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‘It was the best of times, it was the’: Subject aims and professional identity from the perspective of one veteran male teacher of physical education in Scotland.

Abstract

Studies of teachers’ lives and careers rarely include a precise focus on subject teaching. This appears a limitation given the often strong connections there are between subject teaching and professional identity. With the intention of understanding the connections between the two better, the research adopted a case study methodology to describe the career of ‘Jack’ who taught physical education in a secondary school in a socially deprived area of Scotland for thirty-six years. The paper collected data from a series of six semi-structured interviews with findings referenced against recent theorizing on physical education futures. Descriptive analysis used the structural contrasts provided by Dickens opening to ‘A Tale of Two Cities’, (‘It was the best of times, it was the ...’) as an interpretive device for framing discussion. Findings showed that Jack’s identity and focus in teaching were closely linked with improving performance through sustained practice and that subject purposes were rarely discussed with colleagues. In agreement with recent policy advice in Scotland, the paper considers that subject-based discussions should be a more substantial component of career long professional development.

Keywords: veteran teachers, professional identity, teaching, physical education, professionalism

Introduction

Studies of teachers' lives and careers rarely include a precise focus on subject teaching (Hextall, Gewirtz, Cribb, & Mahoney, 2007). This is problematic, as for many teachers "it is the subject which becomes the lynchpin of identity" (Bernstein, 1971, p. 56). As Day, Kingston, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) acknowledge, *identity* is at the core of factors which affect motivation, effectiveness, and perceptions of self-efficacy. In addition, Gewirtz, Mahony, Hextall, and Cribb (2008) highlight that identity concerns have also been influenced by the shift from relatively high levels of teacher autonomy in the 1970s and 1980s to the current time which is characterised more by increased efficiency and quality control measures. This has tended to challenge teachers' "claims to expertise based on the exclusive possession of specialized knowledge" (Beck & Young, 2005, p. 183). There is also evidence that over the course of a career, teachers can become nostalgic for earlier times and insecure about their futures with commitment and enthusiasm levels diminishing as the years go by (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006).

We know as well relatively little about the lives of veteran teachers (i.e., those teachers with more than 25 years teaching experience), especially when such teachers have spent their entire careers teaching rather than merging teaching with school leadership responsibilities (Cohen, 2009).

Thorburn (2011) discussed the life history and career of Jack (a pseudonym), who taught physical education on a non-promoted basis in the same secondary school (for pupils of 12-18 years) in an area of social deprivation in the west of Scotland from 1974 to 2010. However, during this study, the general emphasis on social and policy influences on teacher identity, career stages, and professional development made it difficult to adequately include and make reference to Jack's subject-specific views. This was an unfortunate limitation given the solace Jack found in subject teaching and the rather jumbled assortment of aims and values which often accompany investigations of teachers' beliefs and professional identity in physical education (Green, 2000). Subject theorizing has often suffered from similar coherence problems, despite physical education

being currently considered as a policy conduit for improving the health-related ways in which many young people lead and construct their lives (Penney, 2008).

It appeared to be a productive research idea to connect the theorizing of longstanding and leading academics in the field, such as Kirk (2010), with a practitioner who has made a similar commitment across a similar timespan to school teaching. In this way historical, political, and contextual perspectives informing research on physical education futures can be compared and contrasted with one teacher's professional reflections on subject developments, curriculum aims, and models of schooling. With these ambitions in mind, data were collected through a sequenced series of six semi-structured interviews. Thereafter, in order to probe the detail of Jack's subject-based reflections, descriptive analysis used the structural contrasts provided by Dickens' opening to *A Tale of Two Cities*, namely: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was a time of wisdom, it was a time of foolishness'. This analytical frame was chosen in order to capture the interconnectivity of factors influencing subject aims and professional identity, as Dickens' novel examines the nature of change and of how one way of life will be reflected upon, as time passes, by Sydney Carton and across France more widely. Arguably, similar parallels exist for Jack and physical education. As such, this interpretive device aims to help reference Jack's reflections alongside international and Scottish-based theorising on physical education's future challenges.

