

**Playing to our Strengths: Physical Education Leadership in  
Irish Primary Schools**

by

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for the award of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis set out to research primary physical education (PE) leadership. It is an exploratory study investigating generalist primary school teachers' experiences of PE leadership. Although PE leadership has been identified as an important contributory factor to the success of school based PE programmes, to date there is a lack of data explicitly investigating PE leadership in primary schools, particularly informal PE leadership.

Utilising a professional capital framework, this research provides an original contribution to existing knowledge by providing the first insight into Irish generalist teachers' understanding of PE leadership and of the skills and supports required to engage in PE leadership. Using qualitative methods including individual interviews, focus group interviews, reflections and observations, data were generated on teachers' experiences of PE leadership over two separate interventions. Study 1 investigated five teachers' experiences of leading a PE innovation alongside a number of colleagues within their school. The results indicated that the lead teachers who provided PE leadership had an important role in supporting PE innovation. These results led to further consideration of how school based PE leadership could be utilised within primary schools in Study 2. This second study investigated the leadership experiences of three lead teachers who taught additional PE across their school through class swapping. It was found that teachers with expertise and enthusiasm for PE positively influenced PE provision within their school through class swapping. The opportunity to teach additional PE also increased the lead teacher's ability and desire to provide further PE leadership within their school.

The results demonstrated that generalist teachers valued PE leadership and embraced shared approaches to it. Provided that PE leadership is supported and scaffolded, the results indicate that teachers with individual PE expertise and a broad whole school understanding of

leadership can have a positive influence on PE within primary schools through the provision of PE leadership.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this material which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that it has not been taken from the work of others save and to extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Liam Clohessy

## **Acknowledgements**

I was once told that undertaking a PhD is like being on a rollercoaster. The challenge is to stay on board throughout the many ups and downs that will be faced throughout the journey. There are many people that I would like to thank who helped me to hang in there (even if it was just by my fingertips at times!) on the 'PhD rollercoaster'.

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## **List of abbreviations**

DES:	Department of Education and Science/Skills
GAA:	Gaelic Athletic Association
INTO:	Irish National Teachers Organisation
IPPEA:	Irish Primary Physical Education Association
IFDA:	Irish Flying Disc Association
MIREC:	Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDST:	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PE:	Physical Education
PPDS:	Primary Professional Development Service

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## Preface

Selected results from this research have been presented in a number of formats at various forums and conferences.

- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2014), *Follow the leader? Promoting Innovation in Primary School Physical Education*. Limerick Postgraduate Research Conference, Limerick Institute of Technology (Oral presentation)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2014), *Follow the leader? Promoting Innovation in Primary School Physical Education*. PEPAYS Research Forum Conference, Waterford Institute of Technology (Poster presentation)
- Clohessy, L., (2015), *Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE*. Irish National Teachers Organisation, 2014/2015 Educational Research Bursary Award Winner Ceremony, Dublin (Bursary presentation)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2015), *Follow the leader? Promoting Innovation in Primary School Physical Education*. All Ireland Postgraduate Conference in Sports Science and Physical Education, University of Limerick (Oral presentation)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2015), *Primary School PE: Generalist teachers teaching additional PE?* PEPAYS Research Forum Conference, University of Limerick (Roundtable discussion)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2015), *Physical Education in Irish Primary Schools: Generalist Classroom Teachers Experiences of Subject Leadership*. AIESEP International Conference, Universidad Europe Madrid (Oral presentation)
- Clohessy, L., (2016), *Ultimate Frisbee*, Irish Primary Physical Education Association Conference, University College Cork (Practical workshop)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2016), *Class swapping for Physical Education in Irish Primary Schools: Effectively Utilising Generalist Teachers' Talents*, PEPAYS Ireland Annual Forum, Institute of technology Tralee (Oral presentation)
- Clohessy, L, Bowles, R & Ní Chróinín, D., (2016), *Playing to our strengths: Leading physical education in Irish primary schools*, European Conference on Educational Research, University College Dublin from 22-26 August, 2016 (Oral presentation)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Physical Education (PE) has been identified as a fundamental right for every human being by UNESCO, the United Nations Agency mandated to support PE and Sport (UNESCO 1978). Further to this, the importance of providing quality PE to all children has been acknowledged (Woods *et al.* 2010, McLennan and Thompson 2015). Quality PE seeks to enable all young people, whatever their circumstances or ability, to take part in and enjoy PE, sport and physical activity and endeavours to empower all children to develop physical literacy (Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2010). It also strives to promote young peoples' health, safety and well-being, as well as supporting all young people to improve and achieve in line with their age and potential (Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2010). Quality PE can promote positive attitudes to physical activity, reduce the chances of young people engaging in risk behaviour and impact positively on social inclusion and academic performance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2010, McLennan and Thompson 2015). Other benefits of quality PE highlighted include increased levels of fun for pupils during physical activity (Kretchmar 2006), and improved self-esteem and confidence as well as better overall health (Le Masurier and Corbin, 2006). Although many of these benefits claimed for PE are mediated by contextual, social and pedagogical factors (Bailey *et al.* 2009), the available evidence suggests that PE in a child's formative years can be an important influence for future physical activity patterns (Green 2012). In this context, the critical importance of primary PE has been espoused, with suggestions that primary PE is particularly key to the development of lifelong physical activity and should be prioritised accordingly (Griggs 2007).

Yet the provision of quality PE has been identified as problematic in many contexts, particularly when delivered by primary school teachers (Morgan and Hansen 2007, Sloan 2010, Tsangaridou 2012, UNESCO 2014). Issues have been raised in relation to the time allocated

to PE in initial teacher education programmes (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007), the ongoing meaningful professional development of teachers (Murphy and O'Leary 2012, Patton *et al.* 2015), teachers content knowledge (Decorby *et al.* 2005, Sloan 2010) and their confidence to teach PE (Morgan and Hansen 2007). Consequently, there is considerable debate surrounding the most appropriate means of primary PE provision (Jones and Green 2015). Even the very aims of PE itself have been questioned, with the agenda of health and sport ideologies competing with more traditional educational discourses of PE (Coulter and Ní Chróinín 2013, Griggs 2015). Set against this tumultuous background, the importance of leadership within primary PE has been advocated within the literature (Griggs 2015). Within an educational context, leadership can be understood as the process of influencing others leading to change (Cuban 1988). Given the growing calls for change in primary PE which have emerged in recent years (Jess and Collins 2003, Petrie 2008, Thorburn *et al.* 2011, Kirk 2012, Griggs 2015), the need for leadership within primary PE appears great.

Aside from PE leadership, the value placed on educational leadership more generally has also become more prominent in recent times, with a growing recognition that leadership can impact positively on student outcomes (Leithwood *et al.* 2004, Robinson *et al.* 2009). Although leadership in the context of primary schools has traditionally been largely associated with principal teachers in primary schools (Drea and O'Brien 2003, Bush 2011), there is a growing recognition that distributing and sharing leadership amongst other members of staff is beneficial (Spillane *et al.* 2004, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Research suggests, for example, that when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them, student outcomes are likely to improve (Silins and Mulford 2002). Consequently, the involvement of teachers in leadership has emerged as a dominant discourse within the literature through a myriad of different leadership models and strategies (York-Barr and Duke 2004). School-based subject leaders have, for example, become prominent in many educational systems and are considered to hold

a key position from which to positively influence teaching and in some cases by extension learning (Harris *et al.* 2001, Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett 2005, Timperley 2005, Burch 2007). Research has shown, however, that leadership practices in primary schools differ significantly according to the subject area (Spillane 2005, Burch 2007, Spillane and Hopkins 2013). Leadership relating to each subject area, therefore, merits independent investigation and this research explicitly considered primary PE leadership.

Leadership has been identified as an important factor which can contribute to the effective provision of primary PE in several different contexts such as in the United Kingdom (Pickup and Price 2007, Lawrence 2012, Griggs 2015), Australia (Morgan and Hansen 2007), and Canada (Decorby *et al.* 2005). Within Ireland, the potential value of PE leadership has also been mentioned by a variety of stakeholders, including researchers (Coulter 2012, Murphy and O'Leary 2012), teachers (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007) and the national PE association (Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2012). Despite the importance attributed to PE leadership, there remains a paucity of research evidence relating to the topic. To date, references to PE leadership have been largely cursory in nature, typically outlining a general belief in the value of PE leadership. Although some useful practical guidelines are offered by Raymond (2005), as well as Pickup and Price (2007) in contexts where formal PE leaders operate, these writers were unable to draw on a research basis. There are few empirical investigations which have specifically investigated primary leadership, especially in contexts where generalist teachers operate. While there are some data available highlighting teachers experiences of formal primary PE leadership (Sloan 2010), informal PE leadership provided by full-time classroom teachers has been overlooked within the literature. Consequently there is little is known about what informal PE leadership entails, teachers' experiences of it, or the skills and supports required to engage in informal PE leadership.



## **Research questions and rationale for the research**

This research was conducted over two studies. There was, however, one overarching research question guiding this thesis:

What are generalist primary school teachers' experiences of PE leadership?

The core of the thesis sought to provide insight for the first time into generalist primary school teachers' perceptions of PE leadership. Gaining this insight into generalist teachers existing experiences of PE leadership was identified as a vital prerequisite to the further development of PE leadership in Ireland and the creation of any future leadership development programmes. Accordingly no leadership development was provided to the participants within this research, and both Study 1 and Study 2 were solely designed to contribute to answering the overarching research question which sought teachers' experiences of leadership. To this end, in each study there were a number of further sub-research questions relating to primary PE leadership. Study 1 specifically sought to answer the following questions,

- What are generalist teachers' experiences of PE leadership while promoting an innovation in primary PE?
- What skills and supports are needed when taking on PE leadership within the school?

While Study 2 sought to examine teachers' experiences of PE leadership through the following questions,

- What are the experiences of teachers with additional PE expertise teaching PE to classes other than their own in primary schools?
  - What are the PE leadership experiences of teachers who teach additional PE?

- What are the benefits and challenges of PE lead teachers teaching PE to classes other than their own from the perspective of the other teachers, children in the PE class and the school principals?
- What skills and supports does a PE lead teacher need when teaching additional PE across the primary school?

The rationale for the research was twofold and stemmed from my own personal interest in PE and my initial experiences as a teacher, as well as from the literature, or lack thereof, in relation to primary PE leadership. With respect to the first element, it is important to acknowledge that a researcher's world view has an important bearing on the research process (Lincoln and Guba 1994, Creswell 2014). Within the subjective social constructivist outlook I adopted, it is particularly important to position myself within the context of the research. To this end, a brief personal biography of my background is presented with reference to the experiences which have helped to motivate my interest in this area and shape this particular research.

From a young age I had a special interest in PE, identifying it as my favourite subject in primary and secondary school. My experiences of PE in school were quite typical, in that I experienced a games dominated PE curriculum with a limited amount of exposure to dance, gymnastics and outdoor and adventure activities. Competitive extra-curricular school sport was emphasised and was highly valued in the schools I attended. This sporting ethos stimulated my interest in coaching, and at the age of sixteen I completed a foundation level coaching certificate with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). During the summers of my teenage years, I worked at children's summer camps (age 4-13) as a GAA coach. This experience heightened my interest in working with young people and led me to pursue a career in primary school teaching. I applied to the colleges of education and was successful in receiving a place on a three year bachelor of education (B.Ed.) programme. My experiences in initial teacher education

challenged my understanding of what PE entailed, and led me to reflect on my own experiences. My first real encounters with dance or gymnastics as elements of the PE curriculum, for example, were in my first year of study. These experiences instilled in me the importance of a broad and balanced PE curriculum. During my final year I had the opportunity to specialise in a subject area and I completed two PE elective modules. I enjoyed this opportunity to specialise and to reflect more deeply on my own teaching practices in collaboration with others. At this point, I considered the possibility of further postgraduate study specifically in the area of primary PE. I was, however, eager to start teaching and I decided to revisit the possibility of further study at a later point in my career. I secured a teaching position and taught as a mainstream class teacher for a number of years. Over the course of this time, while feeling I was delivering a good quality of PE to my own class, I questioned how much impact I was having on teaching and learning in PE across the whole school. In particular, I was interested in how the individual expertise of teachers could be utilised within the wider school context and wondered about their potential PE leadership experiences. This experience renewed my interest in further study and I set about contacting the PE lecturers in Mary Immaculate College.

It was at this point that engagement with the research literature provided me with further rationale for this study. Having discussed some of my initial ideas with my supervisors they suggested I review some of the related research and to refine my ideas into a research proposal. Whilst an abundance of literature relating to educational leadership was available, upon initial review I found there was a dearth of research available relating to primary PE leadership. This finding strengthened my conviction to research this area and aided my preparation of an initial proposal for research. On acceptance of my proposal, I took a career break from my teaching post and began a full-time funded research master's degree. During this period of study, with the support of my supervisors, I became immersed in the 'PE world'. I made many new

acquaintances and was exposed to new ideas, as well as new perspectives in the literature which challenged my preconceptions. During this time period, my experiences as chairperson of the Irish Primary PE Association (IPPEA) and as a primary PE professional development provider within the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) also strengthened my fascination and ever evolving understanding of primary PE. This sense of curiosity and passion for primary PE led to the emergence of further questions within my initial research and a strong desire to continue to research further. To address these unanswered questions I submitted a research proposal to transfer from the masters to the Ph.D. register and I was successfully upgraded.

### **Overview of research design**

This research was exploratory and interpretative in nature, and data were generated qualitatively. Qualitative methods of enquiry were employed throughout as a means of illuminating the teachers' experiences of PE leadership and answering the research questions. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital was used as a theoretical framework throughout and all data generated were analysed using the six phases of thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). Further details relating to the design of each study within this research are provided in the methodology section of this thesis, but by way of introduction, an overview of the two phases of data generation is provided in this section.

In Study 1, five generalist primary school teachers in five separate schools led the implementation of an eight week module of Ultimate Frisbee with their own class and provided support to two other class teachers within the school. These teachers providing leadership will be hereafter referred to as lead teachers, while the other teachers involved will be referred to as participating teachers. Data were generated through qualitative methods including

interviews with the lead teachers, principals, and focus groups with all teachers involved in each school as well as weekly written reflections by the lead teacher.

In Study 2, a case study approach was utilised. Three generalist teachers with additional PE expertise taught PE to other classes within their respective schools over two separate intervention periods totaling eighteen weeks. Data generation included individual interviews with the lead and participating teachers as well as the principal of each school. Focus group interviews with a random sample of children taught by the lead teachers were also conducted, in addition to lead teacher reflections and researcher observations of lessons taught by the lead teacher during the class swap.

### **Significance of the research**

There are several important areas where this research makes an original contribution. Firstly, there is little existing data investigating PE leadership in primary schools. Any existing research into subject leadership has focussed on the role of the formal subject leaders generically, without taking into account the intricacies and differences associated with informal leadership and leadership in different subject areas. This research, therefore, addresses a gap in the international literature by providing empirical research relating to primary PE leadership. As little is known about Irish teachers' perspectives of leadership, it also provides insights for the first time into generalist primary school teachers' understanding and experiences of PE leadership. Importance was attributed to understanding whether the lead teachers viewed their leadership role in terms of their own class or across the wider school. In addition, examining the teachers' experiences of PE leadership to ascertain what tasks they considered appropriate in their leadership roles was another central aspect of this research. Considering that primary PE is most often delivered by generalist teachers globally across the world (UNESCO 2014),

these findings can make a worthwhile contribution to our understanding of informal primary PE leadership.

The research may also be of interest to educational stakeholders in Ireland, as there do not appear to be any studies in an Irish context which have previously explicitly considered primary PE leadership. The results of this study may prove particularly insightful for both principals and teachers by highlighting the potential of teacher led PE leadership and demonstrating examples of support structures which can be engaged to facilitate leadership opportunities for teachers. As there is also a limited amount of research relating to teacher leadership in general within Ireland, this study may promote further investigations of teacher led leadership across different subject areas in primary schools.

This research is also significant as it is the first ever study to explicitly investigate the practice of class swapping. Class swapping is the process whereby a generalist teacher with a particular interest or expertise swaps classes with a colleague and teaches PE to their classes. The presence of class swapping for PE has been noted in Finland, Ireland, England, Australia and New Zealand (Pühse and Gerber 2005, Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007, Morgan and Hansen 2007, Petrie 2008, Jones and Green 2015). There are, however, currently no research studies which specifically investigate primary school teachers swapping classes for PE and its influence on teaching and learning experiences. The results of this research can provide evidence relating to class swapping and consider some of the benefits and challenges of this practice and guide its implementation.

Finally, this research may also be of particular interest to teacher educators. Insight is provided into both theoretical and practical aspects of PE leadership which can contribute to the pre-service education of students. Specific to an Irish context, this research is timely and can help inform the design of newly reconceptualised PE elective programmes in initial teacher

education. Valuable insights are provided into the potential PE leadership role which can be undertaken by Irish primary school teachers, as well as the traits which could consequently be developed and prioritised amongst potential future PE leaders in pre-service education.

### **Overview of the thesis**

There are 8 chapters in this thesis. Subsequent to the introductory chapter, chapter 2 presents a review of literature. The broader context of educational leadership is first addressed within this review, before more specific subject and PE leadership are considered. Chapter 3 builds on the literature review presented in the previous chapter by considering the issues of educational, subject and PE leadership within the contemporary context. These insights facilitate exploration of the theoretical framework utilised within this research in chapter 4, namely Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital. Chapter 5 outlines the overarching methodology used across both studies. The application of this methodological approach in the design of Study 1 is then presented in chapter 6, along with a description of the results generated and a discussion of these results. At the beginning of chapter 7 the links between Study 1 and the subsequent Study 2A and 2B are explored and the research design utilised in the second study is outlined. The results of this second study are then provided before a discussion based on these results is presented. The final chapter contains an overall discussion encompassing both studies.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

The literature review focuses on three main areas namely educational leadership, subject specific leadership and PE leadership. A review of literature pertaining to the first of these areas is presented in the first section of this chapter to provide an overview of leadership in educational contexts. The second section of this review address leadership specific to particular subject areas, while the final section of the chapter considers leadership specifically within primary PE.

### **Section 1: Educational leadership**

An exploration of differing definitions and understanding of what educational leadership entails is examined firstly in this section. The evolution of models of primary school leadership over time are then charted to provide insights into contemporary educational leadership developments of relevance to this research. In addition, this appraisal of models of educational leadership provides the necessary background to consider the adoption of professional capital as a theoretical framework within this research which is presented in chapter 4. The insights generated from this section of the literature review will demonstrate the value of leadership theory and practice, as well as highlighting the complexity of leadership and the continued need for context and domain specific research. The understanding of educational leadership theory and practice generated from this review is significant in itself because it will facilitate the in-depth analysis of leadership specific to PE at a later point in this thesis.

#### **Educational Leadership**

There are many disparate definitions and meanings of leadership, and associations with the term in educational contexts (Bush 2011). Several of these conceptualisations do, however, have many common characteristics. Leadership has, for example, been associated with position, personal qualities and behaviours or practices involved in leadership (Robinson



2009). The categorisation of leadership by Bush and Glover (2003) into three broad categories including leadership as influence, leadership and values, and leadership and vision, does however provide a succinct grouping of leadership understandings within the literature. Each of these elements of leadership will now be discussed in turn.

