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# Curriculum reform in Wales: Physical education teacher educators' negotiation of policy positions

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## Abstract

This paper reports on research that explored the experiences of secondary Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) professionals' simultaneous negotiation and implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW) Health and Well-Being (HWB) Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) and policies focused on the transformation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales. The study was an exploratory case study of PETE professionals working within one university's ITE programme. Data were generated through documentary analysis of PETE and ITE programme materials and semi-structured interviews with staff involved in programme management and delivery. Data analysis employed Ball and colleagues' conceptualisation of policy actors and contexts to critically examine the varied policy positions that PETE professionals adopt in navigating and negotiating enactment of the HWB AoLE within their ITE provision. Attention is drawn to the significance of historical and culturally situated dimensions of secondary physical education and PETE in Wales, and significant changes to the professional culture of ITE, in shaping PETE educators' engagement with the HWB AoLE. The paper concludes by contending

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that ITE institutions in Wales need to further consider how PETE (and other) educators can be actively supported to engage in sophisticated policy work within their institutions and across policy and professional networks.

#### KEYWORDS

Ball, initial teacher education (ITE), physical education teacher education (PETE), policy actors, policy enactment, Welsh curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, a series of significant, transformational reforms have been advanced in Wales, with the aim of 'raising standards; reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers' (Welsh Government, 2017a, p. 2) and delivering an education system that is a source of 'confidence and pride' (Welsh Government, 2015, p. 2).

Central to the delivery of this transformational agenda has been the recommendation for significant reform to the curriculum and assessment arrangements for all young people 3–16 (Donaldson, 2015; Taylor & Power, 2020) and the re-professionalisation of the teaching workforce (Furlong, 2015). Against this backdrop, the specific aim of the study was to explore Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) professionals' simultaneous negotiation and implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales' (CfW) Health and Well-Being (HWB) Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) and policies focused on the transformation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales. Employing theoretical perspectives on policy enactment developed by Ball and colleagues (Ball et al., 2011; 2012; Braun et al., 2010) the study conceptualised PETE educators' policy work and positions as variously enabled and constrained by the complex policy context that they were navigating. Two research questions framed the study and provide the foci for this paper: (1) What are the contextual dimensions of policy and curricula reform that are shaping PETE educators' engagement with the new CfW HWB AoLE and developments in ITE provision in Wales? (2) What elements of policy positions are evident in PETE educators' enactment of the new CfW HWB AoLE and policies related to the developments in ITE provision in Wales? It provides important and detailed insight into the ongoing negotiations of policy positions that are inherent in PETE professionals' enactment of the CfW HWB AoLE and their simultaneous navigation of requirements associated with newly formed ITE partnerships (Welsh Government, 2017b). As explained below, these have fundamentally changed university-school relations in ITE provision.

Accordingly, we contend that changes impacting ITE institutions, programmes and ITE professionals are, significant and prospectively, highly influential in the enactment of the new CfW and the HWB AoLE specifically. This study therefore foregrounds the need to situate PETE professionals' enactment of curriculum reforms within complex and notably fluid, institutional and policy contexts. In so doing, it extends international research understandings of the policy work of teacher educators and PETE professionals (Barwood et al., 2017; Lambert & O'Connor, 2018; Lambert & Penney, 2020) and affirms the need for teacher educators to be supported as key actors in contemporary reforms of curriculum and ITE. The following sections extend the theoretical and contextual background to the study.

## POLICY ENACTMENT, POLICY CONTEXTS AND ACTOR POSITIONS

To address the research questions above, we have drawn on Ball et al.'s work on enactment (Ball et al., 2011a, 2011b, 2012) and subsequent applications of it that have focused on curriculum reform in PE and the work of PETE professionals in expanding or limiting readings of new curriculum specifications (Lambert & Penney, 2020; Penney, 2013). The emphases that we specifically adopted from this work are that PETE actors' engagement with the new CfW HWB AoLE is informed by sets of complex repeatable, active, dynamic and contested processes, which are mediated and institutionally rendered (Braun et al., 2010). Furthermore, as previously argued by Ball et al. (2011) making sense of such engagement can be undertaken by focusing on analytically distinguishable sets of interplays between the contextual dimensions of policy and curricula *and* the capacities of educators as policy actors in the translation and enactment of policy and curricula. The limits of space mean that our illustrations of different contextual dimensions and of characteristics of various policy actor positions direct attention to those dimensions and positions most pertinent to the findings presented later in the paper.

### Policy contexts

The importance of context in policy enactment is captured by Ball et al. (2012, p. 24) in noting that 'context initiates and activates policy processes and choices which are continuously constructed and developed, both from within and without, in relation to policy imperatives and expectations'. Furthermore, Ball et al.'s (2012) conceptualisation of policy contexts prompts exploration of the interplay between material, structural, cultural and relational resources and conditions, articulated via four interrelated dimensions of context; *external*, *situated*, *professional* and *material*. Table 1 provides examples of these dimensions in the context of this study.

*External* contexts reflect that policy enactment occurs amidst 'pressures and expectations generated by *wider* local and national policy frameworks' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 36). In this instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Welsh Government, Estyn and the Education Workforce Council (EWC) could each be seen to generate different expectations and pressures pertaining to ITE provision and teacher educators' engagement with the CfW and their policy work with teachers and schools (see Table 1).

