

Global Community Partnership Research

Abstract This chapter investigates a successful teacher education programme in the UK, awarded ‘Outstanding’ by England’s Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. Furthermore, the success of the programme was explicitly contributed by established partnerships with nearby schools. This course, at the time, was not offered within Australia. This study offered valuable insight into a successful primary teacher education programme/course, illustrated good practice, and subsequently, offered possible improvements to the preparation of pre-service primary teachers in Gippsland, Australia.

This research investigates a successful teacher education programme in the UK; awarded ‘Outstanding’ by England’s Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted). Furthermore, the success of the programme was explicitly contributed by established partnerships with nearby schools. The Bachelor of Education (Hons) Primary (PE) course was specifically designed to develop generalist primary classroom teachers with a specialisation in PE. This course, at the time, was not offered within Australia; however, national curriculum reform has ignited a renewed interest in the health and wellbeing of children beginning in the early years of education, and subsequently, course designs that enable this. A qualitative, interpretive study using a case study methodology was

adopted. Methods engaged included semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, observations, and document analysis, and participants included all course lecturers. This study offered valuable insight into a successful primary teacher education programme/course, illustrated good practice, and subsequently, offered possible improvements to the preparation of pre-service primary teachers in Gippsland, Australia.

INTRODUCTION

It is argued that the key learning area for children's health and wellbeing, HPE, be a priority in the recent Australian national curriculum reform:

to provide ongoing, developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to practise and apply the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to maintain and enhance their own and others' health and wellbeing. (ACARA 2012, p. 4)

The implementation of HPE from the early years of primary school increases the likelihood of holistic lifelong health and wellbeing. An issue greatly valued by governments responsible for costs involved with wellness of citizens, the influence of hypokinetic diseases, and the strong connection physical activity has with optimal health and quality of life (Corbin et al. 2011; Robbins et al. 2011; Mackenroth 2004; Howard 2004). The purpose of the HPE learning area is to "offer experiential learning, with a curriculum that is relevant, engaging, contemporary, physically active, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate" (ACARA 2012, p. 2). However, the HPE learning area has had a history of barriers that have impeded quality delivery within all Australian Primary schools, which Sloan suggests has also existed in schools internationally (2010).

'In-house' discussions of crisis at HPE conferences and in journals 20 years ago led to a Senate Inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia 1992) into the state of HPE within Australian Education systems. The 'crisis' was experienced at an international level also (Dinan-Thompson 2009). The findings in the report by the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts (Commonwealth of Australia 1992) confirmed the 'in-house' discussions of crisis (Dinan-Thompson 2009). The Senate Inquiry found that there was in fact a decline in the opportunities for quality HPE in Australian schools, although paradoxically there was unanimous support for the learning area. The problems were mainly with resources and the time allocation to the key learning area which resulted

in a drastic decline in children's skill levels and physical fitness (Tinning et al. 1994). Another major problem was that "suitably qualified physical education teachers were not being employed to teach physical education and school sport to all children" (Commonwealth of Australia 1992, p. xiv). There was also no required accreditation or formal training in physical or sport education as a condition of employment for graduating primary school teachers (Moore 1994). Webster (2001, p. 1) recommended that "pre-service education of primary school teachers include mandatory units directly related to the content strands of the syllabus, with further opportunities for teachers to specialize in PE courses."

These issues still exist today (ACHPER 2011) with some Australian four-year teacher education courses structured in a way that allows beginning primary teachers to graduate with no HPE units completed and then be responsible for the implementation of the HPE learning area for their class. Furthermore, HPE primary specialist teachers are only employed sporadically within primary schools across Australia with, according to Dinan-Thompson (2009, p. 48) questions often raised about "who is teaching HPE, and who is deemed competent to teach HPE in schools". An Australian study conducted by Lynch (2007) concluded: "It is in the Governments best interest to endorse placement of qualified and enthusiastic specialist HPE teachers in all primary schools (p. 22)." Data generated suggested that a lack of quality delivery in HPE physical activities results in a lack of student interest, and is directly related to teacher's lack of understandings about practical ways to implement the social justice underpinnings of the Australian HPE curriculum. "Improving the quality of Physical Education in schools is the best-documented intervention approach to promoting physical activity in youth (ACHPER-WA Branch 1999, p. 9)." Hence, having specialist primary HPE teachers and generalist primary teachers with knowledge and understanding about practical ways to deliver quality HPE experiences will directly affect the holistic health and physical activity participation across the lifespan of today's children.