A process of influence is an attribute recognised by many scholars as key to leadership (Leithwood *et al.* 1999, Gronn 2009b, Northouse 2013). Influence can be concentrated or dispersed and can be provided by either groups or an individual (Bush 2008). The influence can be either positive or negative, and while it is purposeful with specific outcomes in mind (Cuban 1988, Bush 2008), it may not always succeed in influencing those whom it set out to influence (Spillane and Diamond 2007). Bush (2008) noted that the central concept here is influence rather than authority. Authority is linked with a formal position while influence can be exercised by anyone in an organisation. Similarly, Northouse (2013) considers that leadership is open to everyone in an organisation. He sees leadership as a process, which means that it is not a trait or characteristic of a leader but as a transaction that occurs between leaders and followers. Leadership is not seen as linear, and emphasising the process opens up the possibility of followers also influencing leaders. In this context the importance of common goals between the leaders and followers is stressed by Northouse (2013). Robinson (2009) does, however, caution that it is necessary to consider the source of influence, so as to distinguish between other types of goal oriented influence such as force, coercion and manipulation. In contrast to Bush, he asserts that the source of influence can be from the legitimate use of positional authority. Robinson also attributes influence to personal liking or identification with the leader's goals or relevant experience.

Leadership is also increasingly linked with values. Effective leaders are thought to communicate their values to others (Day *et al.* 2001), as well as to 'ground their actions in clear personal and professional values' (Bush 2011, p.6). The implication is that values are chosen

by the leader, although it has been suggested that many of these values are perhaps influenced and imposed upon school leaders by governments (Bush 2008). In the same vein, the core beliefs in place in schools can also impact on the values of individuals (O'Brien 2005). A factor to be explored in this research was consequently the values of the lead teachers in comparison to other participants, as well as the effect of providing lead teachers with opportunities to put into practice their values through PE leadership.

Government prescriptions are also viewed as impinging upon vision, another aspect of leadership which is considered to be important (Bush 2011). Vision is seen by some as an innate human desire for a better world that is intricately linked to leadership (Frost 2003). While the articulation of a clear vision for leadership is generally thought to have a positive effect on schools, the empirical evidence of its effect is mixed (Bush 2011). Although some observers consider vision as personal and dependent on individual leaders (Shtogren 1999), a broader perspective adopted by Senge (1999) suggests that vision can be shared and communal amongst members of an organisation. Within the latter perspective, vision is also considered as a significant influence on school culture and ethos (Hallinger and Heck 2002). The understanding that vision provided by leadership can be shared is of relevance to this research into teacher led PE leadership.

Although these three conceptualisations further the understanding of leadership in an educational context, the challenges of defining leadership is acknowledged. Confusion with the terms educational management and educational administration, adds further to this ambiguity surrounding the term leadership (Bush 2011). Despite a more recent focus and emphasis on leadership rather than management (Bush 2008), these terms are still often used interchangeably and this further exacerbates the ambiguity. For the purposes of clarity, a clear distinction was made between educational leadership and educational management. Cuban (1988) provides a very succinct differentiation between the two terms. He described

management as effectively maintaining current practices while leadership was linked with influence over others leading to change.

It is clear, therefore, that influence over others as well as individual and shared values and vision are central components of educational leadership. An understanding of leadership in an educational context will facilitate examination of leadership models and practices which have become evident in schools.

### **Formal hierarchical models of leadership**

In traditional formal models of leadership, power and influence are attributed to the person at the top of the hierarchy as a result of positional authority (Bush 2011). Within primary schools, the principal is usually ascribed the sole role of leadership. Bush (2011, p.59) outlines how this outlook is further perpetuated by the vision of the principal as the public face of the institution, and through ‘a perceived identity between the head (principal) and the school’. Essentially leadership equates with a formal role or position, in this case that of the principal (Harris 2003). There is, however, increasing evidence that such top down approaches are less effective in securing outcomes than consensus models of leadership (Phillips 2001, Harris 2003, Murphy 2005). As noted by Hargreaves and Fink (2009), hierarchical leadership structures have been inept as agents of change when attempting to enhance student achievement over time. The body of research which points to weaknesses in formal models of leadership, along with ever growing and intensifying demands on school leaders (Drea and O'Brien 2003), led to a recognition within the literature that leadership needs to be broadened within schools (Pont *et al.* 2008). This understanding that the demands of educational leadership are too much for one person provides an important rationale for the present research.

The most effective means of broadening school leadership is, however, strongly debated. A variety of leadership models and approaches have emerged over time, such as the use of middle

leaders, teacher leadership, distributed leadership, hybrid leadership and most recently professional capital. Each of these prominent models have been widely acclaimed and cited at different times as the most effective means of educational leadership, and will consequently be explored in the next section. These models are examined in approximate chronological order according to when they became popular in the literature. This will facilitate the understanding of how educational leadership has developed over time and to set the context for the present research. It should be noted, however, that these models are not mutually exclusive, and that there are a number of instances of overlap as many of them incorporate elements of each other.

### **Middle leaders**

The utilisation of middle leaders has been advocated as effective in broadening leadership within a school (Bell and Ritchie 1999, Ghamrawi 2010). Middle leaders are teachers with formal positions of responsibility and leadership (Humphreys 2010). While the use of middle leaders is an important aspect in many approaches designed to broaden leadership, how and what these leaders are utilised for varies greatly between education systems, and even schools within the same systems owing to differing leadership styles and school sizes (Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007). Tasks usually relate to administrative, pedagogical, or curricular activities and these will be discussed in more detail later. The most common roles assigned to middle leaders have, however, been focussed on administrative duties (Lindahl 2008). This is contrary to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommendations which advocate for use of middle leaders and teams to broaden leadership and to become involved in curricular and pedagogical activities (Pont *et al.* 2008, OECD 2014). Within primary schools, middle leaders are often conceptualised as curricular subject leaders. As this research specifically concerns leadership of one specific curricular area, subject leadership will be examined in more detail in a later section of this review. In the interim other forms of primary school leadership will be explored, starting with teacher leadership.

## **Teacher leadership**

If the use of middle leaders with formal positions represents the first step towards broadening leadership for many educational institutions, the use of teacher leadership, in many cases seems to represent the next progression. Teacher leadership became in vogue during the 1990's and 2000's, with a significant body of literature produced by American scholars and a growing appreciation of the value of engaging teacher leadership also being demonstrated by English and Australian authors (Harris 2003, Murphy 2005, Crowther *et al.* 2009). This has most likely been helped by its entrenchment within school improvement initiatives and associations with reform programmes (Anderson 2004, Murphy 2005). Ambiguous definitions and conceptualisations pervade the leadership literature, and teacher leadership is no exception. Teachers, like scholars, have difficulty in defining teacher leadership (Wasley 1991) and their perceptions of what teacher leadership entails varies according to a variety of factors such as experience, degree and position (Angelle and DeHart 2011). Differing policy contexts also ensure there are differences in the way teacher leadership is constructed (Frost and Harris 2003). York-Barr and Duke (2004, p.287) concluded that teacher leadership is 'the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement'. Whilst acknowledging that there was only small scale empirical evidence to support the effects of teacher leadership, there is optimism about teacher leadership and research in this area (York-Barr and Duke 2004). Similarly, Murphy (2005) cautiously identified positive links between teacher leadership, classroom improvement and school improvement through the medium of improved teacher professionalisation.

Silva, Gimbert and Nolans (2000) conceptualisation of the three ages of teacher leadership is useful when considering how teacher leadership has contributed to the broadening of leadership within schools. Initially, they see teachers serving in formal roles focused on school operations,

often with specific responsibilities outside of their own classroom. Next, they visualise teacher leadership as a means of capitalising on the instructional expertise of teachers, through the use of subject or curriculum leaders. The third conception of teacher leadership centres around the understanding that instructional improvement requires a culture of collaboration and continuous learning that recognises the central role of teachers in creating this culture within a school. Similarly Murphy (2005) portrays the ongoing development of teacher leadership into two broad categories, namely role based teacher leadership strategies and community based teacher leadership strategies. Both of these conceptualisations of teacher leadership acknowledge ‘a shift away from individual empowerment and role-based initiatives toward more collective, task oriented, and organisational approaches to teacher leadership’ (Smylie *et al.* 2002, p.165). The understanding that teachers value collaboration and sharing of ideas and decisions has been central to this shift in emphasis and provides further rationale to investigate whether Irish teachers will have similar experiences of leadership during this research.

It is, therefore, evident that teacher leadership can involve formal and informal leaders (Frost and Harris 2003, Harris 2003). Newer conceptions of teacher leadership do, however, appear to incorporate more informal means of practising teacher leadership (York-Barr and Duke 2004). Informal leaders carry out more classroom related functions such as modelling, observation, providing feedback, or working on curricular development initiatives (Muijs and Harris 2007, Angelle and DeHart 2011). There is a blurring of the distinction between leaders and followers and either may change or blend roles (Anderson 2004). Muijs and Harris (2007) are supportive of this assertion, in that a culture of leadership was found in the most effective schools studied with structures in place to ensure every teacher had a leadership role of some form. Some research would suggest that informal leaders who are not chosen by a principal are, in fact, preferable in that they are more fully recognised and accepted as leaders (Wasley 1991, Du 2007). For these teachers authority is more often derived from expertise based on

their background, as opposed to the position they hold. These teachers are often expert teachers who spend the majority of their time in classrooms but also engage in other leadership roles (Harris 2003). They often go above and beyond normal classroom duties and are happy to put in additional time and effort for the benefit of their students and the school more generally (Angelle and DeHart 2011). These teachers are respected by their peers and have significant influence on the practice of their colleagues (York-Barr and Duke 2004), but would not consider themselves as 'leaders' (Angelle and DeHart 2011). Conversely, Timperley (2005) points out that those who assume informal leadership positions are not always the best candidates for leadership. Certain teacher who take on informal leadership may be ignored, or in some instances perpetuate teaching and learning practices that may not be exemplary. She refers to the possible dangers of this phenomenon as the 'distribution of incompetence' (Timperley 2005, p.417). Although Timperley's insights are noteworthy, rather than contradicting the informal leadership approach, they highlight the importance of providing leadership opportunities to those with the requisite knowledge and expertise.

Despite the progression towards more informal forms of teacher leadership seen within much of the literature, significant variations in the role carried out by teacher leaders remain. Factors such as the organisational environment of a given school and the personal capacity of the leader are, for example, often cited as influences on how teacher leadership is enacted (Frost and Harris 2003). Teachers perspectives on the boundaries of their leadership role also appears to be a substantial influence on teacher leadership practice (Frost and Harris 2003). For example, Angelle and DeHart (2011) found that elementary school (primary school) teachers in America viewed their leadership as confined to the classroom as opposed to school wide. This was attributed to the fact that as generalists, teachers already have a wide variety of roles and responsibility beyond teaching core matter. They cited examples of tying shoes, personal hygiene issues and development of social skills as instances of tasks they already perform in

addition to teaching. This narrow perception of leadership may indicate one reason as to why teacher leadership has not become more established at primary school level. Angelle and DeHart (2011, p.154) concluded that it is necessary to ‘understand the actions of teachers, teacher leaders, and the behaviours that are viewed as credible and/or legitimate’.

The development of teacher leadership represents a significant progression in the broadening of educational leadership. In particular, the recognition that teacher leadership can also be informal was an important insight which informed subsequent leadership theories. York-Barr and Duke (2004, p.263) noted, for example, that teacher leadership ‘is legitimately grounded within the boundaries of several other leadership theories’. Undoubtedly the concept of teacher leadership has been central to the emergence of subsequent theories of leadership, most notably distributed leadership. Harris (2003) examined this link in detail noting that teacher leadership can illuminate how distributed leadership actually works in schools. Accordingly, distributed leadership will now be examined in the next section.

### **Distributed leadership**

The concept of distributed leadership has received significant attention amongst academics and practitioners alike in recent years (Leithwood *et al.* 2006b, Harris 2009). It has also become the preferred leadership model in schools within the first part of the twenty first century (Bush 2011). Yet as Youngs (2013) pointed out, distributed leadership was not initially intended as a model or mode of leadership to be applied and copied by schools. Instead, distributed leadership was envisaged as an analytical tool for thinking about and studying school leadership (Gronn 2002, Spillane *et al.* 2004). Harris (2009) and Bennet *et al.* (2003, p.2) have also suggested it best to use distributed leadership as ‘a way of thinking about leadership practice’ rather than as a model to be copied. Spillane *et al.* (2004) were particularly influential in putting forward the argument for distributed leadership as a conceptual lens as opposed to a



model to be copied. This contention is based on the belief that there is an over emphasis in leadership research on structures, functions and roles as opposed to the actions of those in leadership (Spillane and Diamond 2007). Leadership practise from all those involved (teachers, administrators, principals etc.) is the unit of interest in the holistic approach to distributed leadership, as opposed to more compartmentalised approaches seen in other leadership research, such as teacher leadership (Spillane 2012). In their use of a distributed leadership conceptual lens, Spillane and Diamond (2007) suggest the framing of leadership practice as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation. This framework recognises that the work of leading and managing schools involves more than just those in formal leadership positions. They emphasise that activities are stretched over people and analysis of this is very pertinent. A number of researchers have accordingly considered patterns of leadership distribution and proceeded to empirically monitor and classify these patterns in a number of different categories (Gronn 2002, Spillane *et al.* 2005, Leithwood *et al.* 2006b, Mascal *et al.* 2009). Gronn (2002), for example, identified additive forms of leadership which describe an uncoordinated pattern of distribution, as well as holistic patterns of leadership which are more consciously managed and synchronised. These classifications were further developed by Leithwood *et al.* (2006b) who presented four different forms of distributed leadership alignment. These ranged from planful alignments where the functions of those providing leadership have been given advance consideration, up to anarchic misalignment where leaders or leadership teams behave independently often competing with each other within an organisation.

Distributed leadership has, however, often been thought of as a model, technique or structure of leadership that can be applied for the betterment of institutions. When considered in this context, most definitions of distributed leadership as a model involve the understanding that leadership is detached from positional authority and that anyone from any level in an

organisation can play a leadership role (Camburn and Rowan 2003, Bush 2011). Robinson (2009) reflected the many variations in how distributed leadership is enacted by categorising distributed leadership into three broad indicators. These include the distribution of formal leadership roles, distribution of leadership task performance across members of an organisation and the distribution of influence. In this way distributed leadership can cover both formal and informal leadership within an organisation (Youngs 2013), with vertical and lateral leadership practices (Harris 2004). It also allows people to step in and out of leadership roles where appropriate (Grint 2005). Leader density may consequently develop as a large number of people are invested in the success of the school through leadership involvement (Sergiovanni 2001). What makes the concept of distributed leadership particularly appealing, however, is that it ‘concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role’ (Harris 2004, p.13). Identifying the talents and strengths of staff within a school and matching these to needed functions broadens leadership across a school and is desirable (York-Barr and Duke 2004). Distributing leadership at primary school level has also been associated with self-improving schools (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett 2005, Leithwood *et al.* 2006a, Harris 2009). This has sometimes been enacted in practice through the formation of senior leadership teams within schools (Bush and Glover 2012). These leadership teams typically consist of the principal and several teachers who deal with the day-to-day running of the school and also the longer term vision for the school. Teachers involved in these leadership teams are also usually members of teacher-led curricular or pedagogical learning communities (Muijs and Harris 2007). Bush and Glover (2012, p.21) deduced that these senior leadership teams are ‘an important manifestation of distributed leadership’ and that they contribute to the excellence of the studied schools. As with teacher leadership, explicit direct links have yet to be made between distributed leadership

and improved student outcomes. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) and Silins and Mulford (2002) do, however, correlate distributed leadership in schools with improved student outcomes.

An alternative viewpoint would suggest that the rhetoric and reality of distributed leadership models are separated (Corrigan 2013). It is suggested that the interpretation of distributed models of leadership as giving members of organisations a real autonomous hand in leading is often far from an actuality. Research in English schools found distributed leadership in many cases was used more as a means of delegation with traditional hierarchical leadership structures passing authority down a chain of command (Hall 2013). Bush (2012, p.32), for example, also commented that distribution of leadership was ‘within the gift of the head teacher rather than being institutionalised’. This sentiment is shared by Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007) and Houlton (2002) who both questioned the extent of real leadership that is distributed to teachers within a school. It seems, therefore, that the term distributed leadership in some instances refers to a vehicle of pre-destined managerialism, which does not afford any real power to those outside the top positions. Some critics would go so far as to say that this is in fact not distributed leadership, as it can’t be operated within a controlled paradigm or hierarchical structure (Duignan 2006). In these instances distributed leadership is considered more of a fantasy rather than a reality as a result of hierarchical structures within most schools (Harris 2003).

These varying and conflicting interpretations in the classification and implementation of distributed leadership models, means that scholars are correct in contending that there is no one way of defining distributed leadership (Timperley 2005, Spillane and Diamond 2007, Youngs 2013). Whilst some empirical data supports the value of distributed leadership as a model or structure to be utilised in practice, the utility of distributed leadership as a prescriptive model to be copied is questionable. Within a distributed leadership outlook, the situation or context of leadership is considered as a defining element of the leadership practice, as opposed to

another influencing factor (Timperley 2005, Spillane and Diamond 2007, Bush and Glover 2012, Spillane 2012, Youngs 2013). Consequently the transferability of this model is problematic, and the greatest contribution of the distributed leadership literature, therefore, appears to be theoretical rather than empirical. The understanding garnered from this body of work that a leadership model can provide a frame for exploring leadership practice is significant. This insight demonstrates the importance of seeking a deeper level of meaning through the use of leadership theory. While previous educational leadership research, such as the teacher leadership literature, provided a solid basis of empirical findings, distributed leadership research began the development of an accompanying overarching theoretical framework and rationale. This framework succeeded in creating a prevailing belief amongst many researchers and practitioners alike that anyone within a school can have a role in leadership and was consequently significant in further broadening educational leadership. Yet, despite these important contributions, the challenges of operationalising distributed leadership in practice has led some scholars to think beyond the scope of distributed leadership. There has been a movement towards what Gronn (2009b) has named ‘hybrid leadership’, an evolved form of distributed leadership which will be discussed in the next section

### **Hybrid leadership**

Owing to an adjudged inaccurate representation of leadership in reality, Gronn (2009b) has led calls for further evolution of the distributed leadership model. He advocates the simultaneous presence of both concentrated and dispersed leadership rather than particular types of leadership (Gronn 2009a). He describes concentrated leadership as how one individual’s influence can predominate while dispersed leadership is when a range of people were influential on other occasions and in other locations. In essence, he proposes that there are a mixture of leadership models at play at any given time and he subsequently named this idea as hybrid leadership. This concept of hybrid leadership has received some support within the

literature, with Crawford (2012) identifying that it is an important part of future educational leadership research and practice. Some empirical investigations have also supported the notion of hybridity, such as Young's (2013) study of subject departments in New Zealand secondary schools. In this study he found that both emergent and organisational forms of leadership were present and that they were inextricably linked in day-to-day practice. Emergent leadership referred to intuitive and spontaneous leadership led by teachers in formal and informal positions, while organisational leadership was the vertical formal distribution of authority led by those from a higher level of authority. Whilst not explicitly referencing hybrid leadership, a number of other studies also point to the presence of hybrid leadership within a primary school context. Bush and Glover (2012), for example, found that head teachers retained a strong role, demonstrating solo leadership on some occasions whilst distributing leadership to teams on other occasions. Spillane *et al's.* (2007) study of daily practices of American principals, and Timperely's (2005) study of a literacy improvement initiative also demonstrated the hallmarks of hybrid leadership, in that leadership was both concentrated and dispersed at different times during the studies. These studies suggest that careful reflection on existing empirical evidence relating to distributed leadership does indicate the presence of hybridity.

Although not as widely cited or explored within literature as previous leadership theories, the rationale provided for hybrid leadership seems highly credible and contributes to the educational leadership literature in a number of ways. The recognition that leadership can be fluid, transient and interchangeable amongst people and roles provides a clear vision of the situational nature of leadership practice. Hybrid leadership also reminds us that more formal models of leadership should not be entirely discarded and that exclusive reliance on any one theory of leadership may be imprudent. Accordingly it is necessary to consider how differing theories of educational leadership have been operationalised specifically within the context of subject leadership.

