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# A PE teacher's tale: journeying from teacher education to teaching practice in physical education

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## ABSTRACT

As part of a longitudinal research project on the transition from physical education teacher education (PETE) to school physical education (PE) in Sweden and exploring whether and how PETE matters, this article uses narrative inquiry to 'represent' a PE teacher's professional journey from PETE to the induction phase of PE teaching. The study focuses on his use of, and reflections on, 'assessment for learning' (AFL) at different stages of his teaching experience. The purpose of the study is to contribute knowledge about how positive experiences of AFL during PETE can enable the use of AFL in school PE for a newly qualified teacher. This is done by analysing one male PETE student's reflections on AFL in the context of a campus-based course on PE assessment, his use of and reflections on AFL during his practicum, and in school PE as a newly qualified teacher. The data generation consisted of recordings of a PETE seminar, a stimulated recall interview with the participant during his final school placement, and two interviews with him in his role as a newly qualified PE teacher at two different schools. Through the PE teacher's tale, we show how the campus-based course on PE assessment in PETE and the student teacher's positive experience of using AFL during his practicum seem to have inspired him in his later positions. The results are discussed in relation to the perspective of occupational socialisation theory. This narrative inquiry suggests that PETE can make a difference for student teachers who are prepared to face the challenges of the induction phase of PE teaching and are able to navigate between the barriers that get in their way. We conclude the paper with some considerations regarding the study's potential strength (trustworthiness), sharing (transferability) and service (usefulness).

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Transitions; narrative inquiry; occupational socialisation theory; assessment for learning; physical education teacher education; teaching and learning

## Introduction

As part of a research project focusing on the transition from physical education teacher education (PETE) to school physical education (PE) in Sweden (Backman et al., 2023; Tolgfors et al., 2021; Tolgfors et al., 2022), this article uses narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) assisted by occupational socialisation theory (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b) to 'represent' a PE teacher's professional journey from PETE to PE teaching. The study focuses on the PE teacher's use of, and reflections on, 'assessment for learning' (AFL), at different stages of his teaching experience. The PE teacher was first introduced

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to AfL during PETE within a course on assessment *for* and *of* learning. In this context, he was informed that AfL involves ‘three main processes (identifying where learners are in their learning, where they are going, how to get there) exercised by three categories of actors (teacher, learner, peer)’ (William, 2011, p. 12). These processes can be understood as a pedagogic approach, including five key strategies: (1) clarifying and sharing learning intentions with the pupils, (2) engineering effective classroom discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning, (3) providing feedback that moves the learner forward, (4) activating pupils as learning resources for one another and (5) activating pupils as owners of their own learning (William, 2011). He was also encouraged to consider how to adapt teaching to the needs of the learners.<sup>1</sup> The content area was dealt with in the form of lectures, course literature and seminars. One learning task involved investigating how AfL was implemented in authentic teaching practices of school PE. The participant also had the opportunity to practise using AfL during his school placement (also referred to as practicum). In an important sense, we have not only followed the journey of an individual in his process of becoming a teacher but have also followed the journey of PETE content as it moves from PETE to school PE.

Today AfL is part of the course content in Swedish PETE programmes. This is also the case in other western countries, where many students regard AfL as a highly relevant aspect of PETE (Lorente-Catalán & Kirk, 2016). Nonetheless, Lorente and Kirk (2013, p. 79) argue that, ‘[i]f PE teachers are to be competent users of alternative assessment in schools, then it is of crucial importance that they are able to experience such practices as part of their professional preparation’. Macken et al. (2020) have shown however, that PETE students rarely apply the key strategies of AfL in the context of their school placements. This means that they have few opportunities to practise supervising pupils in learning situations where, for example, self- or peer assessment would be justified.

In our previous work we have identified different enablers and constraints for PETE students’ use of AfL during their school placements (Tolgfors et al., 2021). Amongst other things, we found that: (1) the task of integrating assessment into teaching enables the use of AfL, (2) an exclusive focus on summative assessment and grading constrains the use of AfL, (3) a lack of critical engagement with physical education teaching traditions constrains the use of AfL, (4) knowing the pupils is crucial for the use of AfL and (5) the framing of the school placements determines how AfL can be used (Tolgfors et al., 2021, p. 323).