This study was innovative in its approach to addressing the lacunae in research surrounding the issue that the optimum time for children to learn and refine their motor skills, be introduced to positive HPE experiences and get active is during preschool and early primary school years (Branta et al. 1984; Commonwealth of Australia 1992; Espenschade and Eckert 1980; Lynch 2005; 2008, 2013a, b, 2014, 2015a, b, c, d; Mackenroth 2004; Raitakari et al. 1994). Also, HPE specialists are the preferred providers of HPE in primary school settings (Faulkner et al. 2008; Lynch 2007, 2013c, 2015b Morgan 2008). Paradoxically, primary teacher edu-

cation courses that specialise in HPE in Australia are rare if not non-existent. (Lynch 2015e).

Hence, specialist HPE teachers working within primary schools are often not qualified generalist classroom primary teachers (often secondary HPE trained), and may not have had opportunities to develop pedagogy specifically for teaching children in the primary school sector, or they are generalist classroom teachers with no HPE specialisation. (Lynch 2013b).

RESEARCH PURPOSE

While various studies have found issues with the delivery of HPE in schools and recommend that qualified HPE teachers teach HPE, this study is the first to investigate with the intention to identify what the best qualification preparation for primary school teachers of HPE involves. Hence, this study investigates the implementation of a university course specifically designed to address (structurally) the major problem identified in the Australian Senate Inquiry 20 years ago; a course specifically designed to develop generalist primary classroom teachers with a specialisation in PE.

The overarching general research question that guided conduct of this research was: How are Primary Education HPE teachers' best prepared?

Supplementary research questions were:

1. What is the purpose of the Bachelor of Education (Hons) Primary (PE) course?
2. How does the course function in practice and how are identified partnerships sustained?
3. What evidence is there that the course is successful?
4. Are there any barriers and if so, how are they overcome?

An analytical question arising from the research questions provided a more critical generation of data:

5. What hybrid space features does this course evidence?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative, interpretive study was most appropriate due to the significance of constructed meanings developed from the interpretation of shared experiences and perspectives. "Social realities are

constructed by the participants in their social settings (Glesne 1999, p. 5).” The participants share their experiences and perspectives, which are never wrong.

From within an interpretivist theoretical perspective, a symbolic interactionist lens was applied for the purpose of investigating how the primary education pre-service teachers were prepared to teach PE. Symbolic interactionism as a perspective “focuses on the human being and tries to understand human behaviour” (Charon 1998, p. 12). The key assumptions of symbolic interaction are that “people transmit and receive symbolic communication when they socially interact, people create perceptions of each other and social settings, people largely act on their perceptions, and how people think about themselves and others is based on their interactions” (Neuman 2000, p. 60). The symbolic interactionist lens was applied during interviews, observations, and document analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study research in education is conducted so that “specific issues and problems of practice can be identified and explained” (Merriam 1998, p. 38). The ITE programme was identified as a model programme/course to investigate, identified as having strong partnerships with local schools and subsequently was awarded ‘Outstanding’ for 2010–2011 academic year by Ofsted. While some courses within Australia offered opportunities for pre-service primary teachers to elect a number of PE units, not one could be identified as a specific primary PE specialism qualified course. The researcher in “qualitative research is often the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam 1998, p. 7), noting the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred (Anderson 1990).

DATA GENERATING STRATEGIES

There was only one researcher operating as data gatherer and analyst during this interpretive case study. The methods engaged so as to enable precision of details within the chosen theoretical framework were semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, observations, and document analysis (Table 5.1). The participants were course lecturers and the research questions guided conduct of this research and generated data.