## **Section 2: Subject specific leadership**

This part of the literature review builds on the insights generated in the previous section by exploring educational leadership within specific subject areas. The merits of subject specific leadership, as well as the limitations of considering leadership in all subject areas generically are considered in this section of the chapter. The literature presented will demonstrate the influence of subject matter on leadership practices, as well as the need to consider leadership in each subject area independently.

### **Subject leadership: The international context**

As this study relates to leadership specific to one subject area, it is fitting to consider how subject specific leadership has been conceptualised in practice in primary schools in different countries. Most typically, subject specific leadership has taken the guise of a formal role assigned to a particular teacher within the school. Since the original inception of this role in England in the 1960's a number of different names have been given to teachers with a subject specific responsibility in primary schools. These titles include consultant teacher, posts carrying special responsibility, curriculum co-ordinator, subject manager and now the most commonly used, subject leader (Hammersley-Fletcher 2002). In keeping with the ongoing development of the titles used to describe these positions, over time the role these teachers carry out has also changed. Subject leaders have been encouraged to take a more active involvement in leadership, in addition to management. This process of change was significantly influenced by the publication of the national standards for subject leaders by the Teacher Training Agency (1998). In these standards, the role of subject leader was clearly outlined to 'provide professional leadership and management for a subject to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all pupils' (Teacher Training Agency 1998, p.4). The publication of these

guidelines was considered a significant turning point, with some observers identifying a new expectation on subject leaders to lead innovation and change across the school (Bell and Ritchie 1999). The implementation of these standards by subject leaders within primary schools has, however, proved problematic for a number of reasons. Many primary teachers may be assigned responsibility for more than one subject and for subject areas in which they no particular expertise (Hoult 2002, Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007). A lack of real autonomy for subject leaders has also been identified as another challenge within primary schools that typically adhere to a hierarchical leadership structure (Hoult 2002, Frost and Harris 2003, Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007). Consequently, some observers have questioned the relevance and value of subject leaders as currently envisioned within English primary schools (Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain 2011). Limited autonomy for subject leaders can also be seen in America where there has been a resurgence in the use of formal instructional teacher leaders (Mangin and Stoelinga 2009). This has been fuelled by growing knowledge of effective professional development which focuses on instruction in the school context and is sustained over time (O'Sullivan and Deglau 2006). These leaders are curriculum based and are used as coaches and mentors, often between schools or districts, trying to improve student achievement in a particular area. Concerns around instructional leadership have been voiced, however, with some commentators suggesting that this provides a top down approach to leadership fuelled by standards driven national reform (Day *et al.* 2001, Frost and Harris 2003). In keeping with formal subject leadership, instructional leadership may, therefore, fail to account for school and teacher autonomy.

Despite these challenges, where creativity was encouraged in a blame free environment, principals and subject leaders both felt that subject leadership contributed significantly to school improvement (Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett 2005). This is in line with other scholars who have advocated the value of well-designed subject leadership (Webb and

Vulliamy 1996, Bell and Ritchie 1999, Harris *et al.* 2001, Burrows 2004, Ghamrawi 2010). In New Zealand, Timperley (2005) also found that a subject leader leading a team of teachers was a highly successful practice, providing leadership activities contributed to assisting teachers in delivering effective instruction. The leadership practice she found comprised of both collaborative work by teachers and also individual work by a designated leader who liaised with the principal. Timperley referred to this activity as boundary spanning, in that the leaders were effective in achieving coherence between the beliefs and activities of the principals and those of the teachers in most cases. In some instances, however, it should be noted that principals dictated the agenda to the leaders, which impinged upon their leadership role and subsequently led to conflict. This is in line with the assertions of other authors who identified the important role played by principals in the sharing of leadership within primary schools (Harris 2009, Bush 2011, Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain 2011). Accordingly, principals were considered in the design of this PE leadership research due to their potential influence.

The literature on subject leadership highlights significant potential benefits, but also considerable challenges in operationalising subject leadership in primary schools. The dominance of principals within hierarchical structures in primary schools may account in part for the difficulties in reconciling subject leadership practices more fully with recent theories of educational leadership which emphasise the importance of shared leadership. The studies presented in this field thus far have also failed to account for, or investigate, subject leadership provided by teachers who do not hold formal roles and leadership in different subject areas. The need to examine leadership according to the subject area will consequently be discussed in the next section.



## **Leadership in different subject areas**

Despite the prevalence of subject leadership in several contexts, few studies have previously examined the ‘relationship between subject matter and school leadership at the elementary school level, especially the role of teachers in leadership’ (Burch 2007, p.130). Spillane (2005) was the first to explicitly consider this topic. He identified that leadership practice can differ according to the subject area and suggested that leadership in each subject area may consequently merit independent investigation. Although not referencing the work of Spillane, Beauchamp and Harvey (2006) came to a similar conclusion in their investigation of music leadership in English primary schools, when suggesting that leadership in music was different to leadership in other subject areas. They found that the personal nature of music and the specialised skill base required meant that leadership in primary music was different to other subject areas. A number of skills, abilities and tasks such as organising school concerts, extra-curricular activities and external providers were, for example, highlighted as unique to music leadership. Accordingly the authors surmised that leadership could also potentially be different in other areas such as the arts and physical education and that further research was required. Burch (2007), however, provided the most significant piece of research in this area, when she built on the work of Spillane (2005) by analysing and comparing leadership in two subject areas in one American school. Leadership in literacy involved different class teachers participating in a variety of ways with both the literacy co-ordinator and the principal nurturing teacher participation. Formally designed arrangements for leadership were important but the role of sharing leadership with informal leaders was also considered vital. On the other hand, mathematics leadership practices contrasted sharply with that of literacy. One formally designated leader primarily set the agenda and other teachers followed this with very few opportunities for classroom teachers to provide leadership. As leadership in both areas in the

same school differed considerably, her results confirmed that leadership differs according to the subject.

Burch largely attributed these differences in leadership to the wider view of the subject matter involved. She felt mathematics, for example, was seen as a highly defined discipline in which expertise developed outside of school through formal training, while literacy was viewed as having a less defined area of expertise. The importance of leaders and teachers views about subject matter was a recurring theme, with Burch (2007, p.144) asserting that these perceptions influenced 'how they think about the work of leading improvement in instruction' and how 'subject matter views are reflected not only in teachers' classroom practices but also in leadership practice'. These findings can be correlated with the work of Silins and Mulford (2002) and Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007) who both support the importance of teachers leading in areas in which they have a particular interest or passion.

Following on from the Burch (2007) study, Spillane and Hopkins (2013) further confirmed that leadership differs according to the subject area. They examined the advice-seeking and information-giving patterns of leaders and teachers across three different subjects in elementary schools within one American school district. Using network analysis they again showed how leadership differs in primary schools according to the subject involved. Their study did, however, also indicate that in addition to perceptions about subject matter, how schools organise for instruction can have a significant effect on the leadership practice. High importance was consequently attributed to gaining insights into participants' perceptions of PE and the organisational structures utilised within the present research to develop our understanding of primary PE leadership.

### **Section 3: Primary PE leadership**

The international context of primary PE leadership is presented in the final section of this chapter. The qualities, skills and duties associated with PE leadership are also explored in this section, along with specific PE leadership activities of most interest within this research, namely provision of support and class swapping. This final section of the literature review will highlight the lack of empirical research available relating to PE leadership and accordingly demonstrate the importance of the present research.

#### **Primary PE leadership: The international context**

The importance of primary PE leadership has been advocated in a number of countries across the globe. In Australia, for example, teachers perceived a strong school PE leadership team to have an important role in the success of any PE programme (Morgan and Hansen 2007). Where PE was considered to be successfully implemented, vital importance was attached to the role played by a PE co-ordinator or co-ordinating team. Similarly in a Canadian context, the importance of having a designated teacher to provide school based PE leadership has been asserted (Decorby *et al.* 2005). PE leadership was, in fact, identified by Decorby *et al.* as the single most important factor in addressing deficiencies found in their case study schools' PE programmes. The importance of teachers with specialist PE knowledge in supporting and leading generalist primary school teachers in their delivery of PE has also been identified in Europe by the European Commission for Sport (2015). Correspondingly primary PE leadership has consistently been acknowledged as important within the United Kingdom (Raymond 2005, Pickup and Price 2007, Lawrence 2012). The value attributed to PE leadership in several contexts provides further rationale as to the value of investigating primary PE leadership in an Irish context.

In keeping with the subject leadership literature, accounts of primary PE leadership have been almost exclusively concerned with teachers in formal positions. The role of formal primary PE subject leaders has, for example, been considered by Griggs (2015) in an English context. His comprehensive overview outlines how PE subject leaders in England were originally highly trained qualified teachers who had an expertise in one area of the national curriculum. These subject leaders mainly came through a four year teacher education programme and were expected to be highly influential within their schools. The role of the PE subject leader in England has changed considerably since the turn of the century, however, due to successive national strategies (Griggs 2015). These strategies removed teacher specialism requirements and ultimately began to erode the position of the PE subject leader. Governmental emphasis on literacy and numeracy also led to prioritisation of subject leadership in these areas at the expense of other subject areas (Hammersley-Fletcher 2002). In more recent times, the PE subject leader role is often assigned to the newest or youngest member of staff, regardless of their level of PE expertise (Raymond 2005, Pickup and Price 2007, Rainer *et al.* 2012). Whilst often enthusiastic, in many cases these young teachers lack PE expertise and are required to learn on the job because they are provided with limited opportunities for organised professional development (Sloan 2010, Lawrence 2012). Unsurprisingly many of these teachers are ill-equipped to carry out this demanding role and struggle with the position (Armour and Duncombe 2004, Sloan 2010). The plight of the PE subject leader has accelerated the privatisation of PE and school sport, with many schools now happy to outsource PE classes to external providers (Griggs 2010, Blair and Capel 2011, Griggs 2012, Griggs 2015, Jones and Green 2015). Despite the numerous difficulties facing primary PE, and subject leaders in particular, it does appear, that some PE leaders have maintained a prominent role in positively impacting primary PE within English schools (Jones and Green 2015). This can perhaps be explained in part by the introduction of several educational courses and qualifications designed

to upskill generalist teachers to take on PE subject leadership and PE specialist roles (Association For Physical Education 2013, National College for Teaching and Leadership 2015).

Griggs concluded that within the challenging backdrop facing primary PE ‘leadership in physical education is more important than ever before’ (Griggs 2015, p.84). It is clear, however, that there is an absence of research relating to PE leadership in contexts where formal leaders do not operate. These insights highlight the importance of primary PE leadership and the need to explicitly focus on informal primary PE leadership.

In the absence of existing data related to informal PE leadership, further consideration will now be given to the available PE leadership literature which considers the qualities, skills and duties associated with formal PE leaders. Although the formal PE leadership literature is not of direct relevance, and in many parts is not derived from evidence based research, it may still help inform our thinking about leadership in primary PE.

### **Qualities, skills and duties associated with PE leadership**

PE leadership has been equated to the personal qualities and skills of individuals, as well as to the role and tasks to be undertaken by an assigned subject leader. Personal traits have been advocated as important for PE leaders, with enthusiasm and motivation identified by Raymond (2005) and Griggs (2015) as the most common qualities sought in PE leaders. Further to these personal traits, a number of skills have been identified as important to the position such as leadership skills, decision making skills, communication skills, self-management skills and professional competence (Lawrence 2012, Griggs 2015). These qualities and skills are effectively encapsulated in Pickup and Price’s (2007) presentation of personal and professional assets needed by PE subject leaders. These include the following:

1. Enthusiasm and strength of conviction regarding the value of physical education
  2. Good subject knowledge together with sound teaching and learning experience
  3. An ability to reflect on and through his/her own practice and the ‘bigger picture’
  4. A clearly articulated and appropriate personal rationale for the subject
  5. Strong interpersonal and professional skills to encourage others to embrace the subject
- (Pickup and Price 2007, p.187)

The insights provided by these authors are noteworthy, as the skills and qualities required for PE leadership are a consideration of the present research. It should be reiterated, however, that the above skills and qualities discussed were designed in relation to teachers in formal PE leadership roles. These classifications of skills and qualities are also limited by a lack of research basis. None of the above authors cite supporting research studies upon which they base their categorisations of PE leadership skills and qualities. Whilst these recommendations are undoubtedly based on the considerable experience of the authors, the need for empirical research in this area is clear.

As well as outlining personal attributes required by subject leaders, a number of tasks which need to be fulfilled as part of the role of subject leader have also been highlighted in the literature. The exact duties carried out by PE leaders vary widely in each context, from simply tidying a cupboard up to and including planning, leading and delivering the subject across the whole school (Burrows 2004, Griggs 2015). The use of differing terms such as PE subject leader and PE co-ordinator is perhaps a contributory factor in the variance in duties undertaken in some contexts. Raymond’s (2005) differentiation between co-ordination and leadership specifically within the context of PE is helpful in this regard. PE co-ordination was defined as ‘a role which emphasises harmonising, bringing together, making links, establishing routines and common practices’, while PE subject leadership was defined as ‘a role which emphasises providing information, offering expertise and direction, guiding the development of the subject,

and raising standards'(Raymond 2005, p.xv). It should be noted, however, that Raymond (2005) sees both co-ordination and leadership as implicit within the duties of the teacher with responsibility for primary PE. The duties to be undertaken by PE subject leaders have also been addressed by Morgan and Hansen (2007) and Pickup and Price (2007). More recently, however, Lawrence (2012) and Griggs (2015) provide the most useful overviews of PE leadership by grouping tasks into four main areas including strategic direction and development, teaching and learning, leading and managing staff and efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources. The first of these categories, strategic direction and development refers to activities such as developing PE policies and schemes and the monitoring of these plans. The second category, teaching and learning involves duties such as auditing and action planning, monitoring colleagues' teaching and pupils' progress and mapping the curriculum to ensure continuity and development throughout the school cycle. Leading and managing staff is considered to involve PE professional development and targeted workshops within the school, as well as supporting colleagues in their PE teaching. It appears, however, that tasks relating to the last grouping, efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources, such as timetabling, managing resources, equipment and facilities, as well as dissemination of information relating to safe practice, remain the most common activities carried out by PE-coordinators in practice (Sloan 2010). The PE leadership tasks which the lead teachers would chose to undertake in the present research were consequently of interest.

These categorisations of leadership activities, along with the other PE leadership recommendations articulated above by Raymond (2005) and Pickup and Price (2007) all build on the aforementioned original set of standards for subject leaders published by the Teacher Training Agency (1998). Although these standards provide a useful starting point in understanding subject leadership, they were cross-curricular and cross-sectoral and did not consider examples of domain specific primary leadership. Consequently, it is necessary to

specifically consider in more detail the duties undertaken by PE subject leaders which were of most relevance to this research. As this research concerns informal PE leadership, providing support and class swapping were identified as PE leadership activities which could potentially be accessible to the lead teachers. Literature relating to each of these two topics, providing support and class swapping will accordingly be considered in the next section.

### **Providing support**

The potential role of PE leaders and teachers in supporting other teachers in their PE teaching has received some attention within the literature. This has been driven by a growing awareness of the characteristics of effective PE professional development (Patton and Parker 2014, Patton *et al.* 2015). Whilst there remains confusion amongst some PE professionals as to the full meaning and purpose of the term professional development (Keay 2006), increasingly it is recognised that professional development is any activity which can ‘develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher’ (OECD 2009, p.49). It has been identified that professional development is most effective when it involves active learning (Garet *et al.* 2001), is continuous and maintained over time (O’Sullivan and Deglau 2006) and is focussed on the needs and contexts in which teachers work (Patton *et al.* 2012, Patton and Parker 2014). Effective professional development must also value student outcomes (Timperley 2008) and provide teacher with the necessary knowledge and skills (Armour and Yelling 2004, O’Sullivan and Deglau 2006), which in turn may enable them to positively influence student learning. It must recognise the social nature of learning and the need to include opportunities for collaboration (Armour and Yelling 2007, Patton *et al.* 2013), as well as the importance of effective facilitation of this collaborations (Parker *et al.* 2012, Patton and Parker 2012, Patton *et al.* 2012).



Most typically the provision of school based support and professional development by teachers relating to PE has been examined through the lens of collaborative learning and is also often connected with the concept of communities of practice. Wenger (1998) described communities of practices as ongoing forms of social interaction which leads the members of the group to new meaning and learning. These communities of practice ideals are considered to ‘sit easily’ with primary school teachers (Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007, p.38). Community of practice principles are also complimentary of Hargreaves and Fullan’s (2012) theory of professional capital which promotes the importance of comparable professional learning communities. In the context of PE, a central premise of both communities of practice and professional learning communities is that teachers value learning with, and from, colleagues in PE over traditional forms of CPD (Armour and Fraser 2004). Consequently it has been suggested that traditional CPD needs to be altered so that teachers in professional learning communities or networks play an important role (Armour and Yelling 2007). Whilst the practice of teachers learning from other teachers within the same school is considered highly effective (Garet *et al.* 2001), facilitating school-based collaborative learning can prove particularly challenging within primary PE (Duncombe 2005, Carse 2015). Within this challenging context, the position of community of practice or professional learning community leader takes on critical importance (Parker *et al.* 2012, Patton *et al.* 2013).

### **Class Swapping**

PE subject leaders and classroom teachers with expertise and interest in PE have also been used to teach additional PE lessons within primary schools through a process of class swapping. Class swapping, is when teachers within the same school swap classes so that they are teaching pupils other than their own for an assigned period of time within the school day. The presence of class swapping specific to primary PE has been noted in a number of countries across the world. In New Zealand, for example, class swapping for PE involving generalist teachers in

primary schools was noted as part of a larger PE research study (Petrie 2008). In Finland, it also appears that class swapping is a methodology which is commonly used across a number of subjects. Teachers in comprehensive schools (age 7-12) are generalists but have specialist knowledge in two subject areas, with PE being one of the most popular choices (Pühse and Gerber 2005). Most recently, class swapping for PE was identified by Jones and Green (2015) within English primary schools. In their study, primary PE subject leaders spoke of how they swapped classes with other teachers in the school to teach additional PE classes. Class swapping was considered to be a highly effective system of 'specialist teaching' which facilitated the varied talents of the teachers within the school (Jones and Green 2015, p.3). Despite this endorsement, it should be noted that class swapping was not explicitly investigated, documented or evaluated within the Jones and Green (2015) study. The trend of advocating for the value of class swapping without supporting evidence can also be seen in the literature relating to class swapping in other countries. In a Canadian context, Decorby *et al.* (2005) also recommend class swapping for PE as one way of improving the quality of elementary PE. It was suggested that the teacher designated to teach additional PE lessons could improve continuity across classes. It was also intimated that the teacher who teaches additional PE could provide further PE leadership within the school, an assertion which is of particular significance to the investigation of primary PE leadership in this thesis. Once more, however, no corroborating evidence was offered to support Decorby *et al.* (2005) recommendations. Morgan and Hansen (2007, p.104) also noted the 'common strategy' of rotating classes between teachers in Australian primary schools. Participants in their study felt that class swapping positively influenced PE provision and that all schools should be capitalising on the skills and specific interest of their teachers. Yet again, however, the rationale for this belief in the benefit of class swapping for primary PE was not explicitly explored. As there are no research studies which specifically investigate primary school

teachers swapping classes for PE, or for any other subject, research into this phenomenon is timely. It is necessary to consider how this practice might take place and its possible role within primary school PE leadership.