Based on the above research, student teachers with poor experiences of using AfL in authentic teaching and learning situations such as school placements are likely to limit their use of AfL as newly qualified teachers (Lorente & Kirk, 2013; Macken et al., 2020). Following the same logic, we wonder whether a student teacher with a more positive experience of using AfL in authentic teaching and learning situations during PETE is also more likely to use AfL in the induction phase of PE teaching.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to contribute knowledge about how positive experiences of AfL during PETE can enable the use of AfL in school PE for a newly qualified teacher. This is done by exploring one male PETE student’s reflections on AfL in the context of a campus-based course on PE assessment, his use of and reflections on AfL during the practicum and, eventually, the same individual’s way of implementing AfL as a newly qualified teacher at two different schools. Inspired by Mulholland and Wallace (2003), who have also explored a single participant’s experiences during the transition from teacher education to teaching practice in school, this study is conducted as a narrative inquiry in which the participant is viewed as *a traveller* on a professional journey from PETE to the teaching practice in school PE. The research question that guides our investigation is: How is AfL justified and used in teaching PE in relation to the contextual conditions provided at different stages of a professional journey?

## Methodology

### *Narrative inquiry*

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. Drawing on Dewey’s theory of experience, including his notions of *situation* (place), *continuity* (past,

present and future) and *interaction* (personal and social), Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 50) suggest a set of terms that ‘creates a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*’, useful when conducting a narrative inquiry. Considering this set of terms, the current study addresses temporality during the transition from PETE to school PE; it focuses on personal experiences and social interaction; and it takes place in different educational contexts such as a seminar room at university, a school placement at an upper secondary school and PE facilities at two compulsory schools.

Narrative inquiry has been advocated by several scholars within the qualitative research tradition, based on its potential to provide important insights into teaching, learning and assessment at the micro level of, for instance, PETE (Dowling et al., 2015; Wrench, 2017) or school PE (Casey & Schaefer, 2016; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011). According to Dowling et al. (2015, p. 926),

... narratives are inherently bound to temporality and to contingency. It follows that every day, individual ‘small stories’ in PE are inevitably linked to macro canonical and/or ‘big stories’ in PE, PETE and society beyond. These are, of course, contextualised within a longer-term historical narrative.

Thus, Dowling and colleagues emphasize the relationship between a story told at the micro level and its potential consequences and implications at the macro level: ‘Narrative inquiry in PETE [and PE] is accordingly concerned with understanding subjective, lived experience in the larger context of events and circumstances’ (Dowling et al., 2015, p. 926).

Recently, Walters et al. (2023) conducted a narrative inquiry of a preservice teacher’s, an in-service teacher’s, and a PE teacher educator’s perspective on PE assessment. Based on the stories of these actors, the researchers critically engaged in the complex assessment mission. Similarly, we focus on the same settings, but from one individual’s perspective as he journeys from the PETE context to the teaching practice of school PE.

Drawing on Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Casey and colleagues (2018, p. 29) see narrative inquiry as ‘a way of understanding experience in relationship to the researchers’ experiences, the participants’ experiences, both bound in time, the social environment and place.’ Thus, it is important to note that the authors of the current narrative have considerable experience as PE teachers, teacher educators and researchers in the field of school PE and PETE. In terms of *strength criteria* (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003, p. 8), this experience facilitated the identification and selection of the participant (the traveller) among our PETE students. Our own experiences within different educational contexts also helped us understand the traveller’s story and re-tell it in the form of a professional journey from a first-person perspective (see Carless & Sparkes, 2008; Quennerstedt et al., 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2009).

Mulholland and Wallace (2003, p. 6) account for different approaches to narrative inquiry. Either a primary narrative is re-told, in which the participant’s voice is foregrounded, or ‘the distance of research text from field text is greater and interpretation plays a more prominent role than description’. In the interpretation of the field text, the analysis can be assisted by a theoretical framework. In the current study, the professional journey from PETE to school PE will be related to the research field of occupational socialisation theory (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b).