*Situated* contexts and their inherent links to *professional* contexts are also important. As illustrated in Table 1, situated contexts encompass those 'aspects of context that are historically and locationally linked to the school [or ITE institution]' Ball et al. (2012, p. 21), while professional contexts relate to institutionalised values and culture. We particularly direct attention to the interplay between these dimensions, with the combined influence of historical practices, demographic features, institutional traditions, and political relations evidenced in the maintenance of distinctive ITE (and PETE) identities and practices. Layers of cultural, political, and institutional traditions have shaped the role Welsh universities have played in the development and practice of ITE (see Grigg & Egan, 2020) and PETE specifically.

*Material* contexts encompass infrastructure and resources, including staffing and budgets, that also variously enable or constrain policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012). Once again, the inter-connected nature of dimensions is important to note. In ITE in Wales, it is evident, for example, that levels and distribution of resources may be influenced by external, situated and/or professional contexts.

**TABLE 1** Examples of the contextual dimensions of policy enactment within Wales (adapted from Ball et al., 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2020)

Contextual dimension	Description	Examples of contextual dimensions specific to the Welsh education system
External	Comprised of international and national organisations and agents that influence agendas for/of transformation of education within Wales through specific policy frameworks and texts	(1) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Welsh Education Reform Journey (OECD, 2017) (2) Welsh Government, National Mission for Education (Welsh Government, 2017) (3) General Workforce Council Wales, (4) New curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019). (5) Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (Furlong, 2015; Welsh Government, 2018a) (6) Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) (7) Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers Cymru (USCET Cymru) (8) Estyn
Situated	Culturally specific and historical traditions of local educational institutions and intakes	(1) Cultural and historical role of Welsh Universities in Teacher Education and professional development (see Grigg & Egan, 2020), (2) Role of Regional Consortia in the development of professional learning (3) Historical role of Welsh Local Authorities (4) Newly established traditions based on ITE partnership accreditation (Welsh Government, 2018b)
Professional	Values, teacher commitments and experiences and policy management in schools and universities	(1) Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership (Furlong, 2015; Welsh Government, 2018a) (2) Historical culture of the PETE programmes (3) Professional experiences of ITE educators (see Pugh et al., 2020) (4) Values of specific schools of education within universities
Material	Staffing, budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure found at an in-situ level within institutions	(1) Welsh Government Hwb: Website and collection of online tools provided to all schools in Wales by the Welsh Government. <a href="https://hwb.gov.wales">https://hwb.gov.wales</a> (2) Professional Identities of PETE (3) Curricula and learning resources used within ITE programmes

In this study, the application of Ball and colleagues' heuristic conceptualisation of these dimensions have enabled us to explore the contextual dimensions of ITE reforms (re)shaping PETE educators' engagement with the new CfW and specifically, the HWB AoLE. The accompanying conceptualisation of actor positions and the policy work associated with various positions, facilitated our exploration of the sorts of policy work that PETE professionals were engaged in as they navigated and negotiated their enactment of the new CfW and the changes to ITE in Wales.

## Actor positions and policy work

In articulating various actor positions that educators may adopt, negotiate, aspire to and/or resist, Ball et al. (2012) emphasised the fluid rather than fixed nature of positions, such that individual actors may adopt different positions in different settings. Subsequent research has expanded the conceptualisation to include other or hybrid positions and simultaneously

**TABLE 2** Outline of possible policy actor positions and associated policy work (Adapted from Ball et al., 2011; Lambert & Penney, 2020)

Policy position	Characteristics of policy work
Narrators	Interpretation, selection and enforcement of meanings
Entrepreneurs	Advocacy, creativity and integration
Outsiders	Entrepreneurship, partnership and monitoring
Transactors	Accounting, reporting, monitoring/supporting, facilitating
Enthusiasts	Investment, creativity, satisfaction and career
Translators	Production of texts, artifacts and events
Critics	Union representatives (reps): monitoring of management, maintaining counter-discourses
Receivers	Coping, defending and dependency
Provocateurs	Sensitive challenge of existing discourses, provoking new meanings and possibilities

recognise additional forms of policy work (Lambert & Penney, 2020; see Table 2), while also affirming the need to always recall the influence of contexts in shaping possibilities for individual actors to engage policy work and adopt particular actor positions. In the description that follows, we foreground those policy actor positions that emerged as most significant; *Narrator*, *Transactors*, *Translators* and *Receivers*.

As outlined by Ball et al. (2012), the notion of *narrator* reflects that actors interpret policy, generate visions and engage in the storytelling of policy. 'Effective narratives speak in and combine different logic and languages ... creating different conditions of possibility and recruiting different kinds of support, both moral and practical from teachers, students and others' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 53). Hence, our interest was in what policy narratives would be constructed, by whom and how, as PETE educators engaged with the HWB AoLE and wider changes to ITE.

*Translatory* policy work is arguably inherent in narration. As described by Ball et al. (2012, p. 59), it includes the planning and production of 'events, processes and institutional texts of policy for others who are thus actively inducted into the "discursive patterns" [and particular readings] of policy'. It is often recognised by its positive approach to policy engagement and fulfils the role of 'speaking' policy directly to practice and in the process, serves the function of drawing individuals (such as teachers and PETE students) 'into a positive and active relation to policy as enactors' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 59).

The position of policy *transactor* focuses on the type of policy work that must be seen to be done and also accounted for in enactment. Transactory work is supportive of and facilitatory to policies both within and beyond the context of the university. For example, within the context of ITE partnerships, subject mentors are responsible for the facilitation of policy via provision of and support for school-based placements. Through transactory work, policy actors such as these bring different experiences, knowledge and perspectives into the ITE partnership and PETE programmes (Maguire et al., 2011).