### **Summary**

The study of educational leadership is prone to the constant development of new leadership theories and models, many of which discredit previous theories before being disregarded themselves (Harris 2009). Yet this ongoing process of theoretical evolution is representative of an ever growing understanding of educational leadership. Although literature relating to each new theory of leadership provides valuable original insights, much of what has gone before can still be of use and relevance. To differing extents, each of the theories of leadership explored in this review helped inform the design of this research on PE leadership. Teacher leadership, for example, demonstrated that the work of leading schools involves more than just those in formal leadership and highlighted the potential of informal leadership. The distributed leadership literature highlighted the capacity of all members of an organisation to be involved in leadership. While hybrid leadership underlined the situational nature of leadership and the mixture of different leadership theories involved in the practice of leadership at any particular time. Perhaps most significant, however, was the overall understanding generated from this review that leadership theory can be used as a conceptual lens, rather than as a model to be copied. Theory provides a frame to explore and interpret leadership practice as well as an analytical tool for thinking about and studying school leadership. Consequently, a suitable theoretical framework for this study of PE leadership was sought to provide a deeper level of meaning. Further rationale for adopting a theoretical framework will be discussed in chapter 4, along with a detailed discussion of the theory which was ultimately aligned with the present research, Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital.

Further to the importance of leadership theory, the review of literature also revealed the integral role of subject matter in primary leadership practices. Whilst research related to subject leadership can be of value, the need to examine leadership in each subject independently has been outlined. As this research is concerned with leadership in one specific subject area, namely PE, these results are particularly relevant. There is, however, only a limited amount of research relating to primary PE leadership currently available. Although primary PE leadership has been identified as beneficial, to date most of the literature relating to the topic has been concerned with providing practical guidance to PE subject leaders based on the experiences of authors. Whilst the creation of these guidelines are undoubtedly beneficial in providing direction to schools and PE subject leaders, they have not as of yet led to empirical investigations of teachers' experiences of PE leadership or the wider role of leadership in primary PE. It is evident, therefore, that the available literature lacks a research basis to support existing beliefs and claims about primary PE leadership. The literature specific to primary PE leadership has also largely focussed on the role of formal PE subject leaders and has failed to account for, document or investigate informal PE leadership provided by classroom teachers. The present research can, therefore, make a significant contribution to our understanding of PE leadership by providing empirical research in contexts where formal subject leaders do not operate. In particular, investigation of teachers' experiences of supporting others and class swapping can develop our understanding of informal PE leadership. Considering the context specific nature of leadership, it is however, first necessary to place this research within the contemporary Irish context.

## **Chapter 3: Context**

In this chapter the main issues explored within the previous literature review chapter are considered in the contemporary context of the policies, structures and practices currently in place in the Irish educational system and Irish primary schools in particular. The leadership structures utilised in Irish primary schools will be considered in the first part of this chapter. As this research specifically concerns leadership of PE, contemporary debates surrounding the provision of PE within primary schools, both internationally and nationally, will be explored in the next section. The existing literature specific to PE leadership in an Irish context will then be presented, with a specific emphasis on the leadership tasks of most interest, namely providing support and class swapping. The chapter will conclude with a summary outlining the value of the insights gained from this chapter.

Any research endeavour in the field of leadership needs to be placed within the contemporary policy context (Frost and Harris 2003). It has been shown repeatedly within the literature reviewed that an appreciation of the context of research is vital to the subsequent development of understanding. This chapter will facilitate a better understanding of the contemporary context of the present research and accordingly a better understanding of the results which will be generated in relation to PE leadership. Furthermore, this chapter aims to identify the importance and need for this research while exploring the potential of PE leadership within primary schools.

### **Leadership in Irish primary schools**

Leadership in Irish primary schools typically follows traditional formal hierarchical structures in which leadership is predominantly provided by the principal (Drea and O'Brien 2003). The dominance of principal teachers appears to be particularly strong in Irish primary schools due to the large proportion of small schools (Drea and O'Brien 2003). In addition to the leadership

of the principal, each school has a board of management responsible for its governance. The role of the board is to review and approve strategic direction and policies and then subsequently assess and hold the principal responsible for successful implementation (Drea and O'Brien 2003). Although there has been an extremely limited amount of research on the work of these boards, the available evidence suggests that principals strongly influence and carry out an excessive and disproportionate amount of the work of boards of management (Herron 1985). While the board of management may or may not review policies and strategies, the day to day running of the school and implementation of these policies rests with the principal. As many principals combine this role with a full-time teaching position, attempts were made by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to provide additional help to principals through the appointment of vice-principals and then through the formation of the posts of responsibility management structure. Introduced in the early 1970's, the posts of responsibility structure involved the appointment of teachers, other than the principal and vice-principal to help with the running of the school (Herron 1985). Teachers in these positions were initially referred to as grade 1 or grade 2, but this title was subsequently changed to assistant principal, and special duties teacher (Department of Education and Science 2003). Teachers receive an additional monetary allowance for holding these posts of responsibility and are expected to carry out supplementary work in addition to their classroom duties. The number of posts of responsibility in a school is dependent on the school size and the number of authorised teaching posts. Appointments to posts of responsibility are by competitive interview among the teachers in the school. Traditionally, the applicants length of service within the school was the most important criteria within these interviews (Herron 1985). In recent times, however, a more equitable approach has been adopted with the applicants' skills and capacity to meet the needs of the school now considered alongside seniority on an equal basis (Department for Education and Skills 2014).

The posts of responsibility management structure is currently in place in all Irish primary schools. The use of the word 'management' in place of 'leadership' is appropriate and appears to be reflective of how this system appears to have been typically enacted in practice. Despite the limited availability of research in this area, DES directives and small scale studies into primary and similarly managed post-primary schools in Ireland indicate that this system is more concerned with hierarchical management rather than leadership. Herron's (1985) investigation into Dublin schools and their use of posts of responsibility found, for example, that 88% percent of these posts were primarily used to delegate organisational and administrative duties, and that in many cases principals were reluctant to delegate at all. More recent research in Irish post primary schools also found that the post of responsibility structure could not be equated with distributed leadership (Humphreys 2010). The wording of DES directives and circulars relating to posts of responsibility is also telling. There are repeated references to 'duties' and 'delegation' which points to post holders being primarily used in terms of management rather than leadership (Department of Education and Science 2003). This is further validated within a listing of fourteen duties which may be delegated to those in posts of responsibility (Department of Education and Science 2003). Utilising the aforementioned explanation of educational leadership as influence, values and vision, of the fourteen duties listed, only three could be classed as leadership activities. These leadership tasks were, arranging talks, demonstrations, visits to schools, responsibility for school activities and responsibility for organising particular areas of the curriculum and curriculum development throughout the school. The last duty mentioned is particularly relevant as it suggests that some level of subject leadership exists. Overall, however, the dominance of managerial tasks within this list seems a good representation of the general approach taken to the use of posts of responsibility. Even though this list is qualified by the proviso that it is not exhaustive and that schools must be flexible according to their specific needs, it still seems an accurate representation of the way in

which post holders are utilised. Remarkably, these 14 duties listed in the 2003 circular are the same 14 duties that were similarly advocated by the Department of Education (albeit slightly different wording in places) in a circular thirty years previously in 1973 (Department of Education 1973). This emphasis within the posts of responsibility system on administration rather than leadership tasks is comparable with original conceptions of middle leadership seen in other countries. It is evident, therefore, that the posts of responsibility system has broadened management, rather than leadership, in Irish primary schools.

Although traditional top down hierarchical leadership appears to be dominant in Irish primary schools, in recent years there are some indications of a growing appreciation amongst principals and educational stakeholders of the need for leadership in Irish primary schools to be broadened. Irish principals have, for example, outlined how they are finding it increasingly difficult to carry out their role effectively, especially in small schools where they must carry out the dual roles of principal and classroom teacher (Drea and O'Brien 2003). The usefulness of the posts of responsibility management structure has also been questioned, as principals feel that while it is efficient in terms of delegation, that 'post holders rarely carry the level of devolved management accountability that would be the case for roles at this level in other sectors' (Drea and O'Brien 2003, p.5). Prominent stakeholders in the Irish education system have also suggested that existing middle management structures in Irish primary schools should be reconceptualised. The Chief Inspector of the Department of Education has, for example, stated that posts of responsibility should allow for more autonomy which would facilitate 'curriculum development, staffing development and school development priorities' (Hislop 2014, p.14). The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) has also indicated its support for revising the existing posts of responsibility system. A discussion paper published in 2015 called for meaningful distribution of leadership and management duties through the use of in-school management teams (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2015). Particularly relevant



to the present research was the inclusion of curricular areas as one of the recommended core areas of work for these management teams. New guidelines relating to the appointment and operation of boards of management in primary schools have also outlined the need for leadership to be shared more equally (Department of Education and Skills 2015). Nevertheless, the most appropriate means of sharing leadership remains contested. There have, for example, been mixed responses by teachers to the DES's publication of school self-evaluation initiatives which attempted to lessen the burden on principals and broaden leadership practices by involving staff members in curricular improvement (Department of Education and Science 2012). Increased workloads involved in self-evaluation, allied with a ban on appointments to financially rewarded posts of responsibility<sup>1</sup> have led to a union directive of non-co-operation with school self-evaluation for teachers (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2016). Teachers' perspectives on the sharing of leadership within primary schools are, therefore, unclear at present.

Paradoxically, the posts of responsibility management structure introduced to share the workload of principals, appears to act as a deterrent to widespread teacher leadership in Ireland. The available evidence would suggest that leadership in Irish primary schools is heavily linked to formal positional authority and financial reimbursement. This review suggests that the posts of responsibility system defines specifically who is involved in leading and managing the school, making it more challenging for teachers outside of these posts to become autonomous and take on leadership roles. In addition, it appears that existing posts of responsibility are mainly used as a form of managerial delegation and not to empower teachers to provide leadership. Top down approaches to leadership such as this have been shown to provide a

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<sup>1</sup> The DES introduced a moratorium on new appointments to posts of responsibility in 2009 (Department of Education and Skills 2011b). This ban on recruitment was attributed to financial cutbacks. This moratorium was lifted in 2011 in exceptional circumstance in primary schools with over 400 pupils (Department of Education and Skills 2011b)

significant barrier to teacher leadership (York-Barr and Duke 2004, Muijs and Harris 2007). There have, however, in recent times been some indicators which suggest a growing understanding of the value of broadening leadership within primary schools amongst educational stakeholders in Ireland. What is not yet clear, however, is if this belief in the value of sharing leadership in primary schools is shared by teachers. This research will, therefore, address an important gap in the literature by providing insight into Irish teachers' experiences and perspective of taking on leadership within their schools.

### **Primary PE provision: The international context**

The present research investigating PE leadership is taking place within the context of considerable debate surrounding the most appropriate means of primary PE provision (Jones and Green 2015). Whilst the aforementioned use of formal PE subject leaders or co-ordinators within primary schools is considered beneficial by many (Raymond 2005, Lawrence 2012, Griggs 2015), others would suggest that primary school PE should be exclusively led, implemented and assessed by a specialist (MacPhail and Halbert 2005, Faulkner *et al.* 2008, Kirk 2012, European Commission for Sport 2015). The Fletcher and Mandigo (2012) review of international literature suggested that having a specialist does not guarantee a quality programme, but that PE specialist teachers generally teach better lessons than generalist teachers. Despite these assertions, the compulsory use of primary PE specialists is only seen in a few European countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Romania and Turkey (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013). Primary PE specialists are also found in certain districts within Belgium, Scotland, Australia, USA and Canada (Active Healthy Kids Canada 2005, Ardzejewska *et al.* 2010, National Association of Sport and Physical Education 2012, European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013).

Although it is often suggested that PE specialists at primary level are preferable, there is also an opposing viewpoint which supports the role of the generalist class teacher in delivering PE. The class teacher is believed to know the individual needs of the children in their class and is considered best placed to teach the PE curriculum as a result (Jones 1992, Wright 2002). Considerable reservations about primary PE specialists have consequently been cited, with some researchers warning of the possible detrimental effects of specialists on children's cross-curricular learning and holistic development (Sloan 2010, Blair and Capel 2011). Concerns have also been raised in relation to the qualifications and appropriateness of these teachers carrying out the role of PE specialists in primary schools. Flintoff (2003) and Fletcher and Mandigo (2012) noted a worrying trend of teachers educated as secondary school PE teachers who lack the developmental knowledge required for working with young children being employed as primary PE specialists. Brooks and Thompson's (2015) Australian autoethnography provides further insight into the significant challenges faced by these secondary PE teachers in teaching primary PE. The teacher in question faced developmental challenges, feelings of isolation and exclusion as well as difficulty in influencing the cultural and social practices within the school, all of which further support claims that secondary PE specialists should not be teaching at primary level. Classroom teachers with a background in sport have been cited as another group of teachers who may work as primary PE specialists, but they may lack the pedagogical knowledge required to be effective subject specialists (Fletcher and Mandigo 2012). Similarly, coaches who have been used as primary PE specialists to deliver PE curricula in some settings, have in many instances been found to lack the required level of pedagogical and curricular knowledge (Griggs 2010, Blair and Capel 2011, Griggs 2012, Smith 2013, Bowles 2014, Petrie *et al.* 2014).

### **Primary PE provision: The Irish context**

In Ireland primary PE is typically delivered by generalist class teachers, with a small number of schools employing individuals to work on a full time basis as ‘specialist PE teachers’, most commonly secondary school teachers or coaches (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007, Bowles 2014). The dominance of generalist primary PE provision is reflective of the educational policy context. Although some reports have suggested that PE specialists should be used in primary schools (Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education & Science 2005), the Irish primary school curriculum states that ‘a [generalist] class teacher is the most appropriate teacher to teach the physical education programme’ (Government of Ireland 1999b, p. 8). Accordingly the potential use of specialist primary PE teachers has traditionally received limited backing amongst educational stakeholders, with the delivery of all subjects in an integrated curriculum by a generalist teacher considered to be a particular strength of the Irish educational system (Irish National Teachers Organisation 1993, Government of Ireland 1999b, Coulter 2012, Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2012). In the recent past, however, reports outlining Ireland’s growing levels of overweight and obese children have placed the spotlight on primary PE provision (Layte and McCrory 2011). Support for the use of primary PE specialists in Irish primary schools has gathered some momentum, particularly within the media. A weight loss television show ‘Operation Transformation’ launched a campaign which supported the use of PE specialists in Irish primary schools. Rather worryingly, the PE specialists proposed for primary schools in this campaign were second level PE teachers. This campaign received significant attention, culminating in a presentation to a governmental committee (House of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children Debate 2013). Generalist primary school teachers have, however, maintained their position as the main providers of primary PE in Ireland. Fletcher and Mandigo (2012) linked this ongoing

dominance of generalist PE primary provision with the absence of research connecting primary PE specialists to issues considered critical by policy makers, such as fiscal savings.

### **Alternative constructs of primary PE provision: Generalist teachers with PE expertise**

Although the delivery of primary PE by generalist teachers remains dominant in Ireland, there appears to be a growing appetite to examine other means of provision which may enhance existing practices. This change in outlook is illustrated by the evolving position of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) in relation to primary PE provision. Historically, the INTO staunchly supported the role of the generalist teacher within PE (Irish National Teachers Organisation 1993), but more recently they have suggested that ‘it is timely to carry out a review to see if specialisation, in any form, could enhance and improve the teaching of PE in Irish primary schools’(Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007, p.30). In other countries, specialisation which maintains the involvement of generalist teachers in PE provision has been developed. In Malta, for example, generalist class teachers and specialist PE teachers work together and share the delivery of PE lessons to classes, with each typically delivering one lesson per week (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2013). Generalist and specialist teachers working together in partnership has also been advocated as an effective form of primary PE provision in England by Jones and Green (2015) as well as by Sloan (2010).

As dedicated primary PE specialist teachers are not presently being educated in Ireland, the use of generalist teachers with additional specialist knowledge in PE has been proposed as an alternative construct of specialist PE provision (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007). Newly reconceptualised elective modules within the Colleges of Education which now allow for additional specialisation (The Teaching Council 2012b), would appear to support these suggestions further. Utilising generalist primary school teachers with additional PE knowledge may represent the best mix of developmental and content knowledge, and address some of the

concerns associated with specialist teachers. The use of teachers with additional PE expertise to positively influence PE, through a variety of means, including PE leadership has been referenced by several Irish PE scholars and provides further rationale for the present research (Coulter 2012, Murphy and O'Leary 2012). In particular, the provision of support and class swapping have been identified as activities which may potentially be worthwhile endeavours for teachers with additional expertise (Coulter *et al.* 2009, Ní Chróinín and Murtagh 2009, Roche *et al.* 2009). The available literature in an Irish context pertaining to each of these areas, namely PE leadership, providing support and class swapping will now be explored.

### **Primary PE leadership: Irish context**

There is a very limited amount of literature available relating to Irish primary school PE leadership. While the possible use of post of responsibility holders in relation to curriculum areas suggests that PE leadership may exist (Department of Education and Science 2003), the evidence is not so promising. Herron's (1985) study of posts of responsibility, showed that only 2.5% of schools in the survey had a specific post of responsibility relating to PE throughout the school. Whilst it is acknowledged that primary education has changed significantly since this survey was carried out, this study remains the only piece of research which provides insight into the limited use of the post holder system to engage PE leadership. More contemporarily, the INTO indicated that PE leadership would be valued by teachers, with the idea of a school based Director of PE suggested (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007). The Professional Development Service for Teachers (2012) (PDST) have referenced the potential leadership role of teachers through the use of PE subject co-ordinator's, particularly in the context whole school planning. The term subject co-ordinator is only used once in the PDST document and is not explained, although there are several other references to the importance of sharing staff expertise to inform and upskill the school community. The

IPPEA also envisions an important PE leadership role being undertaken by teachers in the future, as evidenced in their PE 2020 vision statement.

‘Planning for physical education will be undertaken by all staff led by a subject leader (who is supported in developing particular subject expertise) and supported by the school principal.’ (Irish Primary Physical Education Association 2012, p.1)

Whilst not explicitly explored in her research, Coulter (2012) alluded to the potential of teachers to take on PE leadership roles in Irish schools in the future. The repeated emphasis within several of these references on the potential of PE leadership in the future, rather than the present, can in part be linked to the recent modification of Irish teacher education programmes. The Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree has been increased from three to four years and this has resulted in additional time for all students to choose areas of the curriculum within which to specialise in detail (The Teaching Council 2012b). Parallels are clear between this new system of teacher education and the past and current development of generalist teachers’ subject expertise within England and Finland respectively, and suggest that in the coming years there is significant potential to further develop leadership by teachers within Irish primary schools. Perhaps most pertinently to the present research, additional PE elective specialism courses are now offered yearly to a number of Irish students (St. Patrick's College Drumcondra 2013, Mary Immaculate College 2014, Dublin City University 2016, National University of Ireland Maynooth 2016) with a newly designed module relating to PE leadership delivered in one educational institution (St. Patrick's College Drumcondra 2013). Murphy and O’Leary (2012, p.308) noted these recent changes in the Irish educational landscape as significant in the context of PE, anticipating that this ‘new cohort of teachers’ with additional PE expertise may be well placed to provide PE leadership in a variety of ways.

To date, the literature in relation to Irish PE leadership is more robust with rationale and argument than with evidence. The lack of available empirical research in this area provides further justification for explicitly investigating PE leadership. Most notably, the provision of support and class swapping have been identified as elements of PE leadership applicable to an Irish context. The literature pertaining to both of these PE leadership tasks will be explored in the next section.