### ***Assisting theoretical framework***

Lawson (1983a, 1983b) identified three types of socialisation – acculturation, professional socialisation and organisational socialisation. All three types are likely to affect how a teacher views their position, their roles, their subject content and their pedagogical approach. Acculturation refers to the socialisation process that takes place in the individual’s childhood and adolescence, through interactions with significant people who, intentionally or not, share their ideas of what the occupation of PE teacher involves. Professional socialisation refers to the potential influence of PETE. Organisational socialisation refers to the impact of the school organisation and the contextual conditions of the workplace.

Following Lawson's work, numerous studies have been conducted in the field of occupational socialisation theory. In a literature review focusing on PE, Richards, Templin and Graber (2014) summarize previous research and highlight some common aspects of each type of socialisation and note that the transition from PETE to school PE often implies a 'reality shock' for beginning teachers. The theoretical framework has also been used in the Swedish context, where newly qualified teachers frequently feel marginalised, isolated and dependent on building relationships with both colleagues and pupils in order to cope with the demanding psycho-social work environment (see for example Ferry & Westerlund, 2023; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022). These challenges are sometimes referred to as 'barriers' (Ensign & Mays Woods, 2017). However, contemporary occupational socialisation is not merely about beginning PE teachers' adaptation to different contextual conditions. Richards et al. (2014) emphasise the interchange between individuals and socialising agents, which denotes a dialectical approach to socialisation. In the same vein, MacPhail and Hartley (2016) argue that PE teachers are both shaping and being shaped by school forces. In the current study, we consider this reciprocal process within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which will be further explained in the analysis below.

Richards et al. (2014) encourage scholars to use occupational socialisation theory as a framework through which to understand the contextual conditions for beginning PE teachers. Thus, the theoretical framework is of analytical importance in this study, in that it focuses on an individual's professional socialisation in PETE and organisational socialisation<sup>2</sup> in school PE. Our focus on *one* PE teacher on his professional journey facilitates shifts between different perspectives on the micro and macro level. This idea is inspired by Curtner-Smith (2001), who used occupational socialisation theory when exploring PETE's impact on a single first-year teacher's perspectives, beliefs and values. For the PE teacher in Curtner-Smith's (2001) study, PETE implied 'real change' (p. 98), which cannot always be expected. Thus, the theoretical framework also directs our attention to the potential 'washing out of practices emphasized in PETE, including the newly qualified teacher[']s conceptions of the purposes of assessment' (Starck et al., 2020, p. 2).

### ***Recruitment of the participant and ethical considerations***

During PETE the participant (between 25 and 30 years old) carried out his practicum at an upper secondary school (students aged 16–18) in a medium-sized Swedish city. After graduation, the novice PE teacher was first employed at a compulsory school (with pupils aged 13–15) in a small Swedish agricultural community. However, after one term he accepted a new job at a compulsory school (with pupils aged 7–12) in the city where he completed his teacher training. The recruitment of the participant for this study was based on our impression that he stood out in comparison with many other PETE students regarding his use of AfL in the context of the practicum. He seemed to have more positive experiences than his course mates. Thus, we asked him if he would be available for follow-up interviews at later stages of his professional journey. As he was happy to tell us his story and gave his informed consent to the data generation described below, we had found our *traveller*.

In pursuit of confidentiality and anonymity, we have tried to avoid disclosing as much personal and geographical information as possible. The research project has also been approved in a review by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (2019-05727).

### ***Data generation***

Mulholland and Wallace (2003, p. 9) emphasize the importance of 'telling the research story' by providing a thorough description of the research design and data generation. This study has a longitudinal design and consists of several sources of data, such as audio- and video-recorded seminars, Stimulated Recall (SR) interviews using video as prompts, and interviews via the online software Zoom. The point of departure of the traveller's professional journey was a campus-based course

on PE assessment at a Swedish university. A seminar was organised via Zoom to focus on the PETE students' understandings of assessment *for* and *of* learning. The seminar was recorded, which made it easier for us to identify who said what. Thus, we were able to extract the traveller's statements from the rest of the students' reflections. The seminar was transcribed verbatim. The data from this seminar have been used in the construction of the initial phase of the PE teacher's tale and is referred to as the 'take-off' point.