Table 5.1 Research framework within which the specific methodology has been selected

<i>Epistemology</i>	<i>Constructionism</i>
Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism
	– Symbolic interactionism
Research Methodology	Case study
Data Generating Methods	Interviews: semi-structured
	Reflective journal
	Observation
	Document analysis

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The researcher initiated contact with the case study through e-mail and phone calls to arrange a visit and subsequent gathering of data. The visits occurred over the period of approximately one month, at the beginning of the UK academic year’s second term (January 2012), immediately following the Ofsted ‘Outstanding’ 2010/2011 award. Furthermore, follow-up research was conducted again in January 2014. The researcher observed open day for prospective students, which included course-specific information from the Programme Manager; interviews for prospective students; worked alongside course lecturers and observed course lessons; consulted the university lecturers involved in the Bachelor of Education (Hons) Primary (PE) course and conducted semi-structured interviews which were audiotaped and later transcribed. Meetings and discussions were held with the ITE Programmes Leader and the International Co-ordinator for the Faculty of Education. This involved gaining permission from the PE Team Leader and Education Programmes Leader to gather data. Observations also included visiting local primary partner schools for half a day.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The case study was analysed using Wellington’s (2000) simplified version of the ‘Constant Comparative Method for Analysing Qualitative Data’ and was described. This involved an iterative process of “Immersion; Reflecting, standing back; Analysing—dividing up and taking apart, selecting and filtering, classifying and categorizing; Synthesizing and re-combining; Relating to other work and locating; Reflecting back (returning for more data?); Presenting, disseminating, sharing” (Wellington 2000, p. 141).

Table 5.2 Coding of interview transcript

<i>Interview Transcript</i>	<i>Coding</i>
I In a nutshell what does the course involve? How would you briefly describe what it's about?	– Course purpose – Course structure
P You are trained to be a primary school teacher, but you need a passion and interest in physical education. The four years is a journey through various different elements, so as well as the nine specialist subject modules across the four years, there are professional studies modules; classroom management, differentiation, teaching styles and all of that. Then there's the foundation subject modules; History, Music, RE (Religious Education), all the foundation subjects. And core modules; English, Maths, Science and ICT as it stands at the moment. It's like splitting it up into quarters, one quarter is specialist subject modules, one quarter is professional studies, one quarter are other subjects and one quarter is teaching placement. They are on teaching placement for quite a significant amount of time	– Course modules – Professional Studies – Foundation Subjects and Core modules – Specialist Subject modules – Teaching Placement

In attempt to answer the research questions, units of meaning were formed, coded, and categorised with other similar units. Table 5.2 illustrates a copy of a coded semi-structured interview transcript. The process of analysis forms an audit trail and is diagrammatically represented in figure 5.1.

VERIFICATION AND ETHICAL ISSUES

An ethical clearance was granted from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) which involved permission from the UK University for the recruitment of participants and research to be conducted. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured during the study as pseudonyms were assigned to protect the privacy of the participants.

A conscious effort was made by the researcher to be fair in the generation of data, in the interpretation of data, in the formation of theories, and in the presentation of the data. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, “in which practitioners intervene in people’s lives” (Merriam 1998, p. 198).

Process of Analysis

Research Question Three: What evidence is there that the course is successful?

STAGE 1 Data Generation, display and reflection.

Participants	Data Generating Strategies
Primary Physical Education specialist lecturers	Semi-structured Interview Observations of lessons Document Analysis Reflective Journal
Primary Bachelor of Education Students	Observations of lessons Document Analysis Reflective Journal

STAGE 2 Data coding and distillation. Themes from data gathered.

-Ofsted	- History of course	-partnerships with primary schools
-sharing facilities with schools	- teaching various age groups of children	
- module evaluations by students	- International partnerships	- student support networks
- equipment	- action plans for improvement	- teamwork between course staff
- international experiences for students	- school teachers value partnerships	
-gender ratios of students	- students from around the UK	- optimal children contact
-Course covers bus expenses for school children	- large enrolment application numbers	
-external examiners report	- Unistats survey	- employment prospects on completion
-teaching placement experiences	-feedback given to students for assessment	

STAGE 3 Generation of key themes. Data themes from stage 2 categorised.