The policy actor position of *receivers* is characterised by what Ball et al. (2012) note as high levels of compliance. These actors are often colleagues 'looking for guidance and direction rather than attempting any creativity'. Or, rather, their creativity is strongly framed by the [overt] possibilities of policy' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 63). Notably, receivers 'rely heavily on "interpretations of interpretations" and are attentive participants in and consumers of translation work' (ibid., p. 63).

As indicated above, we emphasise that the actor positions that any individual can and/or does adopt are fluid and may not be fully reflected in the descriptors presented in the

original representation. We anticipated that depending on their role within an institution (e.g., management/programme director, senior lecturer) PETE professionals may move between several positions and engage in contrasting types of policy work. In relation to the aim of the study, the conceptualisations of policy contexts, actors and policy work that we have described facilitated exploration and understanding of the connectivity *between* the dimensions of context *and* policy actor positions and work. Whilst we acknowledge what Ball et al. (2012) recognise as the 'seductive neatness of typologies' (p. 49) we also believe that if sensitively read and used as a set of heuristic principles, the conceptualisations enable an enriched understanding of the sophisticated and complex positions PETE and other professionals negotiate in the enactment of the new HWB AoLE within a new ITE programme. Before exploring this further we provide important additional background about the policy context this study related to.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION IN WALES

The design of the CfW has been a central pillar in educational reform that is framed as transformational. Whilst yet to be fully implemented, the CfW is based on the recommendations outlined within Donaldson's *Successful Futures* report (Donaldson, 2015) that proposed the development of curricula structured around four key purposes to enable learners' development. These include: (1) 'develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives' (2) 'enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work' (3) 'ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world' and (4) 'healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' (Welsh Government, 2019, p. 6). Within the new curriculum framework, these four purposes are expressed through six, integrated Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE); Expressive Arts; Health and Well-being; Humanities; Languages, Literacy and Communication; Mathematics and Numeracy; Science and Technology.

Specifications for each AoLE centre on a series of *Statements of What Matters (SWM)* that act as the foundation for learning outcomes. As illustrated by Hizli-Alkan, and Priestley (2019), the SWM have at their heart, a 'big ideas' conception of curriculum. For example, the HWB AoLE is comprised of five interrelated SWM that outline knowledge and skills that will underpin the learning and experience of pupils.

(1) Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits. (2) How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being. (3) Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others. (4) How we engage with different social influences shapes who we are and our health and well-being. (5) Healthy relationships are fundamental to our sense of belonging and well-being. (Welsh Government website, 2019)

The 'big ideas' evident within the SWM of the HWB AoLE, are designed to support educators to develop an approach towards health and well-being that enables educators to enact a vision of 'healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society' (Welsh Government, 2019, p. 73). As outlined in a moment, the concepts underpinning the 'big ideas' have implications for the actor positions that PETE can prospectively adopt in implementing a new ITE programme for secondary PE.

The above curriculum reform has also been accompanied by reforms designed to transform the professional standards for teaching and leadership in Wales and the accreditation mechanisms for new teachers. Building on recommendations outlined in the *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* report (Furlong, 2015), the Welsh Government outlined a set of

new teaching and leading professional standards that illustrate ‘the skills, knowledge and behaviours that characterise excellent practice and support professional growth’ (Welsh Government, 2018a, p. 2). As illustrated by Figure 1, the five professional standards are connected via a central focus on ‘values and dispositions’ of the educator.

Returning to the work of Ball and colleagues, the new professional standards are reflective of shifts in the external contexts and professional culture that promote new forms of professional and technical knowledge, blended with technical practices and critical reflection (see Furlong, 2020). Furthermore, changes to the institutional arrangements for ITE have a central role to play in the realisation of the new professional standards. Following Furlong, (2015, p. 7), the expectation is that structural transformations in the way ITE in Wales is designed and enacted will ‘encourage the achievement of a new kind of teacher professionalism ... appropriate for the challenges of 21st century schooling’.

Indicative changes to accreditation mechanisms are outlined within Figure 2. Integral to the proposed changes, is the idea that universities in Wales will no longer be solely responsible for the education and accreditation of teachers but rather, will need to *work in partnership with schools* (and other national non-government organisations) in the conceptualisation and enactment of teacher education programmes (Welsh Government, 2018b). Another significant element is the renewed importance of teacher educators’, students’ and teachers’ engagement and ‘active dialogue’ (Burn & Mutton, 2013; Mutton & Burn, 2020; Pugh et al., 2020; Welsh Government, 2018a) with research to inform practice. This engagement necessitates that in preparing graduating teachers within the new system, teacher educators must also reflect upon their own disciplinary and technical knowledge.

The above changes have implications for *all* ITE and school-based educators. Next, we turn attention to specific issues that these developments have raised for PETE in Wales.