The traveller's final practicum took place in the spring of 2021. This phase of his professional journey was investigated by means of a video-stimulated recall interview (Endacott, 2016). Researcher 1 used a GoPro camera to video-record the PETE student teaching a class of students at an upper secondary school. After the 150-minute-long lesson, some video sequences including elements of AfL in the teaching practice were selected for the purpose of stimulating the participant's reflections. In the interview, the questions focused on the PETE student's way of clarifying the learning intentions, providing feedback and activating the pupils as learning resources for one another, all of which are important aspects of AfL. The interview lasted for an hour and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The third stop on the journey took place in the induction phase of his first employment, when the newly qualified PE teacher had been working for a few months. The interview focused on his new contextual conditions for PE teaching in general and his use of AfL in particular. For instance, the PE teacher was asked about his cooperation with his new colleagues and his relationship with the pupils, who were younger than those he had taught during the practicum. The second interview also lasted for about an hour, was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The data from the fourth stop on the traveller's professional journey was generated in an interview using the online software Zoom when the PE teacher had worked for about eight months at his second workplace. Inspired by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 50), this final interview included questions that went *backward* and *forward*. This meant that the traveller was prompted to look back on his professional journey to his current position and future development needs regarding AfL. Again, the third interview lasted for an hour, was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In sum, these four opportunities for data generation gave us access to the traveller's professional journey, which we have interpreted as and translated into a PE teacher's tale. This was accomplished through the analysis process described below.

## Analysis

Like many qualitative analytical procedures, the first step of the analysis involved familiarisation with the empirical material by watching the video-recorded seminar from the campus-based course on PE assessment and reading the transcripts from the different interviews (Jones, 2015). When re-reading the field texts, they were narratively coded (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131). More specifically, the traveller's reported experiences of using AfL in different educational contexts during the transition from PETE to school PE were noted in the field texts, focusing on relations with colleagues and pupils, emotional expressions, things that worked well and areas of tension.

According to Armour and Chen (2012, p. 243), 'it is possible [...] to be creative in analysing and reporting narrative research as long as the approach taken offers insights that are warranted by the data'. Thus, the second step of the analysis was to view the traveller's statements through the lens of occupational socialisation theory. This involved relating the field text to professional and organisational socialisation by means of the following analytical questions:

1. How is AfL justified and used at different stages of the traveller's professional journey: (a) at a campus-based seminar (= take-off), (b) during his school placement (= navigating the airspace), (c) at his first job (= stopover) and (d) at his second job (= climbing to cruising altitude)?
2. How does the traveller navigate between the clouds of pupils' resistance, colleagues' beliefs, and dominating teaching traditions, when using AfL?

As far as creativity is concerned, we suggest that the answers to these analytical questions will generate a narrative embracing the temporal, relational and spatial dimensions of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

## **Results: the travel log**

The results are metaphorically displayed as a travel log based on the different stages of the traveller's professional journey. The stages (see analytical question 1 a-d above) that we call take-off, navigating the airspace, stopover and climbing to cruising altitude are meant to enhance the metaphor of the professional journey, which is why they serve as headings in the following results section. As mentioned in the methodology, the PE teacher's tale will be told from a first-person perspective.

### ***Take-off***

In 2016, I started my five-year long education to become a teacher in science education and PE in Sweden. In PE the studies included both theoretical and practical elements of dance, ballgames, gymnastics, swimming and 'friluftsliv' in the outdoors. The programme also included 20 weeks of school placement studies divided into different periods. As this story is about my journey, as well as the journey of a content of relevance in both PETE and PE in Sweden, namely AfL, it is important to mention that different purposes and functions of assessment were addressed in some of the courses during my teacher education.