### **Providing support: Irish context**

The potential of teachers to support other members of staff within their school has been identified by several educational stakeholders and researchers in Ireland. An Irish Teaching Council report (Banks and Smyth 2011, p.33) has, for example, recommended that ‘future research is needed on the extent to which teachers in Ireland access and participate in informal learning opportunities’ as well as ‘identify ways in which CPD participation could be incorporated into the school year’. Specific to PE, both Murphy and O’Leary (2012) and Ní Chróinín and Murtagh (2009) suggest that school based teachers with expertise are well placed to positively influence the PE practices of other teachers. Coulter (2012) also deduced that investigation is required into school based PE communities of practice that provide opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss practice. Whilst Parker *et al.* (2012) have already explored a number of primary PE communities of practice in Ireland, their research focussed on regional communities of practices with an ever changing group of participants. The present research of PE leadership will offer a new school based perspective by considering the experiences of a lead teacher in working with a designated number of teachers in their school.

### **Class swapping: Irish context**

Class swapping for PE is already a reality, albeit informally arranged, within Irish primary schools according to a report into primary PE by the Irish National Teachers Organisation



(2007). Whilst not explicitly explored in this report, the practice of teachers swapping classes for PE was advocated. It was suggested that ‘some teachers who are very confident could swap classes with other teachers for PE’ (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007, p.113). Class swapping within the Irish context has also similarly been alluded to by Roche *et al.* (2009), as well as Ní Chróinín and Murtagh (2009, p.51) who noted that ‘many teachers already use informal arrangements with colleagues to allow them to teach in their area of expertise’. There are no specifics in any of these documents, however, as to teachers’ experience of class swapping or details of how class swapping might work in practice. Research into this phenomenon is timely, therefore, to consider in greater detail class swapping as an element of PE leadership within primary schools.

### **Summary**

Although there are some indications which suggest that traditional hierarchical models of leadership are becoming less prevalent in contemporary Irish primary schools, teachers’ perspectives on involvement in leadership remain unclear. In relation specifically to the context of primary PE, debates surrounding provision have traditionally conceptualised generalist and specialist PE provision as mutually exclusive within primary schools. The present research may offer a valuable new perspective to this debate by considering the potential of generalist teachers with additional expertise to contribute to PE provision through leadership activities in schools where generalist teachers operate. Whilst the available literature suggests that PE leadership is valuable, and that there is significant potential to develop PE leadership within primary schools, as of yet PE leadership in Irish primary schools has not been explicitly researched. In keeping with the international literature, empirical evidence is lacking in support of the use of primary teachers to provide PE leadership across the primary school, through the provision of support and class swapping. This research proposes to address this gap by specifically investigating generalist teachers’ experiences of

engaging in PE leadership, with a particular focus on tasks such as providing support and class swapping which have previously been identified within the literature.

## **Chapter 4: Theoretical framework**

Adopting a theoretical framework is an important part of research (Shulman and Colbert 1987, Yin 2009). As Tinning and Fitzpatrick (2012, p.57) note ‘Theory helps us to better understand the social contexts we are studying and moves us on from simply describing what we see and hear’. Utilising a theoretical framework ensured that the analysis moved beyond a surface or superficial level of understanding and to a deeper level of meaning regarding primary PE leadership. Theory can also bring together pieces of empirical data into a coherent framework with wider relevance (Cohen *et al.* 2011). As this research contained several studies, a common theoretical framework was sought to ensure continuity and coherence between each study, and to facilitate the creation of a thesis relating to primary PE leadership. Accordingly, and also in keeping with the first section of the literature review which demonstrated the importance of theory when examining leadership, an appropriate theoretical framework was used to provide a deeper level of meaning. The leadership models discussed in chapter 2, in particular distributed leadership, were considered as potential theoretical frames for the present research. Ultimately, however, Hargreaves and Fullan’s (2012) theory of professional capital was identified as the most appropriate theoretical frame.

In this chapter an overview of the chosen theoretical framework for this study, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan’s (2012) theory of professional capital will firstly be presented. Each of the three main tenets of this theory, human, social and decisional capital will be discussed, along with leadership capital, a concept which has subsequently been linked to the theory of professional capital. A review of literature which draws on professional capital since its publication will then be offered. This section will conclude by illustrating the appropriateness and rationale for adopting a professional capital framework specifically within this research.

## **Professional capital**

The origins of Hargreaves and Fullan's theory of professional capital (2012) can be traced back to the emergence of teacher professionalism as a global discourse towards the end of the twentieth century (Frost and Harris 2003). Reprofessionalisation of teachers was conceptualised by Lieberman (1988), Fullan (1993), Hargreaves (1997) and Mclaughlin (1997), among others, as an alternative construct of teacher leadership to standards-driven, top-down approaches to educational improvement (Frost and Harris 2003). Hargreaves and Fullan were at the forefront of this debate, producing a significant body of work on the topic both individually and collectively. In particular, Fullan's Change Forces trilogy (1993, 1999, 2003) as well as selected Hargreaves' publications (Hargreaves 1994, Hargreaves 1999, Hargreaves and Fullan 2008, Hargreaves and Shirley 2012) seem significant precursors to their subsequent presentation of professional capital. Their description of professional capital specifically builds on a previous joint publication, 'What's Worth Fighting For in Your Schools' (Fullan and Hargreaves 1996). Since this publication the authors discovered 'a whole new world' which inspired them to reconsider their perspectives on the teaching profession (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, p. xi). Whilst maintaining the core values of dignity, collaboration and collegiality, professional capital updates and applies these core values to the modern educational setting of evidence informed decision making, reform and professional learning communities (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012).

Theories relating to capital have been presented in a variety of fields such as business, culture and spirituality (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) contend that the powerful concept of 'capital' is of vital importance to professional work, capacity and effectiveness within the teaching profession. They have identified this capital within education and the teaching profession as professional capital. As opposed to a business capital view of teaching which considers teaching to be technically simple, professional capital considers

teachers to be professionals and teaching to be complex requiring high levels of education and commitment to continuous improvement. Hargreaves and Fullan contend that professional capital is a product of three kinds of capital, namely human capital, social capital and decisional capital. Each of these three types of capital is considered to amplify each other contributing to the overall development of professional capital and ultimately effective teaching. This idea has been presented in the form of the following mathematical formula,

‘ $PC=f(HC,SC,DC)$  Professional capital = f(Human capital, social capital, decisional capital)’ (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, p.88).

Like other forms of capital, the authors consider that investment is required, in this case in each form of capital to realise a return on professional capital. They see each form of capital as essential to ‘transforming the teaching profession into a force for common good’ (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, p.88).

The term ‘professional capital’ itself has been used prior to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) within several different contexts such as business and finance (Perkin 1990, Manigart and Strufy 1997). Within an educational context the term professional capital was used by O'Brien (2005) to refer to the outcome of effective teacher leadership. The use by Sergiovanni (1998) of the term professional capital in an educational context is, however, the most relevant. Sergiovanni (1998) outlines professional capital as one of four types of capital (intellectual, academic, human and professional) which should be developed by leaders to positively influence school effectiveness. Sergiovanni (1998) considers professional capital to be rooted in collegiality, communities of practice and reciprocal responsibilities. This description of professional capital is comparable with what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as social capital. Each of the three components of professional capital, human, social and decisional will now be discussed in turn.

## **Human capital**

Human capital relates to the individual knowledge and expertise of teachers. Teachers with human capital have the requisite subject knowledge as well as the required pedagogies to effectively teach. Essentially this entails a teacher understanding his/her subject and knowing how to teach it. Human capital is outlined by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) as one of the three pillars of professional capital that can lead to effective teaching. Other research also suggests that the individual quality of teachers is a significant influence on teaching and learning (Hattie 2008).

Use of the term human capital can be noted as far back as the eighteenth century (Spengler 1977). More recently in an educational context, Odden (2012) explored the strategic management of human capital in schools, emphasising the importance of teacher talent and management strategies for teacher retention (Odden 2012). Sergiovanni (1998) also briefly refers to human capital in an educational context, but primarily favours the term intellectual capital. David Hargreaves (2001) similarly refers to human capital but also uses the concept of intellectual capital more widely. Both these presentations of intellectual capital are comparable with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) description of human capital in many ways as the knowledge and experience of the schools' stakeholders is emphasised. Hargreaves and Fullan do note, however, that human capital should not be developed in isolation. The effect of a teacher with outstanding individual human capital is considered to be linked to, and often limited by, the other two elements of professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) contend that an individual teacher's qualifications, knowledge and skills are best developed and utilised through what they refer to as social capital.

## **Social capital**

Social capital relates to teacher interactions which are focussed on student learning (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Social capital involves teachers mutually assisting each other by sharing knowledge and expertise, either formally or informally. In this regard, it offers a means of increasing individual teachers' human capital through meaningful teacher collaboration. Groups of teachers working together with high social capital are considered more effective than the brilliance of individual teachers. Consequently individual human capital in tandem with group social capital is seen as the best combination. Social capital is also identified as effective in spreading learning and change across both school systems and individual teachers (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Also central to the concept of social capital is the idea of collective responsibility. Collective responsibility occurs when teachers identify with all children within a school and not just those within the confines of their own classroom (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Teachers with a collective responsibility outlook are willing and eager to engage with their colleagues for the greater good of all pupils. Unfortunately within the teaching profession, professional dialogue and collaboration can often be lacking (York-Barr and Duke 2004, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012).

Social capital is the element of professional capital most referenced by different authors. Seminal works by Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1986) and Putnam (2001) have attracted significant academic inquiry into social capital. Bourdieu (1985) emphasises social capital as social networks that give members access to group resources in the context of social inequality, while Putnam's (2001) social capital commentary on the decline of community life focusses on norms in networks such as trust and reciprocity. Coleman (1986) accentuates the existence of social capital in relations among people and linked it to varied educational outcomes. Similarly Sergiovanni (1998) considers social capital in an educational context at the student level. These differing definitions and understandings of the term social capital make it

challenging to define, but it has been appropriately described as ‘the glue that enables cooperative human action’ (Forsyth and Adams 2004, p.252). Although Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) note that the concept of social capital has not previously been applied to teacher performance and effectiveness, the work of David Hargreaves (2001) in this area merits recognition. David Hargreaves (2001) identified social capital as one of four master concepts in his theory of school effectiveness and improvement. For David Hargreaves (2001) social capital refers to trust between people, generation of norms of collaboration and strong networks. Many correlations can be drawn between the definitions of social capital provided by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) and David Hargreaves (2001).

In line with the other elements of professional capital, it is not advocated that social capital be developed in isolation (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Social capital, combined with human capital and in conjunction with decisional capital is considered to contribute to the overall development of professional capital. The final element of this formula, decisional capital, will now be discussed.

### **Decisional capital**

Decisional capital is the ability of a teacher to make discretionary judgments and decisions (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). This freedom for a teacher is considered central to teacher professionalism and is another important element of professional capital. Decisional capital recognises the importance of teachers’ professional autonomy. The significance of teacher autonomy has also been highlighted within other educational research (Carse 2015). Autonomy with the context of professional capital is considered important to allow teachers to make the best use of their human and social capital. Teacher autonomy is also important because decisional capital is often exercised by teachers in new situations when there is no existing rule to guide them. Teachers who have acquired decisional capital through experience



and practice over time will be enabled to make good decisions and judgments. Decisional capital is enhanced when teachers draw on the experiences of their colleagues and, consequently, social capital is central to the development of decisional capital and effective decision making. New experiences which stimulate and challenge teachers can also contribute to the development of decisional capital.

Decisional capital has been derived primarily from the field of law, in particular decisional law, which is determined by references to previous court decisions and cases (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). The analysis of cases has also been used to some extent within teacher education as noted by Shulman and Colbert (1987). Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) use and presentation of decisional capital is unique, however, in an educational context as the importance of practising decision making and continued reflection with colleagues is emphasised.

Similarities can be drawn between Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital and preceding explorations of capital in the context of school effectiveness provided by Sergiovanni (1998) and David Hargreaves (2001). The emphasis of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) on professional judgement through decisional capital does, however, mark it out as considerably different and offers a valuable new perspective.

### **Leadership capital**

In addition to human, social and decisional capital, the concept of leadership capital has also been linked with the theory of professional capital. While the importance of leadership within the theory of professional capital is already outlined (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Hargreaves and Fullan 2013) use of the specific term 'leadership capital' has emerged in several contexts. Outside of educational settings, leadership capital has been identified as a means of assessing the authority of political office holders according to their skills, relations and reputation (Bennister *et al.* 2014). A number of references to leadership capital within the educational

literature do, however, directly emanate from Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital. Subsequent to the original publication of professional capital, Fullan *et al.* (2015), for example, refer to the importance of leadership capital in the context of leadership development and professional capital accountability. The value of leadership capital is also strongly espoused by the OECD (2014)<sup>2</sup> and they identify it as prime driver of reform in schools which can contribute to the development of professional capital. Considering the centrality of leadership to the present research, leadership capital was, therefore, identified as another element of the theory of professional capital which could add to our understanding of primary PE leadership.

### **Hargreaves and Fullan's theory of professional capital in the contemporary context**

Since its publication Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital has attracted considerable interest and has generally been received positively. One criticism of professional capital has been put forward in relation to perceived gaps between the theory and supporting empirical data and evidence (Crowther 2014). This criticism can be accounted for by the relatively contemporary nature of this theory, as well as an emerging professional capital research focus. This is evidenced by the formation in 2016 of the "Journal of Professional Capital and Community" which demonstrates the considerable traction that professional capital has started to gain within academic circles. Professional capital has also been utilised and cited within several research studies outside of this journal. Most pertinently, Toh *et al.* (2016) selected professional capital as a central component of the conceptual model used to describe and frame the leadership practices of a Singapore school during the process of transformation. Their findings provided empirical evidence of how professional capital could be harnessed to bring about whole school transformation to the school's ICT mediated curriculum (Toh *et al.*

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<sup>2</sup> Andy Hargreaves was one of the principal authors of this study.

2016). Toh *et al.* (2016) highlighted the potential of professional capital to facilitate analysis of leadership in one specific subject area. Specifically within the confines of PE, a number of researchers have also drawn on the theory of professional capital (Patton *et al.* 2013, Patton *et al.* 2015). In particular, the relationship between professional development and professional capital has been considered. Patton *et al.* (2013), for example, found that meaningful learning in professional development can contribute to the development of professional capital.

Allied with its influence on educational research, professional capital has also permeated educational policies. This is exemplified by an OECD (2014) report into Welsh schools which identified the development of professional capital as one of its primary recommendations for improvement. The value of Hargreaves and Fullan's theory of professional capital (2012) has also been highlighted within an Irish context by prominent educational stakeholders such as the heads of the Teaching Council and Department of Education Inspectorate (Ó Ruairc 2013, Hislop 2014). Social capital, in particular, has been strongly advocated as 'a new way of doing things...to enhance standards and correct failures and mistakes in a sustainable way' in the Irish teaching profession by the director of the Irish Teaching Council (Ó Ruairc 2013, p.1). Social capital has also been identified as a stated research aim of the Irish Teaching Council such is the importance attributed to it (The Teaching Council 2016). This emphasis on social capital from the organisation's hierarchy is reflected in subsequent policy documents which have been produced. The code of professional conduct for teachers (The Teaching Council 2012a), guidelines for programmes of initial teacher education (The Teaching Council 2011) and policies in the areas of teacher induction (The Teaching Council 2013) as well as teacher professional development (The Teaching Council 2015) have all been influenced by social capital. Although social capital is not explicitly referenced or mentioned in any of these documents, it has been acknowledged that 'the concept of social capital is stitched right throughout' (Ó Ruairc 2013, p.6).

## **Summary**

Professional capital provides a useful lens through which teachers' experiences of PE leadership can be understood and interpreted. The primary interest of the present research was not to further or test theory. Instead, professional capital was utilised as an analytical lens to help answer the research questions of this study and analyse the data generated on primary PE leadership. Professional capital was particularly appropriate as a theoretical framework for a number of reasons. Firstly, of the theories considered as potential theoretical frameworks, professional capital provided the most holistic approach. Professional capital allows for analysis at a variety of levels including the individual teacher, leader, school and school system. In this way, the use of professional capital as a theoretical frame offered a means of connecting the broader educational leadership literature reviewed in at the start of chapter 2, with the more specific subject and PE leadership literature considered in the final sections of the literature review. For example, at a micro level in this research, it facilitated the framing of leadership practice in the context of the primary school specific to the area of PE. While the main emphasis was on individual teacher's experiences of PE leadership, professional capital offered a link between this micro level and the macro level of educational systems in Ireland. Accordingly the wider implications of this research to enact changes could be considered through the lens of professional capital.

Within this holistic approach, professional capital also recognises that quality teaching and learning involves several factors, namely human, social and decisional capital, all of which can be mediated through leadership capital. Analysis of leadership practice in the context of each of these forms of capital contributes significantly to our understanding of the participant's experiences of PE leadership. In the case of human capital, for example, this research was concerned with the skills required for PE leadership. Analysis of the lead teacher's human capital consequently provided insight into the skills which facilitated PE leadership. Similarly,

social capital also aligned with the research questions motivating this research. As Study 1 explored teachers' experiences of leading innovation, placing the study within a framework which recognised the potential of social capital to facilitate innovation furthered our understanding. The emphasis on decisional capital within professional capital also aligned with the present research which centred on teachers' experiences of leadership. Decisional capital attributes importance to the teachers' autonomy to make decisions based on their own experiences and reflections. Decisional capital, therefore, aligned with the design of the research as throughout both studies, the participants undertook activities which may have been new or unfamiliar to them. It was consequently particularly relevant in the context of how teachers negotiated leadership tasks such as class swapping and collaborative work projects. Leadership capital also naturally aligned with this research, as it provided a lens to consider the motivation and ability of lead teachers to provide PE leadership and develop the human, social and decisional capital of other teachers.

Finally, the importance of adopting a theoretical framework to which the researcher has an emotional preference must also not be overlooked (Alvesson 2002). The core professional capital values of teacher collaboration, professional autonomy and collective responsibility are in keeping with my own personal beliefs. I also identified with professional capital as this theory is grounded in the practice of teaching and learning and provides a practice orientated approach to transformation. Thus, as a teacher, the accessible nature of this theory facilitated me in connecting theory to practice and facilitated the ongoing development of my understanding of primary PE leadership.

## Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter provides information on the methodology used to achieve the aims of this research. The research was divided into three studies, namely Study 1, Study 2A and Study 2B. Each study was purposefully designed to provide insights into areas of interest to this research. While each study differed in research design, all three were underpinned by a common theoretical framework and research paradigm. By way of introduction, and as an aid to the reader, a table containing an overview of the various research studies is provided below.

*Table 5.1: Overview of Research*

Study number	Date	Data Generation Methods	Number of participants	Focus
1	Spring-Summer 2014 (8 weeks)	Interviews, focus groups, reflective diaries	5 lead teachers 10 participating teachers 5 schools	Experiences of leading PE innovation
2A	Spring-Summer 2015 (12 weeks)	Interviews, focus groups, reflective diaries, observations	3 lead teachers 6 participating teachers 3 principals 19 pupils 3 schools	Experiences of teaching PE to other classes through class swapping

2B	Winter 2015-2016  (6 weeks)	Interviews,  reflective diaries	2 lead teachers  2 participating teachers  2 schools	Experiences of  teaching PE to other classes  through class swapping
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The specific details relating to the research design of each study will be discussed in later chapters. Within this chapter the epistemological and ontological perspectives which informed the overall design, the rationale for using the chosen data generation methods, the credibility of the research, and the data analysis procedures and ethical considerations will each be discussed in turn.