Physical Education: The International context

One of the main points of Kirk's (2010) critique of physical education futures is that the idea of subject aims being contested is a chimera in the first place. This is due to the subject's uncritical attachment to reproducing ineffective physical education-as-sport-techniques programmes to large classes of pupils of varying interests and ability with learning rarely progressing beyond the introductory level (Kirk, 2010, p. 6). Some clear culprits are identified. These include: the academicisation of teacher education programmes since the mid-1970s, confusion over the

relationship between physical education and sport, and the fragmented nature of teaching where there is often an overuse of direct teaching approaches. Some of these factors are interconnected: e.g., the academicisation in teacher education programmes has led to the continuation of “mile-wide, inch-deep” programmes in schools due to new teachers’ lack of subject knowledge of practical activities. These programmes have also been further weakened by the inflexible and centralised nature of how schools are managed.

In as far as there are substantive differences in conceptions of physical education, Kirk (2010) outlines four relational issues to consider: physical education’s links with physical culture; transfer of learning; standards of excellence and ability; and cultural transmission, reproduction, and renewal. Briefly, physical culture concerns itself with social constructions of the body and how forms of embodiment are developed, and with how effectively these equip pupils for leading physically active lives. The transfer of learning focus is on the connections between learning in physical education and school more broadly. The thrust of standards of excellence and ability is on defining these capacities and then of measuring and testing them. Lastly, cultural transmission concerns itself with heritage and the extent to which physical education programmes challenge or reproduce social inequalities in their various forms, e.g., in areas such as gender, social class and disability. At face value the four relational issues defined by Kirk (2010) articulate well with earlier theorizing by Penney and Chandler (2000, p. 76) on ways in which physical education could become a more connective specialism through articulating better its contribution “to the whole curriculum and to the whole child.” Their fourfold focus is on the themes of: movement and physical literacy; physical activity, health and fitness; challenge and competition; and cooperation. Kirk describes Penney and Chandler’s study as “an optimistic view that physical education could change for the better” (p. 30) provided it could articulate with societal ambitions beyond the school and lessen its attachment to restrictive activity-based programmes. Kirk tends to be more sceptical about the capacity of physical education to change and is concerned that yearly repetitions of the

same types of provision will eventually lead to the subject becoming “culturally obsolete” (p. 8). As such, Penney & Chandler’s account is both similar and different to Kirk’s critique in ways that make it a useful counterpoint to the main theorizing which informs the paper.

Physical Education: The Scottish context

Over recent decades physical education has tried to adapt to various policy and practice challenges. Four of the greatest of these - the introduction and development of examination awards, physical activity links with youth sport, the changing fortunes of physical education programmes, and the subject’s articulation with health and well-being agendas (Thorburn, 2010) - are briefly outlined in order to contextualise later discussion. From the late 1980s onwards examination awards have focussed on creating rich learning environments, where pupils can improve standards of practical performance and their understanding of associated content knowledge. In pursuing these aims policy makers were, in effect, arguing that with some careful adjustment physical education could be accommodated within an academic conception of education. However, teachers have reported pragmatic difficulties in deploying such a rationale. There is also concern that a narrow focus on performance improvement might limit the provision of a greater range of experiences and opportunities (Thorburn, 2010).

There is also a policy expectation that the benefits of physical activity and youth sport should become more prominently embedded in the daily lives of pupils in and beyond school. Implicit in this view is that new interventions can counter the adverse effects of reduced levels of teacher volunteerism in contributing to school and interschool sport from the mid-1980s onwards.

However, evidence so far is that building and sustaining increases in participation are more difficult than expected (Scottish Executive, 2007). From the mid-1980s to early this century, the time and priority afforded to physical education programmes have steadily decreased. The situation in Scotland reflects international evidence that the subject was perceived to be remote from the needs