Unfortunately, my teacher training took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, a large part of the teaching was organised online, which was not an optimal preparation for work as a PE teacher. However, we soon got used to it and it worked quite well under the circumstances. I think many of the assignments were authentic, in that they often involved some kind of investigation of how particular challenges regarding teaching, learning and assessment were handled in school. For instance, one assignment involved investigating how PE teachers planned their teaching to promote pupil learning by integrating assessment into their teaching. The PE teacher I focused on encouraged pupils to set their own goals and work towards them. In my critical evaluation of this working method, I identified some pros and cons of the teaching method. To begin with, it was obvious that some pupils could take responsibility for their own development in a knowledge area of their choice, whereas others were not prepared for this high degree of autonomy. Then I realised that it is crucial that pupils are taught some basics in the content area before they are expected to set their own goals and work on their own to achieve them. I also got the impression that it is important to provide individual feedback to the pupils at an early stage so they understand what is expected of them in the PE course. If we liken pupils to pilots, it is crucial that the pilots know the direction of their journey, where they are now and where they are going next. Then, just like an air traffic controller, it is the PE teacher's role to provide guidance during the learning process. This metaphor is also what AfL is all about.

### ***Navigating the airspace***

When it was time for my practicum within PETE I looked forward to navigating the airspace of PE teaching myself at an upper secondary school. Due to the pandemic, some of my course mates had to adjust to online teaching at their school placements, while I was more fortunate! My school still offered live PE for a limited number of students at a time. As the school had found a way of securing longer distance between teachers and students, a restricted number of people were able to come to school every other day. The PE course was also concentrated in time, which meant that each PE class lasted for 150 min. Perfect! This gave me plenty of time to develop my teaching skills under the guidance of my supervisor.



One content area that I introduced to a group of students (aged 17) focused on movement to music and dance, which is part of the central content in the Swedish national curriculum. At the beginning of the module, I clarified the intended learning outcomes for the students. The goals were that they should be able to both follow a well-known choreography associated with the song 'Jerusalem' and then create a choreography of their own in groups. I also told them what I would focus on in the assessment of their performances, namely how well they were able to adapt their movements to the beat and character of the music. Then we started working. At first, I showed the steps for Jerusalem divided into short sections and instructed the students to copy what I did. This was my way of offering some teaching in the area before handing over the responsibility to the students themselves. The large mirrors in the gym were helpful for both me and the students in the ad hoc assessment of our movements to the music. The mirrors gave us all an opportunity to see how well we could execute the choreography together. When I stepped back from leading the class, I filmed their dancing and then invited them to watch their performances and together assess what they needed to develop next. This kind of self- and peer assessment proved effective. Already by the next lesson most of the students were able to perform Jerusalem together!

When we moved on to the students' own choreographies, I assumed the role of a facilitator and supervisor. I divided them into groups of four to five students and let them choose songs that I had already helped them to analyse in terms of beats per minute, pace and themes. I also gave them some general advice about how to put their choreographies together. While they collaborated on putting their dances together, I circulated amongst the groups and provided feedback on their step-combinations, the transitions between them and ways of expressing themselves to the music aesthetically. After each feedback session, we agreed on which parts needed to be developed. The long lessons made it possible for me to both provide feedback to all the groups more than once and, importantly, pay attention to how they *acted* on this feedback. It was obvious to me that this working method enhanced the students' progress. I also noticed that the students with low self-confidence benefitted from cooperating with classmates who were more confident. Most of them were also quite motivated by the fact that their collaboration would end up in a performance.

So, what did I bring from PETE? First, I believe that PE should provide conditions for *learning* and not just be a space for *doing* physical activities. This means that it is important to share the learning intentions with the students and organise content areas into modules that facilitate their progression. I also think the assessment criteria should be made concrete for the students so that they know what will be assessed at the end of the module and how it will be conducted. From the school placement, I bring positive experiences of activating students as learning resources for one another through creative groupwork. Last, but not least, I take with me proof that providing feedback, including sufficient time for the students to act on this feedback, is an effective way of promoting learning in PE!

With my luggage compartment full of beliefs and experiences of the potential value of AfL as a pedagogic approach, about four months later, I left for a job in a small agricultural community in Sweden.

### **Stopover**

My first job as a newly qualified PE teacher was at a compulsory school in a little town in the middle of the forest. I was recruited to teach PE for pupils in school years seven to nine together with a colleague who was employed at the same time. Even though we were both newly qualified teachers, we did not share the same view of how PE should be taught. If you are not familiar with what Swedish PE looks like, I can say that the national curriculum aims for pupils to receive an equivalent education in terms of which goals should be achieved, which general areas of knowledge should be included, and which criteria apply in the assessment. In compulsory school, there are usually two or three PE lessons per week. But, indeed, these lessons can differ depending on how each PE teacher interprets the syllabus.