FIGURE 1 Diagram to illustrate the professional standards for teaching and leadership in Wales, adapted from Welsh Government (2018a)



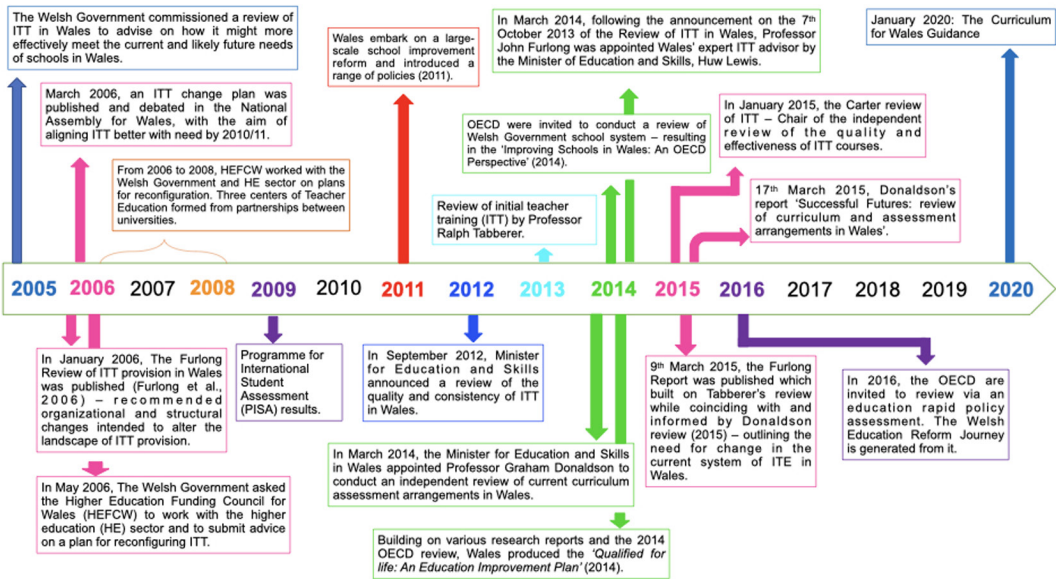


FIGURE 2 Timeline to demonstrate the historical nature of ITE policy development in Wales

## Educational transformation and PETE in Wales

The development of the HWB AoLE is an important curriculum development for PETE, re-positioning and re-articulating secondary PE as a specialism *within* the AoLE, rather than a stand-alone subject. The role of physical education in this context, is to contribute to the stated aim that the HWB AoLE will build learners' capacity to make informed decisions about their health and well-being and also to engage critically with a range of social influences which may impact on their values and behaviours' (Welsh Government, 2019, p. 3). The re-positioning is thus not merely structural—it simultaneously signals pedagogical re-orientation, with physical education challenged to embrace discourses that traditionally have not been privileged in the subject in Wales (Penney & Evans, 1999). The re-positioning of physical education within the HWB AoLE consequently poses questions for/of teacher *identities and positions*, as much as pedagogy in physical education. In PETE, these questions relate to the way graduating teachers will be supported to recognise and enact the new professional standards in their translation and interpretation of the new CfW and the HWB AoLE.

The reform measures directly focused upon the transformation of university-school partnerships also have implications that impact the professional identities, knowledge and practices of PETE professionals working within ITE. Whilst some empirical research is emerging on how educators within the Welsh primary and secondary education systems are engaged with aspects of this transformative agenda (Hizli-Alkan & Priestley, 2019; Kneen et al., 2020; Lyakhova, 2019; Pugh et al., 2020) what remains to be understood is what impact the new accreditation mechanisms for ITE will have on the policy work and positions that PETE actors engage in their reading and translation of the CfW HWB AoLE. What is apparent is that the reform context in Wales necessitates that teacher educators and PETE professionals specifically, reflect upon their own disciplinary knowledge and technical knowledge in what Furlong (2020), re-articulates as a vision of a teacher, 'who is able to draw on both practical and intellectually based conceptions of professional knowledge that underpins the current reforms to initial teacher education in Wales' (p. 42). In extending Furlong's vision and building on the work

from other similar policy situations (see Lambert & O'Connor, 2018), this case study focused on exploring PETE professionals' simultaneous negotiation and implementation of the CfW HWB AoLE and policies focused on the transformation of ITE in Wales. Before presenting findings, we outline the case study research design, data collection and analysis processes.

## AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

The research was designed as an exploratory case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002) comprised of one PETE programme located within a university ITE programme, with data collection undertaken between May 2019 and February 2020. Following Ball et al.'s (2012) principle of 'getting inside' institutions to understand policy and curricula enactment, the case was selected given its unique position as one of the newly formed ITE Training Partnerships in Wales. After gaining university ethical approval in May 2019, official approaches were made to the Dean of School for approval to undertake the study and invite staff and students working within the PETE programme. Participants were recruited with a view to capturing different insight of the various situated and external contexts and different professional cultures of the PETE programme. Recruitment of the participants also focused on ensuring that different positions across the ITE Training Partnership were captured. Consequently, the sample ( $n = 5$ ), chosen through purposive means, comprised two members of management for ITE (M1 & M2), the Programme Leader for the PGCE Secondary Physical Education and Sport (PLPETE), a Senior Lecturer (SLPETE) working on the same programme, and a Subject Mentor (SM) for secondary PE who was positioned within an associated partnership secondary school.

The participants of the study are not merely 'subjects' but constitute colleagues of the lead and 3rd author and former teachers of the 2nd author. The 2nd author acted as the principal researcher within the study. Following Mishler (1986) we found these *a priori* relationships enabled the participants to express what they found to be salient aspects of their experience, thus giving voice to their engagement with policy.

Data were generated through a blend of documentary method and semi-structured interviews. Following principles outlined by Bowen (2009) and Prior (2008, 2016), the documentary method involved organic sourcing (Hard et al., 2018) of a mixture of documents provided by the participants and publicly available documents (see Appendix A) that were collated for analysis ( $n = 11$ ). Selection of these documents was focused on further understanding the situated and external contexts and professional cultures of the secondary PETE programme and the newly established ITE partnership.