of pupils and inflexible in terms of how curriculum was constructed, with most pupils only having a little over an hour a week of physical education (Hardman & Marshall, 2005). There are also concerns about the lack of activity choices available to pupils. The bias towards team games and the overuse of performance improvement pedagogical approaches have also been cited as reasons why many pupils have become disengaged (Penney & Jess, 2004). In this type of sport-influenced environment, curriculum has often consisted of compartmentalized activity blocks lasting a short number of weeks with little evidence of transferable learning. Despite these limitations, the connections between physical education and health and well-being have recently been championed. The predominant health evidence informing curriculum renewal has arisen out of concerns about low participation levels in physical education and the rapid increase in the number of overweight children (Scottish Executive, 2004). The intention now is that all pupils have access to high-quality physical education experiences with a focus on: movement skills, competencies and concepts; cooperation and competition; and evaluating and appreciating. At face value, the framing of such goals overtakes some of the concerns there are about how the educational potential of physical education might be undervalued by adhering to narrow health-informed curriculum imperatives (Thorburn & Horrell, 2011).

Methodology

Jack's earlier case study involvement in life history and career research came about as a result of the author's own professional background in physical education in Scotland (20 years secondary school teaching experience followed by 12 years as a lecturer in higher education). This method was considered preferable to placing advertised requests for potential interviewees. The advantages of a degree of familiarity borne out of working on a sports coaching programme many years previously was used as the basis for contacting Jack. In pursuing this approach it was considered that relationships were cordial enough to make an approach feasible, yet not so close that it might make Jack uneasy about exercising his decision-making right to decline to participate. In defining

the teacher and school context further, national census data indicates that just over a quarter of all high schools (26.5%), which includes 100 teachers in total, have a male non-promoted physical education teacher of age 50-plus in post (Scottish Government, 2008). The local authority where Jack taught currently has the third-highest pupil uptake for free school meals (17.4% vs. a national average of 12.9%) out of the 32 locally elected education authorities in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2009).

Following on from earlier research where 10 semi-structured interviews were completed with a focus on social and policy influences on teacher identity, career stages and professional development, a further set of six interviews took place with the researcher between January and May 2011 with a focus on subject values. Written agreement to participate was recorded. This took place after it had been outlined to Jack that while confidentiality could be assured, it was not possible to provide anonymity due to the topics discussed and the narrowness of the interview selection procedures adopted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Jack was also advised that he could check the interview transcripts for accuracy and for interpretations drawn from the interviews. This form of checking was designed to ensure respondent validation of findings occurred. This aided trustworthiness and helped confirm that the interview protocols adopted met with the ethical procedures applicable within this version of life history research (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Each interview lasted approximately 75 minutes. All interviews were taped and transcribed so that sequences of talk could be carefully and repeatedly listened to between interviews. This process acted as a form of interview guide and helped confirm that questions asked during future interviews were based on the researcher having thoroughly reviewed previous transcripts (Silverman, 2006). Questions predominantly moved from the Scottish to the international context as interviews progressed. For example, questions about the links between physical education and health and wellbeing were initially discussed in terms of curriculum aims and, implications for teaching and later in terms of more abstract theorising on physical culture and movement literacy. This approach

avoided overly constraining Jack's responses and enabled him to move discussion from the immediate context of his career at a level and frequency with which he was comfortable (Rapley, 2004).

Figure 1 depicts the impact of general career influences, theorizing on physical education, and policy outcomes on Jack's career-long reflections on subject values and professional identity. This framework assisted in identifying emerging themes and linking these together to build a descriptive analysis. During thematic analysis illustrative quotes and comments were identified. In the following discussion direct quotes from Jack appear in quotation marks followed by the interview date in brackets. Overall, the intention was for the interviews to yield rich data and authentic insights into Jack's subject values and professional identity and in so doing to explore one teacher's career that might otherwise 'have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past' (Byrne, 2004, p. 114).

Enter Figure 1 close to here

Interpretation and Discussion

It was the best of times ...