### **Research paradigm**

The underlying assumptions which govern and inform the subsequent approach taken in a study must be outlined at the outset (Creswell 2014). The beliefs and practices adopted are often referred to as the research paradigm, or worldview (Lincoln and Guba 1994, Denscombe 2010, Creswell 2014). A paradigm has been defined as ‘a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry’ (Guba 1990, p.17). Each paradigm can be distinguished by its assumptions in relation two key areas, namely ontological and epistemological assumptions (Blaikie 2007). Ontology refers to the nature of social reality, while epistemology refers to the way in which knowledge of this reality can be obtained (Lincoln and Guba 1994). Much literature has been devoted to the merits of different research paradigms within the qualitative and quantitative research traditions. Within quantitative research a positivist approach has historically been taken to explore the natural world (Lincoln and Guba 1994). This approach places central importance on scientific rigour (Cohen *et al.* 2011) and the gathering of facts when constructing knowledge

(Bryman 2004). Whilst undoubtedly contributing to investigation into the natural world, a positivist approach becomes more challenging when studying human behaviour owing to the inherent complexity and intangible qualities of human nature (Cohen *et al.* 2011). These difficulties can prove most profound when investigating human interactions in relation to teaching and learning in school contexts (Cohen *et al.* 2011). My own experiences as a primary school teacher have affirmed his belief that human behaviour is complex and is best investigated differently to the natural world. Interpretivism is one such school of thought, arguing that the natural and human worlds differ (Schwandt 1994). Interpretivism has typically been associated with qualitative methods and originated from Weber's concept of *verstehen* which critiqued positivism in the social sciences (Schwandt 1994, Bryman 2004). *Verstehen* was originally conceptualised by Weber as the interpretive understanding of the meaning of social phenomenon (Bryman 2004). Despite subsequent differing phenomenological and hermeneutical interpretations of *verstehen* (Schuz 1967, Taylor 1987), Weber's presentation of *verstehen* was a significant point in the development of the interpretivist tradition. Interpretivism acknowledges that different research paradigms are required for the natural and human worlds (Schwandt 1994, Bryman 2004). Drawing from an interpretivist philosophy, a variety of related paradigms have emerged, including postmodern critical theory, participative inquiry, constructivism and social constructivism (Lincoln and Guba 2000). While recognising the value of recounting these paradigm debates, these accounts have already been presented elsewhere (e.g. Lincoln and Guba 1994, Blaikie 2007, Creswell 2014). Instead, social constructivism will be discussed in detail, as it is the particular type of interpretivism that resonates most with my beliefs.

Social constructivism acknowledges the social nature of meaning making and draws on a community consensus of reality (Lincoln and Guba 2000). A social constructivist paradigm attempts to understand the lived experiences of those being researched (Schwandt 1994). From



a social constructivist perspective, meaning and knowledge are constructed within a social system and through the interactions of people within the system (Creswell 2014). As opposed to discovering knowledge, human beings are seen as constructing knowledge (Schwandt 1994). Blaikie (2007, p.22) outlines it as ‘the outcome of people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people’. In this study, the context is a school and involves the various lead teachers interacting with other teachers and making sense of their leadership experiences. The lead teachers’ understanding of leadership is seen as socially constructed and influenced by both their school context and interactions with other people. Social constructivism fits with my beliefs, as it encompasses a relativist ontology and a subjective epistemology (Lincoln and Guba 2000). My ontological and epistemological understandings will now be further discussed. These worldviews will then be considered in relation to the present research being undertaken.

Two main opposing ontological beliefs concerning reality are evident within research paradigms, namely realism and relativism (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Realists believe in absolute truths in both the natural and human world (Blaikie 2007). Establishing absolute truths in terms of human behaviour does, however, seem unlikely as it fails to take account of the complexity of human beings. Relativists understand truth to be relative to the individual and the context involved and accept that there may be multiple truths owing to different interpretations and understandings (Lincoln and Guba 1994). My relativist ontological standpoint is demonstrated by the use of multiple lead teachers across different contexts in this study. It is envisaged that each of the lead teachers may have different experiences of leading, which in turn allows for a number of different interpretations and understandings of leadership. No one absolute truth about PE leadership was sought, as meaning was seen as relevant to each lead teacher in their own particular context.

Social constructivism also has a subjective rather than an objective epistemology. An objective epistemology sees meaning as having an independent existence awaiting discovery (Schwandt 2007). A subjective approach, however, acknowledges the crucial role of the individual in constructing knowledge and typically employs more qualitative methods and recognises the more personal and human aspects of what is being investigated (Cohen *et al.* 2011). A subjective truth is also seen as being true only under certain conditions at certain times. It is acknowledged that participants in the research will construct their own unique understanding of PE leadership dependant on their particular context, background and experiences. Each participant's subjective understanding of leadership is seen as true for that person, at that particular time in their context, and is not seen as generalisable. A subjective epistemology also recognises the place of the researcher within the creation of knowledge and acknowledges that the researcher's background influences his/her interpretation (Crotty 1998). The results of the study are considered to be created as a result of the interactions between the researcher and the participants. It is understood that the situation impacts on the researcher and the researcher impacts on the situation (Lincoln and Guba 1994). Consequently, a process of researcher reflexivity was undertaken over the course of the research. This process was not undertaken in an attempt to attain objectivity but rather to provide insight into the researcher's subjective understandings of the world and the research (Cohen *et al.* 2011).

In summary, social constructivism was seen as the most suitable research paradigm, as it aligns with my own relativist ontological and subjectivist epistemological beliefs. It is particularly suitable for this research as each participant is seen as an individual, interpreting their experiences of leadership in their own way and consequently constructing their own understanding of PE leadership. Adopting a constructivist paradigm for this study recognises that each participant will likely perceive and experience PE leadership differently. Having

outlined the chosen research paradigm, it is now necessary to consider data generation within this research.

### **Data generation methods**

It is necessary to align the research paradigm with the most appropriate method of data generation. The research question is central to determining the data generation approach (Hastie and Hay 2012). Quantitative and qualitative approaches are considered the two principal research methods (Denscombe 2010), and the merit of both must be evaluated in relation to the research question. Quantitative methods address questions that can be measured in quantifiable terms i.e. numbers or codes (Denscombe 2010). This method does not, however, take into account individual experiences or opinions, as the data are considered as one group (Hale and Graham 2012). Furthermore, Hale et al (2012, p.97) outlined that if the research requires appraisal of an individual's experiences that 'quantification of data may cause loss of information that could compromise the value of any findings'. As a consequence, quantitative data generation methods were not considered suitable for this research.

A qualitative approach provides a lens to examine immeasurable and unquantifiable realities about the research topic and human beings (Berg 2004). It also allows the issue at hand to be investigated deeply by taking into account the nuances of the issue (Hastie and Glotova 2012). It is concerned with words rather than numbers (Bryman 2004), and this approach can provide a foundation from which to examine the intricacies, micro politics and social meaning associated with a project (Hastie and Hay 2012). Qualitative techniques are also considered useful when exploring underlying issues, as they provide voice to participants (Cohen *et al.* 2011) and allow the researcher to share in the understandings and perceptions of others (Berg 2004). Consequently, the main orientation and focus of this type of research is often the

perspectives of those being studied (Bryman 2004). All these qualities and characteristics resonate well with the focus of this research on the experiences of PE lead teachers in leading.

### **Generating the data**

The sources chosen to generate data within the qualitative approach outlined above were interviews, focus group interviews, participant reflective diaries and observations. The appropriateness of each data generation instrument will now be evaluated. The specific details relating to the use of each data generation instrument will be discussed at a later stage.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were chosen as one of the primary sources of data generation. An interview can be viewed as a transaction between the interviewer seeking information and the interviewee supplying information (Cohen *et al.* 2011). The purpose of a qualitative interview is to ‘gain a deeper understanding of your interviewees’ perspective’ (Ennis and Chen 2012, p.217). An interview is a powerful tool for researchers and provides insights into points of view and how a person sees their world (Cohen *et al.* 2011). In this research primary school teachers’ perspectives on, and experiences of, PE leadership were sought.

It is important to place the process of interviewing within a methodological context before evaluating different interview strategies and techniques. Ennis and Chen (2012) outlined four different interview approaches namely, ethnographic, life history, narrative and phenomenological. Phenomenological interviews were deemed most appropriate as they seek to understand participants lived experiences. These interviews can be useful in providing valuable insights into shared meaning and phenomena (Ennis and Chen 2012). In this case, insights were gained into participants’ experiences of PE leadership and the phenomenon of class swapping. As such, the researcher is enabled to see through the eyes of the interviewee, as outlined by Denscombe (2010) and Bryman (2004). As was the case in this research, this

type of interview also assumes that researchers and participants share many common experiences (Ennis and Chen 2012). My biography enabled me to gain deep understanding and empathise with issues faced by interviewees.

Individual interviews were deemed most appropriate as the primary method of collecting interview data, as they allowed for close communication (Hastie and Hay 2012), and could provide insights into the interviewees' insider perspective (Ennis and Chen 2012). This insider perspective was valuable in illuminating primary school PE leadership within this research. Within individual qualitative interviewing there are two main types of interviewing, namely, unstructured and semi-structured (Bryman 2004). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this research as they permit the interviewer to probe far beyond the answers to their pre-prepared standardised questions (Berg 2004). This type of interview allows the freedom to present the same topics to different interviewees without using the same wording or specific order (Ennis and Chen 2012). In this way the interview guide is flexible and allows the interviewer deal with any relevant issues that crop up during the interview (Bryman 2004). Semi-structured interviews were suitable as the differing individual and environmental factors of each participant could be taken into account. This approach also allowed for some structure to ensure cross-case comparability on specific issues relevant to the research (Bryman 2004). The format and schedule for each set of individual interviews will be discussed in greater detail at a later point.

### **Focus group interviews**

While central importance was attached to the experiences of the individual participants leading the research, it was also acknowledged that leadership practices are best examined as a group process (Spillane and Diamond 2007). Group interviews with the lead and participating teachers were, therefore, chosen as a suitable instrument of data generation in addition to

individual interviews. Group interviews most commonly take the form of focus group interviews, with these two terms often questionably being used interchangeably (King and Horrocks 2010).

Focus group interviews typically involve several participants and a facilitator discussing a particular pre-arranged topic (Bryman 2004). The aim of focus groups is to tap into the understandings of a specific group of people and to gain an understanding on a specific issue (Liamputtong 2011). After their inception in the 1930's as an alternative means of conducting interviews, focus group interviews became popular and predominantly used as a means of market research (Krueger and Casey 2009). Academics have, however, renewed their interest in focus groups in recent years and developed the methodology to fit their needs as an effective instrument of data generation (Liamputtong 2011). Having the correct number of participants to participate in a focus group has been recognised as important to the success of the process. Traditionally it has been recommended that focus groups should have six to ten participants, but in recent times smaller focus groups have become increasingly popular (Liamputtong 2011). Krueger and Casey (2009) acknowledge that the size of the group is heavily dependent on the purpose of the study and the participant characteristics. In this case, in-depth insights were sought and, hence, it was appropriate to limit the focus group to those teachers directly involved. Focus groups are considered particularly important as they enable an interviewer to draw out common group understandings (Ennis and Chen 2012). Focus groups also provide valuable insights into differences of opinion, as those in leadership positions can often see situations differently to others (Krueger and Casey 2009). Valuable insights can, therefore, be generated when participants talk with each other during the course of a focus group interview (Ennis and Chen 2012). A semi-structured format with probing questions was adopted in the present research as an effort to stimulate this discussion between participants (Liamputtong 2011). It was acknowledged that through these interactions, participants' viewpoints could be

both shaped and changed owing to the social nature of focus group interviews (King and Horrocks 2010, Ennis and Chen 2012).

Focus groups were also undertaken with a number of the children who had experienced class swapping within Study 2A. Importance was attached to allowing the voice of the pupils to be heard within the research (Enright and O'Sullivan 2012). Focus group interviews were considered the most appropriate means of listening to the pupils as they were likely to be more comfortable talking in the presence of their peers (Cohen *et al.* 2011, Ennis and Chen 2012). Gaining and maintaining the attention of pupils on the interview topic and preventing distraction can, however, be particularly challenging (Ennis and Chen 2012). The researcher sought to build some rapport with the pupils before the first interview to facilitate subsequent discussion (Ennis and Chen 2012). Observing the pupils' PE lessons developed shared experiences which acted as a stimulus for discussion in later focus group interviews. Icebreaker activities also took place to allow the pupils and researcher to become familiar with each other and to get the pupils talking. The language used during the focus groups was also child friendly and accessible to the pupils.

Many young people can, however, also have difficulty expressing themselves through words and so alternative methodologies which incorporate visual sources have been advocated (Moss *et al.* 2007). Drawing and the creation of images, for example, can act as a scaffold for children and facilitates them in expressing their feelings and beliefs (Leitch and Mitchell 2007). Asking children to draw pictures has also been identified as an effective means of exploring childrens' lived experiences within qualitative research (Hastie and Hay 2012). Originating from the fields of art and psychology, the use of drawing has become widespread within social research (Mitchell *et al.* 2011). Within art based methodologies which utilise drawings, exploration and interpretation takes place after the drawing is complete through the examination of the finished product as a visual text (Mitchell *et al.* 2011). During drawing elicited interviews, participants

often speak during the process of drawing and provide insight into to the meaning of their illustrations through a process known as draw and talk (Milburn-Backett and Mckie 1999). The latter approach was adopted within this research as drawings were only used as a stimulus for communication and eliciting pupils' understandings of the topics being explored.

### **Reflective diaries**

The reflective diaries of the lead teachers were also used as an instrument of data generation. Diaries were utilised as they are a good source of data on the thoughts and behaviour of the participants (Denscombe 2010). Hastie and Hay (2012) have advocated the use of teacher diaries specifically within the confines of PE research. As outlined by Denscombe (2010), they acted as a retrospective source of information on significant incidents that occurred and the personal interpretations of the lead teacher. The lead teachers were given a reflective diary template to follow which was designed specific to each study and contained questions devised to stimulate the participant to consider their experiences over the previous week. Where possible the diaries were collected and read each week and this provided opportunities to engage in data analysis and data generation at the same time (Hastie and Glotova 2012). Reading the diaries each week helped inform the approach taken to each subsequent stage of data generation, as they proved an excellent stimulus in the generation of the interview schedules. As with the other sources of data generated, the content of the diaries could not be considered objective facts (Denscombe 2010). Clarification and verification of some information gathered in reflections was sought through subsequent focus groups and interviews. The use of reflective diaries also served as another verification element within the triangulation of data. Although efforts were made to verify and clarify aspects of the reflective diaries, a lack of participant objectivity was not considered as a weakness, as the experiences and interpretations of the participants were critical to the research question posed. By experiencing and reflecting on PE leadership during this research, it was felt that participants



would be able to make wise judgements on the merits of the different forms of PE leadership explored. The lead teachers' reflections were seen as valuable in themselves and they provided insights into their experiences and perceptions of PE leadership.

### **Observation and field notes**

Observation was also used as an instrument of data generation within Study 2. Observation involves witnessing an event first hand and observing what happens (Denscombe 2010). As Study 2 was a case study, observation of the natural setting was considered important (Yin 2009). As with other data generation methods, there is a variety of different approaches and methodologies that make use of and define observation differently. Observational studies can be quantitative or qualitative, participatory or non-participatory in nature and the choice of which type of observation to use largely depends on the research question (Ohman and Quennerstedt 2012). Qualitative observation was seen as most applicable to the research question, as it is a naturalistic process that observes participants in their natural setting (Hastie and Hay 2012). Participatory observation involves the researcher taking an active part in the investigated practice, while non-participatory observation involves observing from the outside when capturing phenomena (Ohman and Quennerstedt 2012). As has been aforementioned, the central focus of the present research surrounds the experience of the lead teachers. A clear picture of the class swapping experiences with as little bias as possible was sought and as a result, a non-participatory observation role was adopted.

One advantage of observation is that it 'facilitates our understanding of what is said and done when language use is put in context' (Ohman and Quennerstedt 2012, p.191). This allows for observation of the use of language by the lead teacher in different contexts and it sheds light on their interactions and experiences. As a variety of interactions and actions took place within class swapping, a purpose related sample of class swaps were selected and explored (Ohman

and Quennerstedt 2012). These events provided specific insights into the actions of the lead teachers when leading. Descriptive and reflective notes were recorded after each purposefully chosen observation session (Hastie and Hay 2012). These notes provided deep insights which acted as a stimulus for further questions in subsequent observations and interviews (Patton 2002). The primary advantage of using observation, however, is that ‘research gets close to social practices and everyday situations’ (Ohman and Quennerstedt 2012, p.190). Observation offers sentient first hand data that is taking place in the context being researched (Cohen *et al.* 2011).

In addition, the effect of the observer on the actions or interactions of the lead teacher was considered. Denscombe refers to this as ‘retaining the naturalness of the setting’ (2010, p.203). For example, in a recent Irish school based PE professional development programme having an observer was seen as detrimental as the participants felt pressurised (Coulter 2012). This pressurised feeling was, however, attributed to the view of the observer as an expert, something that may not be as applicable in this research considering the biography of the researcher. The fact that observation in Coulter’s research was also used as a form of lesson assessment may have contributed to this pressure. Within the present research, it was outlined to the participants that observation was being used to get a fuller picture of class swapping for PE, rather than as an assessment tool. Consequently, it was felt that while an observer will affect behaviour in most circumstances, this effect was not significant as those being observed were occupied by the activities they were engaged in (Ohman and Quennerstedt 2012). Ultimately observation was deemed useful as it offered first hand data that was not available from any other source and provided a means to analyse the lead teachers in context. Observation also served as one form of validation for the other types of data collected, as well as providing a fuller picture of the experiences of the PE lead teachers in tandem with the other data generation methods.

Details of the observation template used are discussed further in the Study 2A research design section.

Any further relevant observations outside of the observation template used in Study 2A were also kept from visits to the participating schools. These notes were first recorded from the initial visit to schools right up until after the final interviews with the lead teachers. This allowed the observer to also consider factors such as language tone and body language and to shed light on the interactions between participants, as well as any pertinent conversations or incidents witnessed outside of the recorded interviews. These insights cannot always be captured through the medium of voice recorded interviews and in this way these observations were considered useful. They offered a means of gathering authentic impressions of how the participants were leading PE innovation or class swapping within their school as well as their relationships with others. The use of the word ‘impression’ should be noted, as research has shown that there is an inevitable element of interpretation in observation (Denscombe 2010). Whilst this element of interpretation is inescapable, steps were taken to ensure researcher reflexivity and to limit bias as much as possible. The steps taken to reduce bias and enhance trustworthiness will now be discussed.