Based on what I learned during PETE, I wanted to continue to teach in modules, which had worked so well during my practicum. While I wished to focus on one content area at a time, two lessons per week for at least two or three weeks, my colleague (a male teacher about my age) who had a teacher training from another country, preferred to vary the lesson content more often. He could go so far as to offer the same learning activity twice, before switching to something else, so that the pupils would not get bored. Hm, why should the subject of PE be more amusing than other subjects? If we want the subject of PE to be perceived as an educational subject, I think it is crucial to create the best possible conditions for learning.

There was also an older, more experienced male PE teacher at the school, who still taught a few classes. He told us about the teaching traditions at our school. Previously, there had been a co-teaching system, which meant that two PE teachers cooperated with a large group of pupils every lesson. This made it possible for them to divide the participants into homogenous sub-groups based on gender, skill levels or other characteristics. It was also obvious that our pupils were used to a multi-activity approach to games and other physical activities, for the sake of variation and joy of movement. I instinctively felt that I did not want to be part of this tradition. I refused to adapt to the multi-activity approach! I believed in teaching one class at a time and focusing on their learning, regardless of how complex the group composition was. Pupils need enough time to learn, and I need enough time to promote their learning! Thus, I could not see how my colleagues and I would be able to cooperate if we did not share the same pedagogical approach. It was as if a cumulus cloud towered before me, which I had either to pass through and get obscured or rise above. As I did not want to abandon my beliefs about how PE teaching should be organised and how assessment could be used formatively, I chose the latter. Thus, I decided to take responsibility for my own classes and teach them in the way I found best.

If I was to implement what I had brought with me from PETE, I understood that I would probably meet resistance because the pupils simply were not prepared for it. I was afraid they would see me as a bore if I talked too much about learning intentions. Still, I was convinced they would soon see the benefits. For instance, I tried activating them as learning resources for one another when playing Ultimate frisbee. Instead of switching to some other game at the slightest complaint of repetition, we continued with the learning activity and discussed what could be developed to make the game work better. I wanted them to reflect on what it is like to know something when it comes to movement, in this case in Ultimate frisbee.

After a while, I think they got used to my way of teaching. Nonetheless, due to the lack of cooperation with my colleagues, I soon realised that this job had just been a temporary stopover. Another reason why I understood I was in transit was that I had been commuting to this agricultural community from my hometown, which was a waste of time. Consequently, I started looking for another employment closer to home and a few months later I found one. Then my professional journey resumed.

### ***Climbing to cruising altitude***

My second job was at a compulsory school for pupils in school years one to six. At this second stopover, I was welcomed as a saviour. It felt good to have high expectations! The previous PE teacher had not completed any teacher training. Therefore, I guessed that the pupils were not used to any well-planned teaching. As summative assessment is not highlighted before it is time to grade in school year six in Sweden, the pupils were probably not acquainted with formative assessment either. Implementing AfL would probably cause considerable turbulence.

The pupils' expectations of what PE was all about could consequently represent another barrier, but rather than making changes that were too radical, I decided to gradually rise towards cruising altitude again. I understood that these pupils would not be prepared for any long-term modules aiming for progression. Instead, I tried to offer lessons of reasonable educational quality while focusing on getting to know them better. I also started to devote two lessons a week to the same content

area. Painfully aware of the dominating teaching traditions of PE – after having bumped into them at both my schools – my aim in the first couple of months was at least to connect one lesson to another. However, at the start of the new school year in August 2022, I launched an updated plan for PE at our school, thereby creating the conditions for long-term progression. At this point, all the classes had been introduced to my way of teaching based on modules that recurred from year to year. The basic idea was to create a structure, based on the key strategies of AfL, that everyone was familiar with and that could act as a scaffolding for the pupils' learning.