Two main areas characterise the best of times in Jack's career: **1)** the usefulness of his teacher education programme and **2)** occasions when there was widespread recognition of subject relevance and his teaching expertise. Jack appreciated the applied apprentice emphasis in his teaching diploma and felt secure about his educational aims, subject knowledge of activities, and ability to demonstrate. The latter was important, for if you are trying to improve ability, it helps if pupils are convinced "the teacher can actually do stuff" (12 January 2011). The opening years of Jack's career were a particularly golden period with teaching "being everything that I could have wished for" (12 January 2011). The curriculum included a full and diverse range of activities. Discipline was firm and classes were single sex and set according to academic ability. Jack endorsed this approach, as

he considered the benefits of mixed-ability teaching a myth. It was a time of enthusiasm and improving the craft of teaching, “as I was just not doing stand-back-tell-and-them-teaching” (28 January 2011). Pupils were encouraged to take on increasing responsibility for their learning once they recognised and appreciated the benefits of practice and perseverance. The Senior Management Team (SMT) “liked to see lots of activity around the school and valued the part we played in making the school a good place to be” (28 January 2011). As such, there was no sense of physical education being of marginal status.

In addition, there was a sense of subject cohesion in the local area. This was aided by having three local authority subject advisors who all had physical education teacher backgrounds. The advisers were well respected figures who, among other responsibilities, set up coaching schemes for interested pupils, with physical education teachers providing the coaching expertise and point of contact between schools and local sports clubs. Jack was a leading figure in a number of these schemes, with involvement continuing until the mid-1990s, when a mix of local authority reorganisation (including the removal of subject adviser posts) and budget cutting forced the schemes to close. Jack’s coaching role became an important part of his identity as he valued the rewards of creating and developing new sporting opportunities for pupils. Jack commented that the ski coaching programme he led:

... was based on a shared ethos, staff participation, staff training and logistics support as many schools and 150 pupils were involved each weekend. It was not a job which needed a committee, it needed one collecting person to put it together and develop it, and the remit became central to my teaching life. ... Once, some older pupils were interviewed by the local newspaper about the programme. They talked about how they would like to put something back into sports coaching in the years ahead as the programme had been so good to them. This would never have happened without leadership and teachers working together (28 January 2011).

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Jack's stable professional identity was further enhanced by good relationships with pupils who were "mostly lean and tough" (24 February 2011) and who soaked up teaching advice and participated willingly. Jack's values were largely in line with Kirk's (2010) expectations "that (male) physical educators (in particular) in the 1950s and beyond would accept unquestioningly 'motor skill' as *the* (original emphasis retained) most significant dimension of their subject matter" (p.84). Jack's subject values also reflect Morgan's (1973) theorising of the time, in that "physical education might quite simply be defined as *education through athletic forms of activity* (original emphasis retained)" (pp.8-9). For Jack, such reasoning, by itself, was an adequate justification for the physical education curriculum as it represented the essence of what the subject was about.

... it was *the worst of times*...

What characterised the worst of times in Jack's career was when involvement in teaching and coaching was curtailed by "easy-to-make financial cutbacks" (15 March 2011). Two main examples define the problem. In the early 1980s teaching was beset by a bitter industrial dispute during which teacher's voluntary contributions became part of a bargaining lever for achieving better pay and conditions of service. This came at a cost to physical education as levels of extra- curriculum participation dropped considerably. Also, SMT recognition of subject contribution became more measured as there was a "lack of outward evidence of what we were doing due to the weakening of the links between physical education and sport" (24 February 2011). This situation remained for most of the next two decades.

Further problems emerged when funding were withdrawn for primary-age programmes in the mid-1980s. The net effect of this cutback "was that when pupils arrived in the secondary school, their ability to perform was considerably less than it had been previously" (15 March 2011). Collectively,

the diminishing profile of physical education and the short sightedness of cost-cutting measures made it occasionally difficult for Jack to sustain his enthusiasm for teaching. As Jack noted:

I knew it would be difficult for me when sport and extra curriculum programmes were separated from physical education, so I found new things to do. I kept analysing and updating my teaching, and I made sure my day-to-day efforts in school convinced pupils that I was working hard for them. If they saw this it would help develop relationships, and make them more likely to become involved in sport in the future (15 March 2011).

Penney (2008) has expressed concerns about how a general lack of political presence and awareness of policy processes has often limited the capacity of physical educationalists to make the most of the policy opportunities available. In this study, the difficulty in sustaining innovations at a local authority level and the lack of professional association to provide leadership and support at national level were weaknesses that directly impacted on Jack's professional life.