### **Criteria in qualitative research**

A number of criteria can be utilised to demonstrate the trustworthiness of a piece of research. Classical criteria for assessing qualitative research is drawn from the quantitative tradition, with areas such as validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity often utilised (Kirk and Miller 1986, Bryman 2004, Denscombe 2010). The appropriateness of applying quantitative terms to qualitative research has, however, been questioned as a result of the two traditions divergent beliefs (Flick 2014). Accordingly, alternative criteria such as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability were developed specifically to assess

qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1985). When considered collectively these four criteria comprise the trustworthiness of a piece of research. As a result, the use of each of these criteria will now be outlined, along with an outline of the researcher's stance to demonstrate trustworthiness.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is an important part of any research and can be defined as 'the extent to which the data are an accurate representation of the context' (Hastie and Hay 2012, p.87). The primary means of enhancing credibility within the present research was through the use of triangulation. Triangulation may be defined as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour', and it allows for deep description of complex human behaviour (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.195). Its underlying concept is that a better understanding can be gained of what is being studied by viewing it through different positions and perspectives (Denscombe 2010). The credibility of the interview data was triangulated against the focus groups, reflective diaries and observations. This process of constant comparison led to strong themes emerging based on the whole of the data. The use of triangulation, therefore, compensated for the weakness of individual data generation methods (Hastie and Hay 2012) and aided in providing a more valid picture of the participants' experiences. Similarly, member checking can also be utilised as a means of enhancing credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Denscombe 2010). Member checking can involve asking participants to check the accuracy of data generated (Bassegy 1999), or participants can be asked to verify themes emerging from initial analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). The latter form of member checking was utilised in this research by orally sharing emerging results and themes with participants after their final interviews and seeking feedback. Participants were also consulted during the design of Study 2B through the sharing of transcripts and also through discussion to ensure the results relating to Study 2A were being appropriately implemented. Further to triangulation and member

checking, peer debriefing has been put forward as another means of enhancing the credibility of research (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Peer debriefing takes place when knowledgeable individuals provide feedback and attempt to widen the perspectives of the investigator by challenging initial perceptions which may have been formed (Shenton 2004). Within the present research a sample of interview transcripts and initial themes were shared with the supervisory team who then provided feedback at regular meetings. Drafts of chapters were also shared with numerous academics from differing disciplines over the course of the research. A form of peer debriefing was also undertaken through the presentation of results at a number of national and international conferences<sup>3</sup>.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is closely linked to credibility (Lincoln and Guba 1985) is concerned with demonstrating that a piece of research with the same conditions could be reproduced with similar results by others (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Although applying this criteria can be somewhat problematic as a result of the ever-changing and contextual nature of certain phenomenon (Marshall and Rossman 1999), it can still be demonstrated through the creation of detailed records (Bryman 2004). Dependability calls for detailed accounts of the methodologies and procedures used in data generation and analysis to be presented to allow independent readers decide for themselves if the approach was reputable and as such, dependable (Denscombe 2010). The methods and logic behind decision making is, therefore, explicitly stated throughout and detailed information on the context is provided.

### **Transferability**

Transferability can be described as the potential to apply findings from research to other examples of the phenomenon in question (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Denscombe 2010). In place

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<sup>3</sup> Details of these presentations can be seen on p.xii

of generalisability, which seeks findings representative of all settings (Bryman 2004), transferability was sought within this qualitative research. Transferability was pursued in this qualitative research due to the interpretive social constructivist outlook of the researcher, as well as the complexity and context specific nature of leadership in practice (Spillane *et al.* 2004). The multitude of differing school contexts and participants within this research also meant that searching for total generalisability would be futile. As a means of achieving transferability and in keeping with the suggestions of Lincoln and Guba (1985), thick descriptions of the research have been provided. Significant effort and time has been invested in ensuring that the features of this research are explicit (Silverman 2005), with comprehensive accounts of the context, the assumptions of the researcher and methodologies provided to enable the reader to draw connections. Providing this depth of detail about the cases within this study enables readers to bridge the gap between a localised study and the wider context (Hargreaves 1999, Bryman 2004). Readers armed with this information may wish to evaluate whether the results are applicable to their particular context (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Hastie and Hay 2012). Accordingly, the results are considered as valuable in their own right, by providing a rich description and an insight that is unique amongst current literature in this area. It is hoped that this information will lead to more research in this area and add to our understanding of PE leadership in Irish primary schools.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the final element of trustworthiness put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the results of research are shaped by the participants and not by the researcher (Lincoln and Guba 1985). It must, therefore, be demonstrated that personal values or preferences do not have an explicit undue effect on the approaches adopted to research or the results generated (Bryman 2004). The level of influence that a researcher has on the findings of a piece of research is often referred to as objectivity

(Denscombe 2010). It is acknowledged, however, that no research can remain fully objective from the researcher (Crotty 1998), particularly within the constructivist paradigm and qualitative approach adopted. The subjectivist outlook utilised meant that reflexivity and researcher stance were given central importance in place of objectivity. Reflexivity can be explained as ‘an account for the influence of the researcher’s personal values, beliefs and experiences on the research process and its outcomes’ (Hastie and Hay 2012, p.82). Reflexivity was identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a means of enhancing confirmability and it is essential in providing a rationale for key decisions and ensuring transparency (Hastie and Glotova 2012). Critical self-reflection has been undertaken within this research through the use of a reflexive journal. Hand written reflections were created to record thought processes and perspectives as the study progressed, a selection of which can be viewed in appendix J. This journal also documented any interactions or informal discussions which developed with participants outside of the interviews. Other variables such as interview atmosphere and body language were also considered within this journal. Reflexivity has also been accounted for through the provision of a personal biography in chapter 1 to ensure prior beliefs and their potential influence on the research are clearly outlined.

Further to this personal biography, the influence and bias of the researcher are also accounted for in this section by positioning the researcher within the study. Undoubtedly, the analysis of the data presented in this thesis has been affected by my personal experiences and outlook. It should be noted, for example, that this research has been approached from the perspective of a teacher searching for a descriptive picture of PE leadership in Irish primary schools and not that of a philosopher or leadership theorist. It is possible that my background and personal beliefs influenced the direction of the research. Consequently, efforts were made throughout this study to engage in researcher reflexivity through the use of a reflective diary, as well as through consultation with my supervisors. I also found, however, that my personal experiences

were beneficial and helpful to the process of data generation. Being a primary school teacher meant I could empathise with the outlook of many of the participants. On a practical level this facilitated me in asking meaningful questions and developing in depth conversation. Similarly, the participants identified and referred to me, first and foremost, as a primary school teacher, rather than as a researcher or expert. In this way my background facilitated the development of researcher and participant relationships throughout the study. The development of these positive relationships was a strength of this study, which was facilitated by my personal experiences as a teacher. Prior knowledge and experience was used as a resource to gain insight into the participants' thoughts and viewpoints during data generation but also during data analysis. Consequently, my background as a teacher is both a limitation and a strength of this study.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis goes hand in hand with data generation, as these two processes are intertwined and conducted concurrently (Denscombe 2010, Hastie and Glotova 2012). As a result planning for data analysis was considered early within this research. When planning the data analysis it was acknowledged that qualitative research is inductive in nature and consequently, initial findings may guide or affect the subsequent stages of data generation or analysis (Hastie and Glotova 2012). While the flexible nature of this type of research was allowed for in the research design, it was still seen as important to have a clear research design and plan for data analysis before the start of the research (Hastie and Glotova 2012). In the planning stage of this research a thematic approach to data analysis was adopted. Typically this approach is utilised as a method of identifying patterns of meaning within data (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this type of analysis themes are 'generated from the data and are a construction of the researcher' (Hastie and Glotova 2012, p.313). It was considered important to be explicit in explaining the steps involved in the thematic analysis of this research in an attempt to ensure it was not associated



with insufficient detail, a criticism commonly cited within qualitative thematic analysis (Attride Stirling 2001). It was also hoped that by being explicit in the assumptions and methods used that future related research could draw on this research.

The process of data analysis was carried out inductively, as the research questions surrounded the participants own experiences of PE leadership. In inductive analysis the coding and creation of themes comes primarily from analysis of the data generated (Braun and Clarke 2006). Comparative analysis was also utilised as it enables comparisons to be drawn between the different participants. Each of the lead teachers' reflective diaries, interview transcripts and, in Study 2, observations were compared throughout the research. The similarities and differences in their experiences of leadership which became evident were then noted. Constant comparison was also used as it allowed the comparison of new data with previously acquired data (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Data generated at different points were compared and this allowed for the gathering of insight into how the participants' perceptions and experiences evolved. In this way the data analysis was iterative and took place after each of the various stages in the data generation process. As is often the case in qualitative research there was not a clear distinction between the data generation and data analysis stages (Braun and Clarke 2013), with a cyclical interplay taking place between data generation and analysis. Analysis immediately took place after each set of interviews, reflections and observations. This staged data generation process helped inform the approach taken to each subsequent stage of data generation and proved advantageous to the data generation process (Braun and Clarke 2013). The six phases of thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used as a guide in this research. Each of these will be described in greater detail, namely, familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. Further details of how each of these phases of thematic data analysis were specifically used within the present research will now be provided.

## **Familiarising yourself with the data**

The initial data analysis steps involved repeated reading of the reflective diaries and repeated listening to the interviews prior to transcription to ensure familiarity and to build a sense of the whole of the data (Bazeley 2013).

## **Generating initial codes**

Codes are labels given to a piece of text containing an idea (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Coding was completed electronically with the aid of qualitative software package NVivo 10. Whilst the use of computer software in qualitative data analysis can sometimes be cited as fracturing the text and disadvantageous (Bryman 2004), its use in this research was seen as helpful. Coded segments can be seen in their full context electronically (Bazeley 2013), whereas this is more challenging without the use of computer software. NVivo was also seen as advantageous because several codes can be affixed to one segment of text. The use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis was also helpful in ensuring the efficient storage and retrieval of data (Denscombe 2010).

Within the coding process both data derived codes and researcher derived codes were generated. Data derived codes are codes which are semantic and summarise the explicit content of the data (Braun and Clarke 2013), using the concepts and in many cases language of the participants (Thomas 2006). Researcher derived codes are codes which go beyond the explicit content of the data and draw on the researcher's theoretical knowledge and experience to identify implicit meanings within the data (Braun and Clarke 2013). This process was in line with Bazeley (2013) who asserted that coding usually goes through two main phases, open coding which identifies and labels, while focussed coding refines and interprets. An example of the coding process is provided in figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: Coding process

<b>Initial Data</b>	Benefits of class swapping
<b>Derived Code</b>	
<b>Example of coded text</b>	<i>'The benefits I saw were, I think classes getting to know each other better. Teachers getting to know other children in the school better. It is just nicer. Like you know walking into the hall in assembly and knowing their names and who their sisters are, you know I think it's good for community spirit if you like.'</i> (Rachel Final Interview (FI))



<b>Researcher action</b>	Reflection on initial codes led to a process of recoding and the creation of research derived codes. Initial data derived code of 'benefits of class swapping' refined with reference to professional capital theoretical framework leading to research defined code 'collective responsibility'. Amount of text in the code reduced and the most pertinent sentence which captures the essence of the theme was sought.
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<b>Research Derived Code</b>	Collective responsibility
<b>Example of coded text</b>	<i>'I think I'd feel the same responsibility for each (class)'</i> (Rachel FI)

### **Theme generation (Searching for themes)**

Often accounts of data analysis refer to the emergence of themes without acknowledging the role of the researcher in this process (Braun and Clarke 2006, Hastie and Glotova 2012, Bazeley 2013). The term ‘theme generation’ was considered more appropriate than ‘searching for themes’, as the researcher was acutely aware of his role in generating the themes. Careful consideration was, therefore, given to positioning the researcher through the process of reflexivity as previously discussed.

Having coded the interview transcriptions, reflections, and observations, similar themes and patterns were sought to reduce and refine the codes (Hastie and Glotova 2012). These themes were dependant on, and came from, the codes that had been created already (Bazeley 2013).

### **Reviewing themes**

Review took place on two levels at this point, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Level 1 involved looking at the collated extracts from each theme and seeing if rational links could be drawn. It was found, however, that some of the themes were not creating a coherent pattern and needed to be refined. Level 2 of review involved reviewing the credibility of themes in relation to the entire data set. During this process it became clear that some of the themes were not appropriate, as there was not enough data to support them (Braun and Clarke 2006). Accordingly, the number of themes was reduced at this point with certain elements of the discarded themes retained and subsumed into other themes.

### **Defining and naming themes**

The remaining themes then underwent a further process of refining and defining (Braun and Clarke 2006). The true meaning of each theme was sought at this point, both at an individual level, and also in relation to the wider messages generated. Accordingly, a number of interrelated sub-themes were created within several of the themes. Sub-themes are themes

within a theme and they were utilised in this analysis as they give structure to large and complex themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). By the end of this process the themes and sub-themes captured the essence of the data and provided an effective means of answering the research questions posed at the outset of this study. An example of the three stages of theme development which took place, namely searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes is provided in table 5.2.

An overall account of how the five phases of thematic analysis were specifically utilised is then provided in table 5.3.

*Table 5.2: Theme development*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Candidate theme name</b>	<b>Researcher action</b>
Theme generation	Collaboration	The codes which were generated in the previous phase of coding were grouped according to similar patterns. A number of codes such as planning, support, meetings, sharing of resources, logistics, and discussion were found to have a common theme of collaboration running throughout. Collaboration was, therefore, identified as a potential candidate theme.
Reviewing themes	Teacher interaction	The theme ‘collaboration’ was reviewed and it was found to be too broad. Teacher interaction was identified as the most central element of collaboration to class swapping and this was brought forward as the main theme. It was decided that other relevant elements of the theme which related to the research question would be subsumed into other themes. Some of the other remaining coded data in this theme was left out altogether as it was not considered directly relevant to the research question.

<p>Defining and naming themes</p>	<p>Teacher interaction is central to the class swapping process</p>	<p>The theme was renamed to reflect the central importance of teacher interaction to the class swapping process. The decision was also made to use sub-themes, as the theme ‘teacher interaction’ affected class swapping in a variety of separate but interlinked ways. Sub-themes addressed the importance of teacher interaction in relation to different elements of class swapping such as logistics, differentiation and behavioural management.</p>
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Table 5.3: Overview of thematic data analysis within this research

<b>Stage of thematic analysis</b>	<b>Researcher Action</b>
Familiarising yourself with the data	Interviews and reflective diaries were transcribed and transferred to NVivo as soon as possible after they had taken place. Observations were also recorded immediately after each school visit.
Generating initial codes	A process of complete coding took place, which involved identifying anything of relevance or interest to the research question in the entire data set and affixing a code to it (Braun and Clarke 2013). Sentences and paragraphs were the frame for initial codes, relevant quotes were highlighted and codes were affixed to interviews, reflections and observations. Many of the initial codes were data derived, but as the research progressed and more data were generated at each stage, the initial codes were re-examined and coded again. These codes become more research derived and concise as they were examined in relation to the research questions to ensure the purpose of research was kept in focus (Bazeley 2013). Within each study, coding took place after each stage of data generation and was approached inductively, with a new set of codes devised for each stage of the data generation process. Following this, the codes generated at each stage were then considered in relation to data already generated and this proved helpful in designing the subsequent stages of data generation.

Theme generation	<p>A number of themes were generated inductively at this stage before the process of further refining categories began.</p> <p>Following the initial inductive analysis the themes formed were then examined and cross-referenced in relation to the research question.</p>
Reviewing themes	<p>Following the initial creation of themes, a more detailed piece of writing related to each of the themes was prepared.</p> <p>This involved collating relevant coded sections of data together as well as adding commentary and analysis. After completing this task, peer debriefing took place between the researcher and his supervisors to challenge initial views which were developed and to aid the formulation of the final themes.</p>
Defining and naming themes	<p>Each of the themes was considered individually at first and then each theme was considered in relation to each other as part of the wider message of the research. This led to further theme refinement which took place primarily as a result of overlap between themes and the interconnected nature of some of the topics. Accordingly, a number of sub-themes were created and appropriate names which concisely described each theme were then sought before the process was completed.</p>



## **Ethical issues**

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC). All procedures were aligned with the guidelines and recommendations of MIREC to ensure the research conducted was ethical. To ensure research is ethical, possible harms and potential benefits to the participants and organisations involved need to be considered (Wright and O'Flynn 2012). As has been mentioned previously, informed consent in the form of a written agreement was acquired from all the schools and participants at the beginning of the research. The full written agreement is available for viewing in the thesis appendices. Meetings were held to ensure the participants understood the nature of the research, their role and the full implications involved in participating. Workshops before the intervention facilitated teachers to understand their role in the research. The privacy of all participants in any research is imperative and this was also protected (Wright and O'Flynn 2012). Genuine volunteers were sought and participants were informed that they had a right to privacy and could withdraw at any time (Cohen *et al.* 2011). To ensure the participants right to privacy a promise of confidentiality was made. Confidentiality entails not disclosing information that might identify the individual (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Pseudonyms were used and any details that might compromise the confidentiality of participants and their school were omitted. All data was treated as confidential and only the researcher and his academic supervisors were able to view the data. Data was kept on an encrypted memory stick and in a secure location.

## **Summary**

The overarching methodology used within the research has been outlined within this chapter. A social constructivist research paradigm was adopted with qualitative methods of data generation utilised. Interviews, focus group interviews, reflective diaries and observations

were the sources chosen to generate the data. The credibility and validity of this research was enhanced by maintaining a focus on the research question and by triangulating multiple sources of data. Whilst the results are not intended to be generalisable, detailed accounts of the methodologies used have been presented to aid reliability and allow readers to apply the results to their own context. This research is not presented as objective, rather the researcher acknowledges and details the subjective influences his background may have on the study. The data were analysed using the six phases of thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach was utilised as a method of identifying patterns of meaning within data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Specific details on the application of the outlined methodology within Study 1 will now be discussed in the next section.

## **Chapter 6: Study 1**

### **Research design Study 1**

Study 1 investigated primary PE leadership and the experiences of teachers leading a PE innovation. Five teachers in five separate schools were asked to lead the implementation of an eight week unit of ultimate frisbee with their own class and two other class groups. Two participating classroom teachers in each school were also recruited and they were led by the designated lead teacher in their implementation of the ultimate frisbee unit with their classes. Each of the fifteen teachers involved were also asked to attend a two hour ultimate frisbee training workshop at the outset of the study. The intervention culminated with interschool ultimate frisbee fun days, where pupils played ultimate frisbee with children from another school of a similar age.

#### **Research questions**

The overarching research question guiding this thesis has been outlined in chapter 1. Each study has been designed to contribute to answering this question. A number of secondary research questions have accordingly been identified within each study to facilitate this process. The intervention in Study 1 was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are generalist teachers' experiences of PE leadership while promoting an innovation in primary PE?
2. What skills and supports are needed when taking on PE leadership within the school?

As this research was attempting to gather insights into the teachers' experiences of PE leadership, no leadership instruction was provided to the lead teachers at any point during the research. The lead teachers were asked to lead in whatever manner they saw most appropriate and recommend activities or duties to be undertaken by the lead teachers were not prescribed.

This was an attempt to ensure authenticity in the leadership activities being undertaken by each individual lead teacher. Through this process, in addition to describing the lead teachers' experiences, the researcher was also provided with insights into the teachers' understandings and perceptions of leadership.

### **Content of the intervention: ultimate frisbee**

Ultimate frisbee is a game that was invented in America in the late 1960's by a group of American high school students (Johnson 1975, Griggs 2009, Light 2013). It is a non-contact invasion game usually played with seven players on each team. It combines elements of a variety of different sports, with the aim of the game being to pass the frisbee (often called a disc) up the field until a team member catches the frisbee in the opposition's end zone. It is played on a variety of surfaces, most commonly on grass, indoors or on the beach and requires minimal equipment. Ultimate frisbee is unique among sports, in that it is self-refereed and there is an emphasis on fair play, sportsmanship and enjoyment at all levels of the game. Competitive play is encouraged but not at the expense of respect between players and the joy of play. Accordingly, ultimate frisbee can develop learning in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains and provide a holistic learning experience (Griggs 2009). These values associated with ultimate frisbee mark it out as an ideal game to introduce to young people (Griggs 2009, Light 2013). After its creation, ultimate frisbee's popularity grew rapidly within the USA and abroad. The sport is now played all over the world, with professional ultimate frisbee leagues established in some countries. It is most commonly played in universities but it has also been adopted into the PE curricula of some countries (Light 2013). In an Irish context, ultimate frisbee has increased in popularity over the past thirty years since its introduction. Although still a minority sport, there are a growing number of active adult clubs and also a growing number of university teams, primarily in large urban areas. Some secondary schools have also started to include ultimate frisbee as part of their curricula through the Irish Flying

Disc Association's (IFDA) coaching initiatives and training for secondary school teachers (Irish Flying Disc Association 2014). At primary school level, however, there is no record of ultimate frisbee being included as part of Irish PE programmes (Woods *et al.* 2010).