Taking a dance module in school year two as an example, the pupils were not only supposed to learn how to move to the beat of the music but also to express different emotions depending on the character of the music. I tried to be very clear about these learning goals so I could provide feedback in relation to them. So, I taught them a simple step combination and then my feedback focused on their bodily and aesthetical expressions when they were to show different emotions in this choreography. Their learning task was to adapt their movements in order to appear, for instance, happy, angry or sad. In the following lesson, we used the video game 'Just dance' as a source of inspiration. The pupils were allowed to choose songs to dance to and repeat the movements monitored on the screen. After this introduction, the requirements can be increased from term to term. In school year three I think the pupils will be able to create their own choreographies, in which they are supposed to show their emotions.

For the classes in school year four, I introduced a module on different ballgames. Rather than focusing on one ballgame for several lessons in a row, the generic learning goal for the pupils was to develop an understanding of their role both when attacking and defending in any ballgame. By addressing the same issues in different games, the pupils were able to identify some common aspects of how to be a good team player, such as the importance of using open spaces on the field, passing the ball, and communicating with one another during teamwork. Our integrated discussions and what I wanted them to reflect on were meant to develop the pupils' 'knowing' of ballgames. In terms of AfL, I would say that it was a way of activating the pupils as learning resources for one another, while I was there to provide feedback that moved their learning forward. I think the pupils' basic understanding of ballgames will serve as a foundation for their development in different games in the future. It is just up to me to offer the opportunity for them to build on what they have learned at a later stage. In other words, my professional journey will proceed!

## Discussion

The purpose of this study has been to contribute knowledge about how positive experiences of AfL during PETE can enable the use of AfL in school PE for a newly qualified teacher. In this section, we discuss the results of our study in relation to the perspective of occupational socialisation theory. We conclude the discussion with some considerations regarding the study's potential strength (trustworthiness), sharing (transferability) and service (usefulness) (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003).

Through the PE teacher's tale about AfL when journeying from PETE to school PE, we have shown how the campus-based course on PE assessment in PETE and the student teacher's positive experience of using the principles of AfL during the practicum seems to have inspired him in his later position as a newly qualified PE teacher. Even though he encountered barriers (Ensign & Mays Woods, 2017) in the form of pupil resistance and isolation from colleagues (see for example Ferry & Westerlund, 2023; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022) with contrasting beliefs and approaches to teaching traditions of school PE, he continued to use AfL as a pedagogic approach. Like the participant in Curtner-Smith's (2001) study, the PE teacher in the current study was determined to teach the way he learned during PETE. However, similar to what Macken et al. (2020) have pointed out in the context of school placements, the traveller did not use any well-established AfL techniques, such as rubrics to facilitate self- or peer assessment. The fifth key strategy, which focuses on activating pupils as owners of their own learning, was also washed out (Starck et al., 2020) from the pedagogic approach. Rather, the traveller adapted the teaching to meet the needs of the learners

(Wiliam, 2011) by structuring the subject content into modules, sharing the learning intentions of each module with the pupils, activating the pupils as learning resources for one another through learning tasks that require creative collaboration and teamwork, providing feedback and sufficient time for pupils to act on this feedback and, consequently, creating opportunities for progression. This way of teaching must be regarded as innovative compared to the custodial orientation of PE teaching at both schools. This finding also contradicts previous studies which have found that many newly qualified PE teachers choose more traditional teaching methods when they begin teaching, even if they have experienced innovative practices during PETE (Richards et al., 2014).

In a previous study (Tolgfors et al., 2021), we suggested that sufficient time and good relations with the pupils are two fundamental prerequisites for AfL to work in PE practice. In this study, the student teacher had very long PE lessons (150 mins) during his practicum in an upper secondary school, which enabled him to get to know the students a little better, provide feedback and give the students enough time to act on it. This experience was a good start to the traveller's professional journey. In his following position as a PE teacher at two different schools, the lessons were much shorter, between 40 and 55 min. In these educational contexts the results indicate that he still spent time building relations with the pupils before implementing AfL in a well-structured teaching system. This meant that the temporal aspect of AfL was handled in a different way by scaffolding the pupils' learning through recurring modules in order to promote progression. Consequently, the traveller was able to adapt AfL as a pedagogic approach to teaching practices with different contextual conditions (cf. Tolgfors et al., 2022), regarding the pupils' ages, stages at school and length of the lessons. So what? Why would this individual professional journey matter? According to Mulholland and Connelly (2003), a narrative inquiry based on a single participant's experiences is highly relevant if the story is perceived as trustworthy, transferable and useful.