... it was a time of wisdom...

Two main issues, professional development and teaching autonomy, characterise wisdom (but on occasion represent foolishness in Jack's view as well). Until the mid-1980s a broad-minded view was taken by local authorities on professional development, e.g., teachers could pursue a variety of experiences and qualifications without a precise functional connection being drawn as to how this would benefit day-to-day teaching. Such experiences "helped develop me as a more rounded teacher and boosted my commitment to keep teaching in the local area" (15 March 2011). However, the wisdom of this approach changed with programmes of school-closure days becoming predominantly used thereafter for reviewing new central-government-informed curriculum arrangements. Exacerbating the situation was local government reorganisation in the early 1990s, which left Jack teaching in a small authority with only 5 secondary schools in comparison with the 25 secondary schools there were previously. Thus, the infrastructure for providing a greater range of

professional development opportunities and for sharing ideas across larger networks of colleagues began to diminish and was poor for the second half of Jack's career. Jack commented that:

I could not see the point of the reorganization as it polarized provision and was not in the best interest of education. Our local programmes were often limited. Where possible, I offered to lead courses and get people involved in thinking about teaching. If nothing else this stimulated me and tried to get us more active and not stuck in a rut (15 March 2011).

Nevertheless, for most of his years in teaching, Jack enjoyed a high degree of professional autonomy. This provided "me with the scope to experiment and to think through tricky teaching issues" (24 February 2011), the most challenging of which was that many pupils found it increasingly difficult to sustain practice due to limited physical fitness and an ability to concentrate. While this decline, which was particularly evident from the early 1990s onwards, was never serious enough to lead to a radical change of subject beliefs, it did lead Jack to closely review his teaching methods. Jack found that technique-laden lessons of the type criticised by Kirk (2010) were increasingly ineffective and that pupils needed teaching approaches which were capable of "getting to the point quicker about what it was we were meant to be doing and why" (21 April 2011). In Jack's view, teachers who graduated with a three-year teaching diploma (rather than four-year degree award) were best equipped to make such adjustments as their courses contained greater levels of practical learning. Jack's three-year diploma enabled him to have a greater understanding of how to develop quality performance and to "talk his way through a problem, rather than talking his way around a problem" (15 March 2011). Kirk (2010) confirmed these programme differences by contrasting his own four-year degree experience in Scotland in the late 1970s with those of Jack, who completed his teaching diploma in 1974. He notes that:

.... the students in the year group ahead of me ... participated in gymnastics every day for the three years of their course. My year group participated in gymnastics once per week for the first two of four years, with an option to specialise in gymnastics in years three or four.

Unsurprisingly, the diploma-qualified teachers had highly superior gymnastics skills compared with the majority of my year group (p. 90).

A further adverse consequence of teachers' limited practical knowledge was in Jack's view that they were relatively uncritical of arguments that attempted to privilege "learning in and via activity contexts, as compared to learning of activities" (Penney & Chandler, p. 71). Jack considered that such claims often lacked robust analysis and misunderstood the crucial difference between 'performance satisfaction' and 'enjoyment' (19 May 2011). By making a virtue of practice, Jack believed that an improved understanding of performance satisfaction could be gained by teachers and pupils alike, especially when there is recognition that ability was varied in terms of outcome. Jack was dismayed by "the obsession with getting everyone up to the same level, even though for some there are many more levels to potentially reach. So we tick boxes to say done, rather than developing talent and stretching able pupils" (19 May 2011). Conceptually, Jack's beliefs reflect MacIntyre's (2007) views on the achievement benefits associated with practice, where there is recognition of both the whole group/community gains from participating in practice as well as the individual benefits of continually trying to excel. However, the lack of rigorous professional enquiry during the majority of his later career on how these aspirations might be achieved was compounded, in Jack's view, by the first-person writing style used to describe educational objectives and outcome statements, e.g., Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010). This, in Jack's view, blurred subject contribution issues in unhelpful ways.

... it was a time of foolishness...