Informed by Ball et al.'s (2012) conceptualisation of contextual dimensions and using an analytical approach like that of Hard et al. (2018), the principal researcher explored the selected documents for characteristics of the contextual dimensions. Firstly, the principal researcher openly read the documents and making annotated notes on the documents that were considered to illustrate the contextual dimensions outlined by Ball et al. (2012). These notes were then discussed with the 1st author. Based on these discussions and in relation to the study questions, it was decided that the documents were reflective of several contextual dimensions. Further exploration of these contextual dimensions was then facilitated through the development of an interview guide used with the participants.

Following the document analysis, six semi-structured interviews were conducted; three with the Programme Leader, one with the Senior Lecturer on the PETE programme, one with two members of the ITE Management group and one with a PETE Mentor. The interviews ranged from one to two hours in duration. Focus of the interviews was guided by an interview guide that was based on the insights provided from the document analysis and the

conceptual principles aforementioned above. All interviews were conducted by the principal researcher (2nd author), digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were analysed through multiple readings using a combination of inductive and deductive coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Firstly, the interview transcripts were read for familiarisation by the principal researcher. Secondly, informed by the principles of contextual dimensions and policy actor positions (Ball et al., 2011, 2012) the transcripts were coded. Here, the focus lied at identifying any key phrases and key events that resembled indications of contextual dimensions or the type of policy work undertaken by the participants. Thirdly, a degree of deductive analysis was undertaken to ensure that the categories developed were meaningful to the relevant research questions. Informed by the focus provided by the research questions, further conceptual comments were then made that specifically explored relationships between the categories and data extracts to the positions and dimensions of context identified by Ball et al. (2012).

To assist in the development of interpretations, the participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcripts to check for accuracy and identify any elements they did not want to be shared. The data generated from the document analysis and semi-structured interviews were then organised into four interrelated themes: (1) *Changes to the situated and external contexts* (2) *Adapting to the professional culture of the new ITE partnership* (3) *Delicately negotiating the enactment of the HWB AoLE* and (4) *Negotiating the constraints of space and time*. Once generated, the themes were then further reviewed by the principal researcher and the other co-authors, who had extensive experience of working with educational theory and qualitative analysis. Following principles outlined by Burke (2016), their role was to act as a critical friend who provided a sounding board to encourage reflection on, and consider, further development of the themes from the data. This process continued until agreement on the final themes from the interview data was reached between the co-authors. Finally, consideration was given to the respective representation of each of the participants within the findings. Based on the outlined aim and research questions representation focused on ensuring that the voices of PETE were made prominent. Findings related to each theme are now discussed in turn.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Changes to the situated and external contexts**

An immediate and prominent observation throughout the data was how the situated contexts of the university, secondary PETE programme and the broader professional culture of Welsh PE were all strongly influential in relation to the way PETE policy actors enacted the new CfW HWB AoLE. Historically and leading into the curriculum reforms in Wales, the PETE programme at the university has been based on a professional culture extending over 70 years. This professional culture, richly entwined with the sporting and education cultures of Wales has resonated with the discourses and practices that are 'competitive games orientated' (Programme Leader) and echo those found within what others (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Kirk, 2009) have previously referred to as 'traditional' forms of physical education. Here, heavy prominence is placed on sport performance, skill-as-technique and games (Welsh Government, 2008). These historically dominant discourses of the situated context and professional culture, prompt reflection on Penney and Evans' (1999, p. 119) observations of how curriculum may 'constrain the possibilities for innovation and change' and result in the formulation of identities that are often resistant to adopting dispositions that evolve in line with wider issues of society (Curtner-Smith, 1999). Alongside these cautions about prospective resistance to reform arising from historically situated contextual dimensions, it is important

to note how other situated and external contextual dimensions present *also* present possibilities for curricula enactment.

The situated context and existing professional culture allow the PETE staff to adopt particular policy actor positions within the wider physical education community. For example, leading into the curriculum and partnership reforms, the professional identities and values of the PETE staff are bestowed with historically significant cultural dispositions (Aldous & Brown, 2010) that have explicit resonance with a secondary PE workforce that has, in the main, been trained within the situated context of the university.

Because of the decades of teacher training that's happened through PE in different guises, with different names, we have a situation where in South Wales ... I would [say] easily half if not two-thirds of every department come from here. (PLPETE)

Importantly, the positioning of PETE professionals within this tightly knitted physical education community emphasised their continued role as policy *narrators* and *transactors*.

Myself and my second in department have come up and done a little bit of delivery on new curriculum lessons, it's just creating that strong link and developing strong relationships ... they've supported us, and I'd like to think that we have supported them as well. (SM)

The strength of these existing historical relationships provide the possibility for PETE to work with the secondary PE community in developing a *collective vision* towards how secondary PE may be transformed through the new CfW HWB AoLE. This reflects similar research by (Alfrey et al., 2017; Ball et al., 2012) that highlights whilst policy creates context, the ideologies and histories of teachers will also permeate the policy process. Whilst the strength of these relationships may be seen as potentially constraining innovation, it is also enabling, in presenting possibilities for how PETE can work with the secondary PE community to enact the new CfW HWB AoLE in the future. Such possibilities are shaped by the emerging professional culture of the new ITE partnership.