- Course purpose and need	- advantage of partnerships	-experienced and respected lecturers
- diverse teaching experience	- Quality assurance and feedback	- popularity amongst students
	- unique course	

STAGE 4 Story report and conclusions

There is an overwhelmingly large amount of evidence that this course is successful. The Ofsted inspection is thorough; it involved observing students teaching in schools, analysis of teaching content and modules, interviewing tutors and students and cluster school representatives. Ofsted awarded the course ‘Outstanding’. The external examiner’s report stated that the course is unique and recommended it be showcased as a best-practice example. The national student survey, unistats, indicates extremely high student satisfaction with the quality of the course. The course is also very popular amongst prospective students. The evidence of success corresponds to a course that the university students find meaningful. That is, it espouses the purpose of the HPE learning area in Australia to “offer experiential learning, with a curriculum that is relevant, engaging, contemporary, physically active, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate.” (ACARA, 2012, p. 2).

Fig. 5.1 Description of data analysis for evidencing course success

As the role of researcher was that of both author and instrument (Patton 1990), bias was consciously avoided and if recognised, minimised.

Member checks involved soliciting informants’ views as to credibility of findings and these were utilised to confirm the plausibility and credibility

of interpretations. Themes and conclusions were checked within the other data generating methods, for example, a finding during an observation was further explored during an interview, which as a result, strengthened the quality of the research. This addressed the issue of public disclosure of processes and gave the themes congruence and verisimilitude (Anfara et al. 2002). Credibility of the study was achieved by employing triangulation, the process for using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning (Stake 1994). This was through interviews of all PE lecturers, observations of classes, and various forms of student feedback underpinning document analysis.

FINDINGS

1. *What is the purpose of the Bachelor of Education (Hons) Primary (Physical Education) course?*

The purpose of the course as stated by formal documentation is to provide a distinctive path to the award of Qualified Teacher Status, qualifying and preparing students to teach in primary schools across England:

The course develops students' confidence, understanding and expertise in this curriculum area and prepares students to become specialist teachers of PE; an important and significant role in today's primary school. (BEd Primary Undergraduate course information booklet, 2011)

This was accentuated by the PE lecturers during interviews. When reflecting on why she chose to study this particular course when younger, the lecturer and Team Leader Toni (Pseudonym) commented, "I knew I wanted to teach all of the subjects but with a particular focus on PE. And this is what we encourage our students to realise, they're not going to be PE teachers they are primary school teachers with a specialism in Physical Education." Another lecturer, Laura (Pseudonym) shared that students will "train as a classroom teacher for a primary school. So that's their main job to be a teacher in a primary school. So they can teach all subjects like English, Maths, Science plus all the foundation subjects like Art and Music. But Physical Education will be a serious specialist subject that they would over the four years have about 290 hours of contact time, of taught time on PE." Graduates of the course are according to Toni: "qualified to teach PE within the primary, specifically for children five to eleven years". Also, in some

cases, although mainly in the private sector, graduates have found themselves “teaching older pupils post Key Stage Two (Year 6)”.

The four-year course is not common as expressed by Toni, “We feel our course is unique because we have nine Physical Education modules across the BEd course which equates to 290 taught hours. So our specialists really leave as specialists, ready to lead their subject in their schools.” Laura explained that “Within England, there are others (programmes) that will say it’s a specialism, but when you look at it in detail it might only be one extra module, or 10 more hours rather than ours which is 290 hours of PE”. More so, Laura was unaware of any other course receiving a testamur stating the students’ specialism in PE: BEd Primary (PE).

The course has been offered for many years. As Toni shared, “we had various campuses around and the university about three or four years ago decided they wanted to centralise it so all the campuses closed down”. The Teachers’ College “had a very good long standing, great reputation for training first class teachers. But, despite hesitations by lots of members of staff, it’s continuing here at university and there are still the good elements of the course”. Laura appended that the College was “set up just after or around the second world war. Toni (colleague) attended the college as a student. Certainly as long as I’ve worked here they’ve had PE as a specialism for primary, and I have the impression it is long standing”. Conversations confirmed that Toni studied the course in the early 1990s. Toni confirmed “Right from the start there were specialist routes.”

2. *How does the course function in practice and how are identified partnerships sustained?*

The course structure is designed to enable students to develop personal skills, knowledge, and expertise in delivering purposeful, relevant, and appropriate PE for children in the primary age range (course website, 2012). The four-year BEd primary course is planned with partner schools and has four strands:

- School experience—teach in a different school every year
- Primary curriculum studies—learn how to teach, plan, and assess all primary school subjects
- Specialist subject—study PE in some depth
- Education studies—explore issues about teaching and learning.