Three main issues characterised foolishness in Jack's view. These were examinations in physical education, the influx of new health-informed teaching imperatives, and stultifying school organisational arrangements. Jack was not persuaded about the merits of introducing examination awards as it tended to "take the emphasis away from doing it to talking about it and analysing it"

(21 April 2011). It also, in Jack's view, "reduced the value of normal everyday physical education programmes which have now become the servant of examination awards" (21 April 2011).

Furthermore, the knowledge base identified in examination awards often too narrowly reflected that needed to become a physical education teacher. Consequently, there had been a sense of regression since the introduction of examinations in the late 1980s in ways which reflect Kirk's (2010) earlier indication of there often being interconnected problems in physical education. Teachers (many of whom have now completed examination awards) entered teaching lacking the depth of activity-specific knowledge necessary and therefore often struggled - and still do today - to teach practical activities in suitably interesting and detailed ways. These problems were compounded by the aforementioned reductions in practical sessions during teaching education programmes. In addition, the introduction of examinations led for the first time to a noticeable lack of status in physical education, as the pupils choosing awards were not necessarily making a positive choice but were predominantly "those of lower to middle interest and ability rather than those who might really have benefited from awards" (21 April 2011).

Jack was not impressed, either, by current policy thinking on how physical education's links to sport could be maintained and enhanced at the same time as links to health and wellbeing could be more clearly established (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). As Jack strongly identified with performance agendas and a focus on highlighting the benefits of perseverance and challenge, he was concerned that "physical education is now part of the entertainment business, and the emphasis on skill has been replaced by a health agenda pursued through a mile-wide and inch-deep curriculum" (24 February 2011). The perceived difficulty with the form of curriculum link proposed was that to achieve multiple learning gains, skill levels in practical activities would remain low and this mitigate against pupils developing their sporting interests and of gaining deep satisfaction through sustained practice. In Jack's view, "the malaise in physical education cannot be overtaken by more health teaching. It's not the right patch for the problem" (21 April 2011).

The final act, according to Jack, of foolishness was the lack of flexibility in school timetable arrangements. Over nearly four decades of teaching, the school day remained virtually unaltered. While these arrangements provided organisational stability, the model did not lend itself to building greater physical education and sport partnerships, as few opportunities were available for after-school participation for much of Jack's career. Jack commented that "more teachers were working to contract now" (19 May 2011), as most of his subject colleagues wanted the same terms and conditions other teachers enjoyed, even if this limited physical education developments and hindered the building of better sporting pathways within the local community. Jack considered "this approach meant that everyone was able to meet a minimum standard but there was less reward and encouragement for teachers to work beyond the minimum standard, and to be innovative in extending their teaching" (19 May 2011). Kirk (2010) is similarly critical of current models of schooling as they typically reflect an industrial model which is inflexible in meeting pupils' needs. Jack found himself in the challenging position of trying to triumph over school-day restrictions by continually reviewing his teaching in response to pupils' increasingly variable level of fitness and motivation.

Conclusion

Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* ends with the quote, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known," as Sydney Carton awaits his sacrificial death. The quote prophesies two resurrections, one personal and one national. Whatever one's educational views it would seem churlish not to wish Jack anything other than a long and fulfilling retirement after 36 years of teaching. But what will be the legacy of contributions such as Jack's for the future of physical education? Will the subject rise like Paris and become beautiful again?

In reviewing Jack's career alongside the four relational issues identified by Kirk (2010), it is evident that regarding physical culture, Jack's values were much more closely aligned with performance and sport agendas than those advanced for exercise and active leisure. Jack's subject aims were sustained throughout his career, even though his pedagogical practices changed considerably as it became evident that performance agendas were becoming "ever more difficult to deliver on in a school-only context" (19 May 2011) as the rigours of practice were often unpopular with pupils. The potential for greater changes was frustrated by the lack of formal professional development on initiatives such as sport education and alternate approaches to teaching games.