## Adapting to the professional culture of the new ITE partnership

Data highlighted how the new ITE partnership instigated changes to the professional culture of the secondary PE programme, that were influential in shaping the policy actor positions PETE professionals adopted in the enactment of the HWB AoLE. The new ITE partnership in Wales involves a collaboration between universities, selected partnership schools, councils and regional consortia. The partnership is structured through adoption of research-informed clinical practice principles that emphasises a commitment to 'negotiate all content, structure, and pedagogical strategies with schools' (Pugh et al., 2020, p. 179). These have informed what the EWC recognised as a,

Systematic and sustainable collaboration between the HEI and lead partnership schools/alliances in relation to the development of the programme ... [It] outlines how the Partnership will work, including respective roles and responsibilities of the HEI and lead partnership schools/alliances.

As intuitively recognised by some of the PETE participants, the emergence of this external context generates strategic visions that build on the situated dimensions of the programme and

provides opportunity for PETE to begin re-negotiating the existing role of PE within the ITE programme. Consequently, the new ITE partnership arrangements encouraged the participants to adopt policy positions characterised as transactors of professional learning and explore ways in which the new CfW HWB AoLE may be developed through the new partnership arrangements between the university and schools.

There is a much better link with schools, there's much more collaboration, they are really involved in developing the university-based part as well ... it's got to be that constant reviewing part and making changes and actually if you are going to bother to listen to people, take on board what they say and do something with it. (SLPETE)

Here, the participants highlight how implementation of the new ITE partnership started to generate a non-hierarchical professional culture. This allowed school-based mentors to feel they could contribute to the new partnership arrangements.

Going forward, I think that we have got a bigger part to play ... It's all on the schools, I think the way it's going as well with enquiry-based learning, I think schools need to be, mentors need to take more of an active role. (SM)

That said, requirements of the new ITE partnership also necessitate complex decisions on the selection of content. For PETE particularly, understanding how to interpret and translate the new HWB AoLE content necessitated translatory positions that required decisions to be made on what knowledge and practices of physical education remained within the new PETE programme.

Myself and my colleague have made some quite tough decisions in context of that, but hopefully in a way that's given the best we can do in that situation ... I think it's just the opportunity for Julie (pseudonym) and myself to even have a think about it ourselves, and actually try and unpick it. (PLPETE)

Alongside, the selection of existing knowledge and practice, some of the participants intuitively illustrated the necessity of changing the PETE programme culture and mindset.

I love the idea that they put in things like innovation, leadership and collaboration, those skills that are really important things to actually acknowledge as part of you being a professional and previously haven't been there as explicitly. (SLPETE)

Importantly, the data also illustrate how the participants recognise the enormity of attempting to make changes to the professional culture that are needed to enact the HWB AoLE.

I mean it's huge, it is tank turning ... I think the idea of putting a child at the centre of it and then building from there with these areas of learning is incredibly ambitious ... aspirational definitely but very ambitious and that culture, that mindset that we've got to change is a huge task. (SLPETE)

Consequently, similar to the findings of Lambert and O'Connor (2018), analysis of the data raise further questions on how PETE educators can be supported in establishing a non-hierarchical professional culture between university and schools across the ITE partnership that offers the opportunity for the development of *sustainable* innovation and collaboration

required to enact the HWB AoLE. Central to establishing this professional culture is the way PETE educators began to negotiate the enactment of the HWB AoLE within the existing secondary PE ITE programme.

## Negotiating the enactment of the HWB AoLE

Alongside recognising the enormity of attempting to change the situated dimensions and professional culture the data illustrated how PETE professionals were required to negotiate their existing historical and culturally situated desires, values and beliefs for the role of PE alongside those provided through the ITE partnership. These are apparent in how the PETE participants were beginning to consider the implications of selecting and integrating the new messages of the HWB AoLE.

We've looked at really what we have been given and gone 'how do we make this as effective within these structures?' So, the PE part of it is, I would say is reduced, it's far more generic ... it's cross phase, it's cross-AoLE, it's cross-subjects. So, the blurring of lines ... it's not out of kilter with what schools are doing, it's just again a significant change for us. (SLPETE)

Here, the data illustrates how PETE professionals are required to negotiate several different policy positions in the enactment of the new CfW HWB AoLE. For example, the data highlighted how PETE recognised the need to 'take risks' and 'be brave' in the way that they teach.

We've been doing it over the last couple of years to be honest, and we've been bringing it in gradually. So, now we are at the point where it's embedded across all key stage 3 ... Like I said, we are quite brave in the way we teach, so we expect students to be the same and just take risks and if it works it works and if it doesn't it doesn't. (SM)

Similar to the findings of Scanlon et al. (2020), ideas around bravery and risk-taking suggest PETE professionals recognise the need for a variety of policy positions that move beyond narrative and translatory enactment of the new CfW HWB AoLE. That said, as evidenced within the documents (Appendix A), the focus on gradual integration also highlights a need to be strategic and diplomatic in retaining a focus on existing subject specialisms alongside institutional requirements. Thus, what emerges is a policy actor position for the PETE educators where they are attempting to creatively and strategically counter the loss of subject specialisms by attempting to generate connections between subject specialisms and the new four core purposes of the new CfW.

I think I'm really aware now that I'm connecting them through to the four core purposes all the time and just banging on, I have to say I'm banging on about it; but making that connection is not just about the physical part of it. (SLPETE)

This quote gives insight into the relentlessness of the PETE's policy work. Yet, as acknowledged by the subject mentor, such policy work does not just involve giving interpretation to the new CfW HWB AoLE but requires students (and educators) to be able to translate these interpretations into practice.