Table 5.3 Module contact hours for Physical Education

Year	EPE 121	ESPE 150	EPE 115
1	Movement Knowledge Stage 1: Motor Development 10 credit points = 25 teaching hours	An introduction to teaching and learning in physical education 10 credit points = 25 teaching hours	Teaching and Learning through school sport 10 credit points = 25 teaching hours
Year	EPE 211	EPE 215	EPE 223
2	Movement Knowledge Stage 2: Gymnastics 10 credit points = 25 teaching hours	Dance as an Art Form 10 credit points = 25 teaching hours	The Outdoor Experience 20 credit points = 50 teaching hours
Year	ESPE 322		ESPE 323
3	Assessment in physical education 20 credit points = 50 teaching hours		Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Physical Education 20 credit points = 50 teaching hours
Year	ESPE 304		
4	Curriculum Leadership in Physical Education 20 credit points = 50 teaching hours		

The primary curriculum studies covered both the core subjects, English, Maths, Science, and ICT, and the foundation subjects, Religious Education, History, Geography, Citizenship, personal social health and economic education (PSHE), Science, PE, Music, Modern foreign languages, Design and technology, and Art and design. This was supported by the Team Leader for the course, Toni.

The following table (Table 5.3) demonstrates how the course equates to 290 hours for the PE specialism.

Furthermore, the course is implemented by lecturers who are experienced teachers. The course website states that all tutors come from teaching backgrounds. The subject leader, Toni, was a graduate of the course and taught for many years in a primary school. Laura attended Teachers' College in 1974, which was a three-year course. "I specialised in secondary physical education, so I did my three years at Bedford. In those days it was an all women's college, one of the best colleges at the time." Laura taught for many years in secondary private and public schools before being employed as a PE specialist in a private primary school. Here she taught "two to seven year olds, and I was there for

16–17 years. And that’s where I learnt everything about primary physical education”.

Toni and Laura’s teaching experience is used to model good teaching practice. Toni shares:

one of the reasons we’ve been determined to bring children into our modules is so that we can teach the children and they (pre-service teachers) can at least see us teaching. So it also gives the students of teaching not just in schools but here on campus too.

Strong relations have been developed with partner schools. Toni explains, “We are quite unique I think in that within the faculty we work with children in eight of our nine modules. I know other subjects never work with children at all, so our PE students often say to us ‘we’re really lucky because we get lots of opportunities to work with children’.” Laura also shared “I think out of all the subject specialism PE has the most access to children, and in virtually every module we run children are involved in some way.” She appended this with “I think the students will say that’s one of the strengths of the PE course, is the contact with the children.” The benefit of involving children was supported in an interview with a fourth year student, Oliver, (pseudonym) who was studying the course. He shared that the best thing about the course:

is going into schools, it is so rewarding. When you are at uni all the time it is great fun but when you actually get in and able to put into practice is when you really feel like you are doing something, where you are really learning something. It is really rewarding to be able to see that you are making a difference in the short space of time.

Toni advised that “we’ve got three schools within a five minute walking distance” that are often involved. Laura further explained that “we’ve got some local schools that will bring children into our lectures, either for Toni and I to teach them and our students to watch, or for the university students to get involved and pair up with the children and run things, or to plan their own schemes of work to implement with the children.”

The PE team consisted of Toni, Laura, and a third member, a technical assistant, who assisted with equipment set-up and administrative

tasks such as organising school classes' times and dates for visits. Observations by the researcher were supported by the team leader, Toni, who agreed that the teamwork between members was a strength. Toni added, "I would say we would want to build on our team if we could, we have an associate lecturer we buy in, she'll be starting next week to teach our dance module." The equipment the PE department has is quite sufficient, as Laura explains, "we build on what we've got each year and it's very much what you'd find in a Primary school equipment cupboard". Observations confirmed plentiful equipment to cover the classes for children visiting from nearby schools for all aspects of the national curriculum. Laura articulated this as "six activity areas; gymnastics, dance, games, athletics, outdoor education and swimming". Provision of facilities included a large university sports hall which they used on occasions and a hall that they had access to at all times and was used as their base. This was able to be used for lectures/tutorials and practicals with an overhead projector and seating, along with a large timber floor space and equipment storage. This is where observations of lessons took place and where the children from schools often visit for classes.