### ***Strength, sharing and service***

Our choice of methodology comes with a certain criticism, such as that it lacks rigour and that the data is only from one teacher (Dowling et al., 2015). However, drawing on other scholars' arguments (for example Casey & Schaefer, 2016; Dowling et al., 2015; Mulholland & Wallace, 2003; Wrench, 2017) one *strength* of using narrative inquiry is that the story of one individual's professional journey provides a thick description of how the transition from PETE to school PE is perceived from a significant person's perspective. The single participant recruited to this study was unique, in that after having learned about formative functions of assessment in the campus-based context of PETE, he gained more positive experiences of using AfL during his practicum than most of his fellow students. As our research interest has been to explore whether positive experiences of AfL during PETE warrant further use of the pedagogical approach for the same individual in the role as newly qualified teacher in school PE, this professional journey is highly relevant since it reveals that teacher education potentially works.

Previous research has suggested that *poor* experiences of using AfL in authentic teaching and learning contexts during PETE probably lead to a restricted use of AfL in school PE in the PETE students' future positions as newly qualified teachers (Lorente-Catalán & Kirk, 2016; Macken et al., 2020). The contribution of this study is that it indicates that student teachers who develop their comprehension of and critical engagement with AfL in the context of campus-based studies, and their application of the pedagogical approach<sup>3</sup> in the context of their practicum, get opportunities to gain *positive* experiences of AfL during PETE, which enable them as beginning teachers to continue using the pedagogical approach in school PE. However, as MacPhail and Hartley (2016) point out, beginning teachers are both shaping and being shaped by their educational context. Just like the participant in Curtner-Smith's (2001, p. 81) study, who was 'determined to teach as he had been trained even in the face of some serious situational constraints', the traveller in the current narrative inquiry has a valuable story to tell. From 'take-off' to 'cruising altitude', the traveller gives an account

of what it could be like when becoming a PE teacher and what happens to AfL during this occupational socialisation process.

If this ‘micro story’ has a high recognition factor at the ‘macro level’ (Dowling et al., 2015), it should also be valid and transferable to other PE teachers in similar educational contexts as well. This is what Smith (2018) refers to as inferential generalisation. The *transferability* of the study also makes it useful in PETE, where student teachers may learn from the experiences of someone else who has gone through the socialisation process in the transition from PETE to school PE (cf. MacPhail & Hartley, 2016).

The objective of our overarching research project on transitions from PETE to school PE is to explore whether and how PETE matters. This narrative inquiry adds a piece to the puzzle at micro level and suggests that yes, it can make a crucial difference for student teachers who are prepared to face the challenges of the induction phase of PE teaching and are able to navigate between the barriers that ‘get in their way’. Richards et al. (2014) advocate that all approaches within PETE should embrace best practices and research-based pedagogies. If student teachers to a larger extent are to use AfL in school PE, this study supports Lorente and Kirk’s (2013, p. 79) argument that they should have opportunities to ‘experience such practices as part of their professional preparation’. Thus, the *usefulness* of this study is its potential to inspire teacher educators to implement AfL in different learning tasks during PETE and student teachers to practice using AfL during their school placements. If this would occur more regularly, the key strategies of AfL, such as sharing learning intentions, providing feedback, activating students as learning resources for one another and activating students as owners of their own learning (Wiliam, 2011), would have a better chance of avoiding the wash-out effect (Starck et al., 2020) and surviving the transition from PETE to school PE.

## Notes

1. According to Wiliam (2011), this is the big idea of AfL. In school PE, Hay and Penney (2013) also suggest that AfL involves a life-long and life-wide perspective, and that PE teachers should always consider the relevance and usefulness of the assessment for the individual student.
2. The empirical material includes less data from the participant’s childhood and adolescence, which is why we do not consider his acculturation in the analysis.
3. Comprehension, application and critical engagement with assessment are three important aspects of assessment literacy (Hay & Penney, 2013).

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