What they [students] haven't got obviously is the practical experience to go with it to back it up; so, you can sprout all the four core purposes, you can know the 'what matters statements' and the 'I can' statements, do you know what it looks like for the pupils? And what does that look like in planning? What does that look like in schemes of work and whole school approach? (SM)

Positively, these quotes illustrate the PETE participants as policy actors willing to explore the potential of the new HWB AoLE and broader new CfW and in turn, appreciating the need for them to articulate the possibilities for PE into practice. This suggests that the PETE professionals in this study are not what Ball et al. (2012) term naïve actors of policy. Rather, they are attempting to actively negotiate past and future possibilities for PE within the new HWB AoLE and new policy context for ITE in Wales. In this regard our data reflect how the policy positions adopted by PETE staff in negotiating the enactment of the HWB AoLE will be important in establishing a culture within the wider secondary PE community that embraces the sense of exploration and creativity advocated within the policy documentation. Yet, the ability to engage with this negotiation is constrained by the pace and space currently provided to engage with enactment.

## **Negotiating the constraints of space and time**

Less optimistic in our data was the recognition that for all the attempts to negotiate the transformation of the PETE programme, the potential for creative integration of PE has been constrained by some of the structural changes associated with the new ITE partnership arrangements. For example, participants highlighted impact of a reduction in number of subject hours allocated specifically to the focus of PE and the challenges also associated with where these hours were positioned. In describing this development, the participant from ITE management highlighted the challenges of these negotiations.

One of the things that our staff are finding most difficult is the fact that especially with our secondary colleagues, the fact that they don't have as much of an ownership over their subject students as they used to have ... to use PE as an example, they are not out following their PE students anymore. (M2)

The hours in context of how many we have for subject studies is less that we've has before, in the old model, we would see them every Monday afternoon for two hours ... So, we've had to make some decisions about which sessions are staying, which are going, some that we've maybe been able to amalgamate together and change the theme and maybe covered a couple of topics. (PLPETE)

In some respects, this reduction of hours to focus on specialist PE subject hours affirmed the idea of policy paralysis outlined by Petrie and Isahunter (2011). Such paralysis is displayed through staff talking of fewer opportunities to work with students around knowledge specific to the discipline of PE.

I just think that maybe the quality and depth to their understanding in things like planning, questioning and pedagogy that we might have unpicked a lot more in PE, has not happened as much in a practical context because we have less time so we have to [be] very sort of specific about what we cover in that time. (PLPETE)

The above data reflect that the PETE response is not inaction, but rather, a recognised need for increasing selectivity in the meanings associated with PE that staff engage with, invest in and work to cultivate in their learning with PE ITE students in making sense of the possibilities for PE within the new CfW HWB AoLE. Hence, we suggest that the time and space for the creative and innovative exploration of the new possibilities afforded by the new HWB AoLE to PETE actors is being squeezed by some of the situated dimensions of the ITE partnerships. Thus, PETE actors have limited choice in becoming what Ball (2012) describes as narrators of reform. They have very little opportunity to focus on selection and interpretation of *new* meaning regarding the possibilities for PE. Consequently, PETE educators and subject mentors are focusing on pedagogy and assessment over and above content.

We've taken elements of it because we still think, whatever happens that's going to exist ... you'd sort of say, right ok, we are going to move that sort of content across because it doesn't matter what [you call] your curriculum, what you title it, there's going to be elements of AfL, there's going to be elements of differentiation. (SLPETE)

Moving forward, I think we are looking at methods of assessment now with the new curriculum, so that's the thing we are looking at this year. So, we are measuring progress rather than attainment ... It's how much progress is made, looking at the 'I can' statements, using lots of peer and self-assessments for pupils to set targets. (SM)

Furthermore, and echoing observations made by Lambert and O'Connor (2018), questions remain about the policy spaces afforded to PETE actors to negotiate different interpretations of PE in relation to the new CfW HWB AoLE.

The idea of re-visiting what is good teaching and learning and we're not given that opportunity because it's all just crammed in and that's a real frustration because I think we should know better coming from our background of being experts in learning, people don't learn like that but we will do it anyway. (SLPETE)

Thus, whilst it is evident that the PETE participants are attempting to engage in several different policy actor positions, the data also reflect contextual constraints and an absence of space, time and discussions needed to generate creative interpretations that move beyond the 'strong' and 'strategic' institutionalised messages of the new curriculum developed centrally by the ITE partnership.

As reflected in the experiences of secondary teachers described in Ball et al. (2011a), our data suggest that the short timeframe provided for the implementation of the new ITE programme necessitated that PETE staff had to act quickly in their translational work with the new curriculum and the new professional standards for teaching and leadership (see Table 1, p. 4). Such speed had several implications for the positions being adopted, with translational policy work inevitably featuring strong elements of realism and pragmatism.

I must admit that we've transferred probably the content name, not necessarily the actual content of what we have done previously over to that part of it [PGCE teaching programme]. But then tried to integrate aspects of Health and Well-being within that, you know aspects of the whole curriculum and just sort of saying 'look the driving force are these four core purposes'. (SLPETE)



The speed with which ITE staff and PETE specifically have had to respond to the CfW HWB AoLE and structural changes of the ITE partnership is arguably reflective of modern university cultures in which educators are often forced to react to a plethora of policy initiatives (Aldous & Brown, 2021). The implications are that this enforces policy positions that reduce the opportunity and ability for PETE staff to express *creative* interpretations of the CfW HWB AoLE in their development of PETE. Limited space/s for translation has meant that PETE staff have adopted pragmatic policy positions in engaging with the reform possibilities.