Teaching difficulties were also compounded by new health and wellbeing agendas, which, while trying to increase transfer of learning, often achieved the opposite due to the increase in number of activities covered for ever shorter lengths of time and though acquiescing to pupils' requests for less intensity in lessons. This rarely helped in Jack's view and often resulted in programmes which lived out Kirk's (2010) concerns regarding ineffective and dislocated sport as technique-based introductory-type lessons. The practical emphasis at the start of Jack's career was poorly reflected in later policy making, especially from the early 1990s until 2009, when physical education was a component part of the expressive arts for pupils of 5-14 years (Scottish Office Education Department, 1992). These Expressive Arts guidelines quite closely matched the type of thematic intentions which Penney and Chandler (2000) aspired towards (Figure 1). Jack was sceptical about such links, as physical education was increasingly being used for its instrumental possibilities. For Jack there was little need for such an explicit change of subject focus, as there was every bit as much educational merit in improving pupils' movement competence as there was in achieving affective and/or wider academic gains as a consequence of participation.

Jack's aims and identity were, for the most part, closely related to excellence and ability, and to how these issues impacted on the coherence of physical education. However, a feature of standards

of excellence and ability is a related focus on testing, assessment, and examinations. These areas were considered more of a hindrance than a help to Jack, as evident by what he saw as the privileging of examination awards and the relative marginalisation of the typical physical education programmes most pupils experienced. Jack's valuing of excellence and ability was much more closely identified with developing pupils' potential in these types of programmes and the capacity such learning had for developing lifelong sporting interests. As improving performance was key to achieving such aims, it was difficult for Jack to merge his more meritocratic values (where competitive practices and games with clear winners and losers were a good context for learning) with increasingly egalitarian whole-school aims with their "we can all be good" focus (28 January 2011). Therefore, Jack's values ran somewhat against the grain of the general whole-school emphasis on educational connectedness that was underway during the second half of his career in particular.

Nevertheless, at a personal level, Jack was not unduly nostalgic for the past and was largely resilient enough to cope with the highs and lows of his career, as his enthusiasm for teaching remained largely intact and positive. As Jack noted:

I was not prepared to sacrifice my personal standards. I cannot ask others to demand of themselves, if I cannot continue to demand of myself. This kept me going and made sure I never taught the same way over and over again (19 May 2011).

This is an impressive achievement given that Day (2008) found that long-serving teachers in areas of socio-economic deprivation were those most likely to lose their motivation and commitment for teaching. However, at a more general level, Jack's views reflect Goodson et al. (2006) theorizing on how the effects of continued change can make teachers sceptical about reforms and generally slightly pessimistic about the future of schools.

Jack's thoughts on cultural transmission centred on considering that deep engagement with practical activities offered pupils relative low-cost sport-based opportunities that could partially offset some of the youth problems associated with living in an area of chronic social deprivation. In this respect, the removal of the coaching schemes in which Jack was so heavily involved during the first half of his career was a lasting disappointment "as they indicated a lack of investment in school-based programmes to bring about sustained improvement" (15 March 2011). Jack's views match the notions advanced by Kirk (2006) that emancipation through encouraging young people to take on new challenges can create the conditions for sport to continue to be a coherent part of the rationale for physical education.

In summary, Jack was mostly able to sustain his motivation for teaching when there was often only limited recognition of the subject's contribution, most notably from the onset of industrial action in the mid-1980s through to the middle part of the first decade of the new century. As Kirk (2010) notes "many physical education teachers perform beyond all reasonable expectation" (p.4). Jack's resilience throughout this period was aided by his secure identity of himself as a teacher. More problematic, though, is recognising that Jack taught during a period which is now considered a professional development failure, as career-long professional development was often too generic in nature and too fragmented and haphazard to be of great value, "despite strong evidence about specific needs for deeper subject understanding and a desire for a reinvigoration of subject expertise" (Scottish Government, 2011, p. 99). Thus, even though Jack sought out new pedagogical practices and was reflective rather than nostalgic about his teaching and career, the chance for him to merge theory and practice in more fundamental ways was seldom formally available during standard professional development arrangements. This poor level of support reflects Kirk's (2010) concerns about the adverse implications of not ensuring that subject purposes are critically discussed throughout teachers' careers. The lack of governance, leadership and subject clarity

during the second half of Jack's career highlights the need for such spaces to be found if higher levels of professional engagement in educational discussions are expected.

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