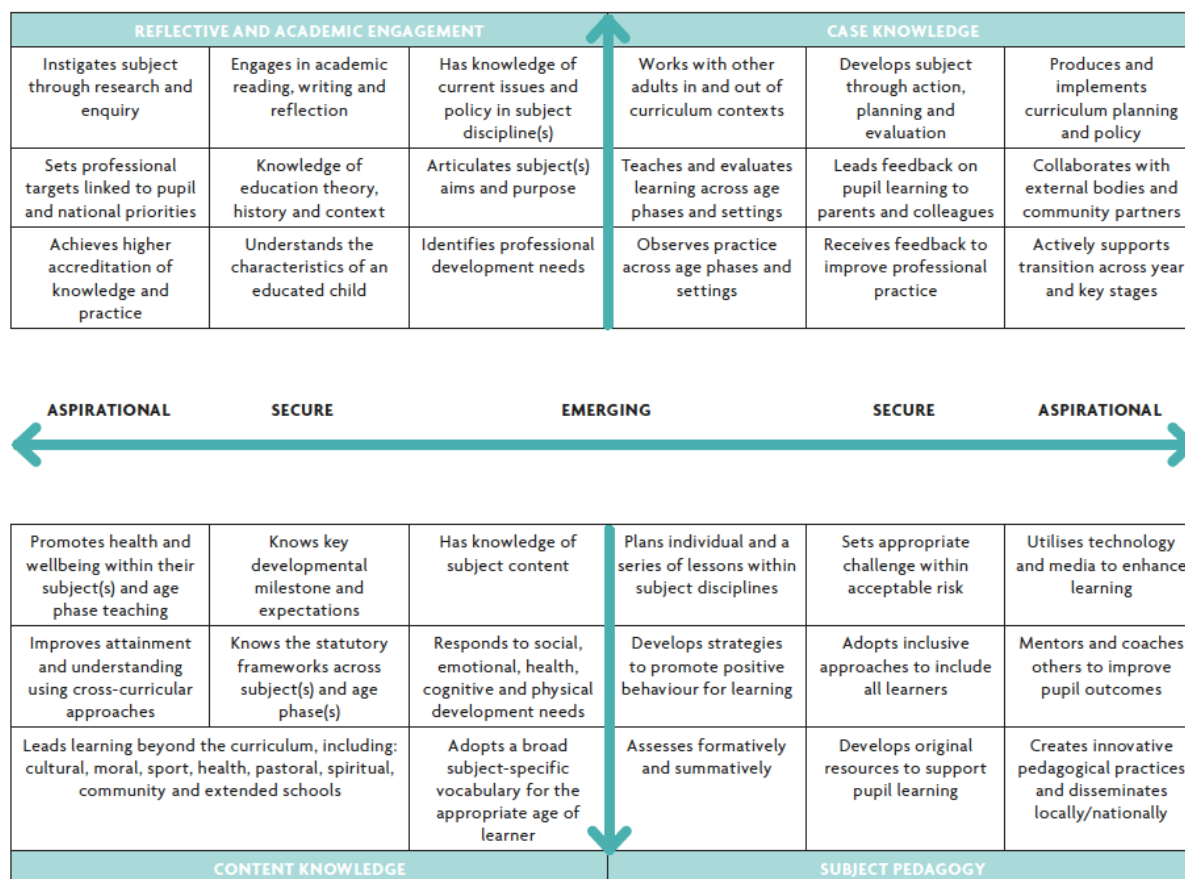
The early stages of developing the PKM required an extensive review of the literature across teacher education and physical education, to determine what knowledge was already of value to that professional community. From this, I synthesised 37 knowledge statements and presented them to the Physical Education ESAG, a sample of teacher educators and pre-service teachers from 16 initial teacher education (ITE) providers across England (Randall, 2016). The knowledge statements were critically debated and organised into categories of emerging, secure and aspirational stages. From the knowledge statements, four knowledge domains emerged: content knowledge, subject pedagogy, case knowledge and reflective and academic engagement.

The culmination of this research was the PKM (please see **Figure 1** for a non-subject-specific version of this model). The study concluded that teacher educators and pre-service teachers believed that the four knowledge domains in the PKM had shared importance within their professional role (Randall, 2016). The same study also revealed that variations of confidence

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occurred across the four professional knowledge domains, with pre-service teachers saying that in some instances they had been taught ‘secure’ and ‘aspirational’ forms of knowledge on their ITE programme ahead of knowledge at a more ‘emerging’ stage. These findings have implications for both ITE and professional development programme design.

FIGURE 1: PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE MODEL (NON-SUBJECT-SPECIFIC)



## USING THE PKM TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

At the centre of the PKM lies knowledge that underpins the ‘emerging’ phase. Teacher knowledge then moves progressively outwards until it becomes aspirational and expert in nature.

Teachers at any point in their career could use the PKM in the following ways:

- To identify their current stage of teacher learning as they aim to progress from an emergent, secure or aspirational level of professional knowledge
- A reflective tool to identify areas of strength and areas in need of further development
- A curricular outline for professional development programmes
- A map of career progression
- A reviewing tool for institutional programmes, ensuring a breadth of opportunity for knowledge development.

For colleagues working within ITE, the PKM could also prompt the following questions:

- Are opportunities made available for development across all four knowledge areas on each programme route?
- (if applicable) Does progression through subject specialist routes ensure students reach an aspirational level of professional knowledge?
- What aspects of the programme are strengths that could be shared with other providers or disseminated out of the local context?
- What aspects of the programme require further development?

Although not intended to present teacher knowledge as a set of knowledge facts, the PKM aims to engage teachers and teacher educators in a process of critical reflection about professional knowledge development.