3. *What evidence is there that the course is successful?*

The most salient evidence that the course is successful is the Ofsted 'Outstanding' grading. This inspection involved investigating school placements, content covered and implementation at university, and interviews with ex-students. The following excerpt from the interview with Toni explains this process:

Our latest Ofsted inspection was in March this year (2011), and I think the report is dated April. We had six weeks' notice and they came for a week and there were five or six inspectors. They were looking at all of Primary provisions, not just specifically at the BEd (PE) course, but the whole of the BEd course. They spent time interviewing us as tutors and interviewing our students from each of the 4 years, interviewing the post grad students doing the PGCE, and spent time working with our partner schools. They went into some of our cluster schools to get a good representation, they spoke with associate lecturers and teachers there. Also watched students teach in the schools and looked at our grading of them. It was quite intensive. In terms of Physical education we had an opportunity to talk to one of the Ofsted inspectors. I met with one of them and told them all about our course, the modules the students take, the feedback we get from students, the external examiners report.

Details about the external examiner’s report were clarified by Toni, “We have a Physical Education external examiner and he comes down twice a year and looks at student evaluations and at our action plans.” Document analysis from previous external examiner reports evidenced that the team was consistently acknowledged for the coherence of its programme and the quality of its marking. Comments from the external examiner’s report included:

The programme offers a quite unique and very special experience for the trainee teacher who is specialising in physical education. The commitment of the subject leader and the teaching team is palpable and the time afforded to the subject is in excess of many other ‘specialist’ programmes that I am aware of around the country... Indeed, (in my view) this subject area could and should be showcased as a best-practice example.

Another comment made by the external examiner acknowledged the benefits of having strong professional relationships with local schools:

The range of modules and their assessments are pitched at appropriate levels and meet the needs and requirements of students at their respective stages of training. A very positive feature of the modules is the amount of contact that students have with pupils (in both the school and university setting).

A national student survey completed by the fourth-year students offered a rating which also evidenced course success. Unistats is an independent website offering a range of statistics on university courses from around the UK. A Key Information Set is an official overview of comparable courses for prospective students. A synopsis of the results from the fourth-year students is provided in Table 5.4:

The fourth-year student Oliver advocates studying the BEd Primary course for “It was ‘outstanding’ in all Ofsted. I know a lot of people that have come through the course already here and they have all got

Table 5.4 Student survey for BEd (Hons) Primary (Physical Education) course

Overall, students were satisfied with the quality of the course	94 %
Students agreed that staff made the subjects interesting	91 %
Students agreed that staff are good at explaining things	99 %
Students agreed they got sufficient advice and support	87 %
Students in work/study six months after finishing	90 %

jobs and they are great teachers.” Toni commented that “We have very positive feedback, we have average size of 22 per year, so that at any one time we have 90–100 students specialising in Physical Education. At the end of each module they fill in a module evaluation, so we as part of our annual review and planning process look at the evaluations of the students. They’re always very positive.”

The BEd (Hons) Primary Physical Education course is popular. Toni shares, “We certainly get a huge number of applicants.” Laura informed, “we get roughly 200 people apply each year and about 80 people being interviewed and roughly 35 places being offered for 20–25 people actually starting the course each year.” Observations by the researcher during interviews for prospective students confirmed the large number of applicants.

4. *Are there any barriers and if so, how are they overcome?*

The main barrier identified by the lecturers interviewed was the lack of outdoor space which has been overcome through having good relations with the nearby schools. Laura states, “Our main problem here is a lack of outdoor space, we don’t have an official outdoor space, so to go outside and play netball or hockey we would have to go to one of the local schools or to hire a facility.” Sharing of facilities is also reciprocated as explained by Toni:

One of the schools their hall is tiny and they have 30 children, so they have to break it (PE lessons) into three sessions of PE, they bring 10 children in at a time. So when they come up to our hall, which to them is a huge space, their children get a lot from it, using all the apparatus and equipment that we have got as well, so it’s a win-win situation really for both of us.