We were put in sort of a situation where you have to change. So, some of it is maybe not what we would have done ... Within that structure we've had some autonomy ... therefore we've looked at really what we have been given and gone 'how do we make this as effective within these structures. (SLPETE)

As a result, rather imagining new possibilities for enactment, much of the interpretation of the CfW HWB AoLE has been made through historical discourses and traditions of PE and with a view to ensuring that PETE students are prepared to deliver *both* the old and new curriculum.

Rightly or wrongly, I think at this stage not a huge amount has probably changed, I think because we've still got a foot in both camps of current curriculum and new curriculum. (PLPETE)

Consequently, PETE staff then find themselves 'holding things together' amidst a somewhat precarious position of having to bridge the new and old curriculums and produce graduates capable of teaching both. This sense of struggling to negotiate a challenging and in some respects problematic transition is evident in this reflection.

I think there is a lot of mixed messages out there at the moment and we are trying to navigate between a lot of schools that are enacting things in very different ways, you know we've got our students as a blob and then they go out as individuals to all these schools that are doing things in different ways; how do we prepare them? (SLPETE)

Here, there is a notable distinction to be made between a 'current' curriculum where PE content knowledge is visible and clearly bounded and a 'new' HWB AoLE where specialist PE knowledge are more invisible and intricately intertwined with more contemporary languages for PE *and* health.

The data presented in this last section illustrate how PETE professionals' attempts to negotiate creative enactment of the new CfW HWB AoLE are continually limited by the pace of reforms within the new ITE partnership. Furthermore, such pacing reduces the space and time PETE professionals have to make sense of the new HWB AoLE and the possibilities it provides for transforming secondary PE. In what follows, we conclude the paper by summarising the key findings of the study and offering insight into future work needed to support PETE professionals in Wales.

## **CONCLUSION**

The data provide insight into PETE professionals' simultaneous negotiation and implementation of the new CfW HWB AoLE and policies focused on the transformation of ITE in Wales. The findings demonstrate how cultural and historical position of the Secondary PE programme and expectations generated from external contexts such as the ITE partnership

and the EWC, have necessitated that current PETE staff, including subject mentors based in schools, begin to occupy different policy positions created in the reading and enactment of the new CfW HWB AoLE. Finally, the data draw attention to how the pace of enactment squeezed the space for PETE professionals to consider creative development of the secondary PE programme in relation to the requirements of the new CfW HWB AoLE and ITE partnership.

Following studies that have focused on similar policy situations (Lambert & O'Connor, 2018; Lambert & Penney, 2020) it is perhaps not surprising that we see PETE staff in this study struggling to negotiate what appear to be conflicting policy positions. The straddling and combination of roles evident in our data has illustrated PETE staff endeavouring to align the existing principles of the PETE programme with those being strongly promoted amidst the enactment of the new CfW, HWB AoLE by the ITE partnership. Accordingly, there is an understandable element of sensitivity in how changes to contextual dimensions will come to shape relations between PETE and the secondary physical education community. While the established valued positioning of PETE professionals as a source of professional guidance within the community points towards a crucial and successful role in supporting physical educators' creative translation and enactment of the new CfW, the capacity to pursue this role appears far from assured. PETE professionals' vulnerability and own need for professional development amidst policy enactment, thus seemed largely overlooked. Here, we are again reminded of the earlier work of Curtner-Smith (1999), who advocated that teacher educators willing to engage with curriculum reform need a high level of support to avoid the reproduction of existing subject specific PE discourses.

The situated and professional dimensions of the PETE context call for PETE and other ITE educators to be provided the opportunity to become skilled in continually shifting between or actively combining multiple policy positions—as narrators, translators, receivers, and in some moments entrepreneurs, in enactment of the new curriculum. Thus, we end the paper by emphasising the importance of PETE (and other) educators being actively supported in developing the dispositions, knowledge, and practices necessary for sustainable policy action. This calls for ITE in Wales to place more prominent focus on enhanced understandings of curriculum and policy, and a strengthening of skills in curriculum design.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

### **ETHICS STATEMENT**

This submitted manuscript is an original work, has not been published before, or posted electronically, and is not being considered for publication anywhere either in printed or electronic form.

### **GEOLOCATION INFORMATION**

Wales, UK.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Data are not available for this study.

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## APPENDIX A

Organisation	Document	Weblink (if applicable)	Access provided by
Welsh Government	Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales	<a href="https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf">https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf</a>	Public Access
Welsh Government	Teaching tomorrow's teachers: options for the future of initial teacher education in Wales	<a href="https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/teaching-tomorrows-teachers.pdf">https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/teaching-tomorrows-teachers.pdf</a>	Public Access
Education Workforce Council	Final report of the Accreditation of Initial School Teacher Training Committee. Post Graduate Certificate in Education: Secondary (11–18)	N/a	Management
Education Workforce Council	Proforma for the submission of ITE programmes for professional accreditation.	N/a	Management
University	Standards for Qualified Teacher Status—further advice for ITE Partnerships in the design of programmes	N/a	Programme Leader
University	Outline of Secondary Physical Education ITE Programme indicative content	N/a	Programme Leader
University	Outline of draft Secondary AoLE Health & Well-Being	N/a	Programme Leader
University	Initial Teacher Education Validation	N/a	Management
University	Postgraduate Certificate of Education Secondary, Rationale, Programme Specifications, Module Descriptors, 26th & 27th October 2017, Issue One	N/a	Management