This sharing of facilities and working in partnership was observed by the researcher who spent half of a day in a nearby primary school. The public school had 362 children and the researcher was welcomed to the school by the Head Teacher where he attended the weekly school assembly and observed PE lessons from various classes. Laura arranged the visit and lessons so that the researcher could observe the children’s skills and understanding.

Another barrier identified by both lecturers was the lack of priority that many primary schools had for PE. Toni shared that often students return from school experience and “the main barriers that they talk about are teachers’ attitudes to the subject and the lack of priority

given to physical education.” Toni gave the example of where third-year university students have reported during school experience that “PE has stopped and it’s the middle of November because they (school) are practising for the school play, hall is taken up by the stage and they want to know what to do.” Laura stressed, “it’s not given a high priority by an awful lot of teachers because they’re afraid of it”. As Toni discusses, efforts to overcome this barrier are made through PE lessons involving children: “The teacher comes with them (children) and often teaching assistants and sometimes parents as well. They value it as well, they see it as an opportunity to get CPD (Curriculum Professional Development).”

Also, value was given to the responsibilities of Head Teachers within primary schools. Their decisions can also create challenges as they choose who to employ to teach PE and what previous experience and qualifications they have. Toni suggests, “We say that to our PE students as well. Don’t assume you’re going to walk straight into the job, there maybe someone already doing the job who doesn’t have a background in physical education.”

Another major challenge identified by the teacher educators was funding. Toni was concerned that funding for the residential outdoor education camp may be terminated and that the pre-service teachers who “are already paying their tuition fees” may be forced to contribute or fund raise. Laura spoke of the UK School Sports Partnership model which aligned primary schools with secondary schools to offer support for sport. “So this whole thing is called a partnership, you’ve probably got eight secondary schools and 40 primary schools and it worked really well.” Funding ceased and it has collapsed in most areas. Toni and Laura also expressed the tightening of research grants within universities since the global financial crisis. The final research question was analytical.

5. *What hybrid space features does this course evidence?*

Course features that espouse development towards a hybrid space (cf. Fig. 4.1) include school/university partnerships, integration through relationships, blended theory and practice, genuine relationships and shared belief, stakeholder equal worth and synergy. The partnerships between the university, schools, and community groups were evidenced within the overall planning and course schemes of work. Furthermore, partnerships were long lasting and supported by course sustainability.

Researcher time in the field was enough to observe the genuine professional relationships and shared belief, equal worth, and synergy of stakeholders. This was discussed by the teacher educators during the interviews where they overcome flaws and difficulties in field experience by deliberately involving children from local primary schools in almost all modules (units) of work. This education opportunity is reciprocated by the schools that contributed to the Ofsted review, allowing the university to use sporting facilities and also teachers who assisted Toni in conducting practice interviews for fourth-year pre-service teachers.

The visits to the schools were pertinent in observing the mutually respectful relationships between teacher educators and staff members. Laura contacted both schools the day before to ask if it was possible to visit with the researcher from Australia. The verbal greetings and body language of the school's staff members were genuine and welcoming. The Head Teacher in one school, who was busily preparing a few final notes before school assembly, found the time to discuss features of the school and kindly invited both the teacher educator and researcher to assembly. The teachers from different year levels made the effort to teach some PE in the afternoon so the researcher could observe the level of the children and the various pedagogies they implemented. Furthermore, they were not threatened by the experience. In some instances, the lessons were adopted from PE classes they had observed from pre-service teachers and teacher educator lessons. There was genuine mutual respect for the teacher educators' knowledge and teachers' and school staff's expertise. There was a common goal of enabling the best opportunity for the children, and the atmosphere was non-threatening which subsequently promoted synergy. An outsider could have easily have considered Laura to be a member of both schools' staff.

Another pertinent contributing feature is the hall that formed the site for the PE specialism course, the PE centre. The hall is used by the teacher educators for lectures/tutorials and practicals with an overhead projector and seating, along with a large timber floor space and equipment storage. It is important to note that the hall is not located within the university grounds. Rather, it is situated half way between the university grounds and the schools and acted as a bridge between the university and the schools, a physical and metaphorical meeting place where all stakeholders were welcome, a third space and possibly a hybrid space.

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