### **Use of ultimate frisbee as the content of the intervention**

Ultimate frisbee was chosen as the content to be implemented in this study for a variety of reasons. The main motivation for using ultimate frisbee was its potential use as an analytical tool to shed light on the teachers' experiences of leading innovation. At the time of this intervention very few Irish primary school teachers or pupils were familiar with or had prior knowledge of ultimate frisbee. This was, therefore, considered advantageous, as the introduction of a new game containing unfamiliar content would challenge the teachers involved and provide a lens to examine the leadership practices of primary school teachers. The researcher went about familiarising himself with the game and considered the most effective ways of introducing it to primary school teachers and children. In the initial stages of this process contact was made with the Irish body responsible for the promotion of ultimate frisbee, namely the IFDA, for support. The IFDA was very supportive of the project and provided a set of lesson plans as well as advice about introducing the game to beginners. They also provided fifty free frisbees for the project, ten for each of the schools who decided to partake in the project. As the plans provided were primarily designed for secondary school children, the researcher adapted these for use in primary schools. To aid this process a variety of lessons and approaches to teaching ultimate frisbee were trialled with children of primary school age prior to the start of the study. Following this trial a folder of age appropriate primary school resources were created by the researcher.<sup>4</sup> The content of the ultimate frisbee lessons

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<sup>4</sup> A sample of these resources can be viewed in the appendix L.

and resources were designed for pupils aged second class and upwards and, therefore, all classes participating had to meet these criteria.

### **Data generation procedures**

In keeping with the qualitative interpretative approach adopted for this study, it was considered important to plan for the fieldwork to be undertaken in advance (Hastie and Hay 2012). In particular special consideration was given to a number of factors such as gaining entry to the research setting, participant selection, contacting participants, generating the data and leaving the setting. Each of these areas will now be discussed in relation to Study 1 of the research.

### **Gaining entry to the research setting**

Qualitative research is usually conducted in real life settings and accordingly access to these settings is vital to the success of research (Hastie and Hay 2012). The research setting for this study was five Irish primary schools. These schools were chosen as a cluster within close proximity to each other for the ease of both the researcher and participants. Having the schools clustered in one area was also seen as beneficial because teachers participated in a two hour preparatory workshop and schools also took part in a culminating interschool frisbee activity day in the locality. Informed consent and access to these schools was sought from each institution's gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are those individuals who have the authority to grant permission to conduct research in different settings (Denscombe 2010). In the case of schools, principals usually act as gatekeepers, although in some schools the board of management may also act as gatekeepers. As the proposition for access to the research setting was over a period of 8-10 weeks and would require several visits to the school, it was considered important to gain a good rapport with all members of staff in the schools (Cohen *et al.* 2011), and especially the gatekeepers. This was important, as outside of providing permission to conduct research

in a setting, gatekeepers can also have a major role in providing the researcher with ease of access to participants (Denscombe 2010).

Informed consent for conducting the research within these schools was sought from each school's gatekeeper. Initial contact was made with the principals by phone calls explaining the study. Following the initial contact with the first school, it was found that other schools already had an awareness of the research. This was attributed to informal discussions that took place between the schools' gatekeepers prior to them all being contacted. This proved helpful as schools were eager to participate, but the second hand information they had received also led to some confusion about the precise nature of the research. During the initial phone conversations meetings were scheduled with the principals to explain the precise nature and details of the proposed research. This ensured that both the school and the researcher understood fully their roles within the research and what it entailed (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Written consent was gathered from whoever had the authority to authorise research in the school, (usually the principal) to act as a formal agreement of the schools participation in the research (Denscombe 2010). Every effort was made to ensure and check that the implications of the research, both positive and negative, were understood by the principals and other gatekeepers, so that they did not 'mindlessly sign a consent form'(Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.80). After gaining agreement and access to the school, consideration was also given to the importance of gaining genuine volunteers within the schools. Bryman described how politically motivated gatekeepers in some research settings 'seek to influence how the investigation takes place'(2004, p.518). Cohen et al (2011), furthermore, warned of the possibility of participants feeling coerced or forced to take part in research by principals or other members of staff within a school. The importance of having teachers who volunteered, as opposed to being compelled to participate was emphasised to the principals. For the purposes of avoiding the coercion of volunteers, efforts were made to ensure that teachers were

contacted separately from the principal. This distinction was also sought to ensure that the research did not solely become associated and identified with the interests of a single channel i.e. the principal (Festinger and Katz 1966). This proved difficult, however, as most of the gatekeepers chose to speak to teachers themselves separately, before allowing the researcher access to the teachers.

### **Participant selection**

After gaining entry to the research setting it was necessary to explicitly consider how participants would be selected within the schools, as this is often a detail lacking transparency within qualitative research (Bryman 2004). The process of selecting participants for qualitative interviews is often referred to as sampling. The sample is the segment of the population that is selected for research (Bryman 2004). Within qualitative research, participants are selected to gain the ‘deepest possible understanding of the person, issue or setting being studied’ (Hastie and Hay 2012, p.83). The issue being studied in this case is the experience of teachers providing PE leadership in primary schools. An exploratory sample was used, as it provides insights and information into relatively unexplored areas, as opposed to representing a cross section of the population (Denscombe 2010). Purposive sampling was employed, as it is especially well suited to creating an exploratory sample (Denscombe 2010). Purposive sampling is when particular participants are selected as they have specific characteristics linked to the research question (Bryman 2004, Cohen *et al.* 2011, Hastie and Hay 2012). Purposive sampling took place in the form of a checklist in the chosen geographical cluster of schools. Before agreeing to participation, teachers were asked to consider if they met the criteria outlined on the checklist below.



Figure 6.1: Participant suitability checklist

<b><u>Suitability checklist</u></b>
Are you a class teacher?
Do you teach one or more of the following classes: 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> or 6 <sup>th</sup> class?
Do you enjoy teaching physical education?
Would you like the opportunity to lead the implementation of an innovative physical education project in your school?
Would you like to learn new skills and introduce new PE content to students in your school?

This checklist was on the participant information sheet and thus ensured that those with the most interest and experience in leading were chosen. This also led to the process being self-selecting, ensuring insights were gained into the experiences of people who are currently providing leadership in primary PE within the cluster schools. By using an exploratory purposive sampling strategy it is acknowledged that the results of this research are representative of ‘itself or instances of itself, in a similar population’, as opposed to the wider population (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.155). When adopting this perspective Cohen et al (2011) recommend the use of the word ‘group’ as more appropriate than the word ‘sample’. For the purposes of clarity in the rest of this study, individuals studied will, therefore, be referred to as part of a group, as the results are representative of them, as opposed to a wider population.

## **Contacting participants**

After deciding on an appropriate method of selecting participants the task of contacting suitable candidates within the schools taking part began. As has been mentioned, the principals had a significant role in making teachers available to discuss the research with the teacher. After gaining the gatekeepers' consent for each schools participation, attempts were made to organise an opportunity to speak to teachers independently about the research. Most gatekeepers were hesitant about providing the researcher access to teachers initially. In all but one school, the principals chose to discuss the research independently with the teachers themselves before committing to a specific time or date for the researcher to meet the teachers. Information sheets were provided to the principals to distribute to all the teachers in the school. This was an attempt to provide information to the teachers from a source other than the principal.

After giving the schools some time to discuss the research internally, contact was again made with the gatekeepers. All five schools that were initially contacted reported interest among teachers in participating. In one school, the principal contacted the researcher with the names of three teachers willing to participate and did not offer an opportunity for the researcher to discuss the research independently with the teachers beforehand. To try and ensure that the participants understood their role prior to the study beginning, initial contact was made with the chosen lead teacher in this school over the phone. All of the participating teachers in that particular school were then spoken to during the initial visit for the first interview with the lead teacher. A suitable time and date was then given by the other school principals to speak with interested teachers in the schools. These meetings took place in the schools, usually just after classes had finished and pupils had gone home.

The meetings between the researcher and teachers took place within the schools involved and with the exception of one school, took place without the principal being present. The presence

or non-presence of the principal at the meeting was noted and provided an interesting insight into differing leadership styles and approaches adopted by principals. These meetings were seen as important, as distinct from second hand information received from principals, teachers themselves were given information about the study to ensure that they could make their own decision about participation (Denscombe 2010). This information was provided primarily in the form of face-to-face discussion at the meeting but information leaflets and emails were also distributed and sent to staff members. Discussing the research with teachers before their consent was gained proved very important, as many teachers had received inaccurate second hand information from other sources. Genuine volunteers were sought and the advantages of participation for both the teachers and students were outlined. The primary means of enticement used to incentivise participation was the offer of ten frisbees for the school and a culminating activity day for the pupils. As the use of incentives in some cases distorts data (Cohen *et al.* 2011), steps were taken to ensure participants understood fully the implications of agreeing to take part. Interestingly, at these meetings, with the exception of one school, only three teachers were present to discuss the research further. This led to the hypothesis that teachers had either made their mind up before talking to the researcher or had been selected and asked by the principal to take part. Further clarification of the issue was sought during subsequent interviews and reflections and it was found that each context was different. A mitigating factor in smaller schools, for example, was that there were only three teachers in the school within the desired class range for the research. Consent was then gathered from the willing participants in writing to act as a formal agreement of participation in the research (Denscombe 2010).

### **Leaving the setting**

In some qualitative research the decision as to when to withdraw from a research setting can become an issue as bonds are formed and researchers are unsure if they have sufficient data

(Hastie and Hay 2012). From the outset of this research a clear timeline was created for the intervention and period of data collection. An interview with each of the participants at the end of the intervention served as the terminus and the cue for the researcher to leave the setting.

### **Context and participant biographies**

Details will now be provided on the lead teacher in each school along with background information on the school context. Information about the two other participating teachers within each school will also be presented.

#### **Bruce**

Bruce had over five years' experience working as a mainstream class teacher. His school is a large mixed gender suburban school with over 500 pupils. While Bruce reported being very active as a child he noted that this trend has not continued to the same extent in his adult life describing himself as 'not particularly sporty' (Bruce Opening Interview (OI)). He did, however, have a strong belief in the value and importance of PE for all children and thoroughly enjoyed teaching PE. Whilst the school has in general good facilities and equipment for PE, Bruce was uncertain of the extent to which PE is actively supported. He noted, for example, a number of areas of the PE curriculum not currently being delivered across the school. Bruce also noted PE as a subject where teachers rarely collaborate, despite the fact that teacher collaboration is common practice across other subject areas within the school. Bruce had an interest in leadership as exemplified by his involvement with the schools board of management and his completion of postgraduate study related to educational leadership.

The participating teachers in Bruce's school were Nicola and Gavin. Nicola was in the school for over five years, while Gavin was a newly qualified teacher in his first year at the school. Both Nicola and Gavin had a strong interest in PE and highlighted the subject as an area they enjoyed teaching.

## **Jane**

Jane was a new member of staff in her school but had worked in the area for the last three years. Her school is mixed gender and rural with over 100 pupils. Jane did not identify herself as being a particularly active person and so she felt strongly that quality PE should be provided to children to help ensure they go on to lead active healthy lives. Although PE is not extensively planned or discussed at a whole school level, Jane identified the presence of a strong cohort of teachers who value PE and sport within the school. She identified a number of separate physical activity and extra-curricular initiatives being undertaken within the school. PE, however, did not appear to be a common topic of conversation amongst teachers. Jane did not have many previous leadership experiences but prior to this project she did set up and individually lead a new initiatives in another curricular area within the school.

Michael and Fiona were the participating teachers in Jane's school and were both easily identifiable as strong supporters of sport, and to a lesser extent PE within their schools. Michael was also the principal of the school and had over ten years teaching experience in his career, while Fiona had been teaching in the school for more than five years.

## **Noel**

Noel worked in an urban single sex school with over 200 pupils. He was a mainstream class teacher with more than thirty years of teaching experience and had a post of responsibility on the in-school management team. Noel's role as post holder primarily surrounds PE and he undertakes tasks such as managing and ordering equipment as well as organising school sports days, preparing extra-curricular sporting teams and linking with external providers. Noel had an extremely active background and played numerous different sports. He had, however, a particularly strong link with one sport and was heavily involved in extra-curricular coaching within and outside of the school environment. Noel described how PE is delivered on most

weeks by all teachers within his school but he also noted a lack of facilities as a significant challenge for the full implementation of the curriculum. Extra-curricular sport is highly valued and supported in Noel's school and this is a more common topic of conversation amongst staff than PE.

Alan was the first participating teacher in Noel's school. Alan had over twenty years of experience teaching in the school, while Raquel had more than five years of experience teaching in the school. Neither participating teacher highlighted PE as an area of particular strength or weakness in their teaching.

### **Gail**

Gail was a mainstream class teacher with over five years of experience, two of which were in her current school which is single sex and urban with over 200 pupils. Gail had a strong interest in PE and during the course of her initial teacher education took an additional educational elective module in PE. The opportunity to spend additional time focussing on PE was highly valued by Gail. She felt that this module had a significant influence on her confidence and competence in teaching PE and she often referred back to the positive impact this period of specialisation has had on her teaching. Gail also led a very active lifestyle and participated in a number of different sports as well as maintaining an involvement in youth sport coaching. Allied with her confidence in the area of PE teaching, Gail also had some experience of educational leadership. She briefly held a deputy-principal position in a previous school and accordingly on a number of occasions took on the role of acting principal. Gail reported PE as being quite well supported with some broad planning on topics to be covered taking place at a whole school level. Aside from the co-ordination of topics being taught PE is not a commonly discussed but it was noted that in general sufficient PE equipment and resources are made available to teachers.

Daisy and Michelle were the participating teachers in Gail's school. Daisy was an experienced teacher with over twenty years of experience and held a formal leadership position within the school. Although confident in her PE teaching, Daisy felt that teaching ultimate frisbee would be different to her previous experiences and could be challenging. Michelle was in the school for over five years and was not particularly confident in her own teaching of PE.

### **Hannah**

Hannah worked as a mainstream class teacher in a suburban mixed gender school with over 200 pupils for more than seven years. She reported a general interest in PE with a particular love for one of the PE curricular strands which she was very active in promoting within and outside of school. Hannah also participated herself in physical activity on a regular basis. She also noted that PE is very well supported within the school with a significant number of initiatives taking place on an ongoing basis to support PE, as well as physical activity and sport. PE is planned at a whole school level with all areas of the curriculum addressed. A number of teachers also often share ideas and resources to support the implementation of the curriculum. Hannah has limited experience of school based leadership and considered other teachers with posts of responsibility to have a more central role in PE leadership and provision across the school. She has, however, contributed to a number of initiatives which the school has undertaken related to PE, physical activity and sport.

Within this school Rob and Mary also participated in the study. Rob identified himself as being not particularly sporty, while Mary was more comfortable in sporting settings and more confident in the area of PE. Rob had over ten years of teaching experiences, while Mary had more than five.

## **Data generation**

Individual interviews, focus group interviews and lead teacher reflective diaries were the sources used to generate data. Data generation took place over a twelve week period as follows:

*Table 6.1: Data generation Study 1*

Week 1:	Initial interviews with lead teachers
Week 2:	Workshop to prepare participants (lead and participating teachers) for intervention
Week 3 - 10:	Participants implemented ultimate frisbee unit in their schools and lead teachers completed weekly reflective diaries
Week 7:	Mid-point focus group interview of lead and participating teachers implementing ultimate frisbee unit
Week 11:	Culminating activity day
Week 12:	Final interview with lead teachers

The use of individual interviews, focus group interviews and reflective diaries specifically within Study 1 will now be discussed.

### **Individual Interviews**

Question formulation for the initial interviews began by using an outline of categories relevant to the study (Berg 2004). To ensure the validity of questions and in attempting to answer the research question, these categories were cross referenced with relevant sections of the literature review. An initial interview with each of the five lead teachers was undertaken, generally in their schools after the school day and when the pupils had left. On one occasion, however, an



interview took place in an interviewee's home. These interviews ranged in length from twenty to fifty minutes and were audio recorded before being transcribed at a later point.

Question formulation for the five final interview with the lead teachers was stimulated by data generated in previous interviews, focus groups and the reflective diaries. It was used as an opportunity to further clarify issues which arose throughout the research and to facilitate participants to reflect on the research overall. Whilst significant effort was attached to preparing interview schedules throughout the data generation, it was acknowledged that in semi structured interviews many of the questions will be formulated in response to the interviewees replies (Hastie and Hay 2012). The importance of acutely listening to the interviewee was, therefore, given paramount importance (Bryman 2004).

### **Focus group interviews**

One focus group interview with the lead teacher and the two participating teachers in each school was undertaken. The lead teachers in each school were contacted and asked to arrange a time for interview that was suitable for the three participants in their school. In all cases the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Most typically they took place in the participants' schools, usually in one the classrooms or staffroom after the students had left. These focus groups took place at the mid-point of the intervention and provided an opportunity for validation of data already collected from the lead teachers. They also offered an opportunity to gather the perspectives of the participating teachers on the leadership process. Question formulation for the focus group interview was stimulated by the initial interview with the lead teacher, as well as from the weekly reflective diaries completed by them. A brief outline of the topics discussed within Study 1 interviews is provided in table 6.2. A total of fifteen interviews were undertaken with 152 pages of data generated.

*Table 6.2: Study 1 interview schedule outlines*

<u>Initial interviews with lead teacher</u>	<u>Final interview with lead teacher</u>	<u>Focus group interviews</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant and school background information</li> <li>• PE and sport in the school</li> <li>• Teaching PE</li> <li>• Leadership experiences and perceptions</li> <li>• Introducing new ideas</li> <li>• Looking ahead to the intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being the lead teacher in this project</li> <li>• Teachers working together</li> <li>• Content knowledge</li> <li>• Innovation in PE</li> <li>• PE Leadership</li> <li>• Impact of leadership</li> <li>• Overall perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching new content</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Benefits/Challenges</li> <li>• Resources/Organising</li> <li>• PE innovation</li> </ul>

### **Reflective diaries**

Lead teachers were asked to complete these diaries weekly and were given the option of producing the diaries electronically or in a hard copy format. Three of the lead teachers chose to type the reflections and submit them electronically, while two teachers chose to handwrite their reflections and arrange for their collection by the researcher. A total of thirty seven diary entries were generated by the lead teachers. There were four questions on the reflective diary.

*Figure 6.2: Reflective diary questions Study 1*

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you lead the project in your school this week? What did you do?</li> <li>2. This week as the leader: what went well?</li> <li>3. This week as the leader: what was challenging?</li> </ol>
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- |   |
|---|
| <p>4. Did your actions as leader this week impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) Students' learning in PE? How?</li><li>(b) The teaching of PE in school this week? How?</li></ul> |
|---|

Each question had a specific purpose, for example, documenting their interactions, relationships and actions as lead teacher. Furthermore, the final question considered the impact the lead teachers had on students' learning and on the teaching of PE. The reflective diaries were collected at the end of each week and provided valuable insights which could be questioned and probed further in subsequent interviews. These reflections, therefore, proved invaluable in the creation of interview scripts over the course of the research.

### **Summary**

This section has outlined the design of study 1 which sought to generate insights into teachers' experiences of PE leadership while promoting an innovation. Five primary school teachers were recruited to act as lead teachers and to lead an ultimate frisbee project within their own schools. Qualitative methodologies including interviews, focus group interview and reflections were utilised to generate data from these lead teachers, as well as from participating teachers. The results generated will now be outlined.

### **Results Study 1**

In this study, five lead teachers' experiences of leading an innovation in PE were analysed using qualitative methodologies including individual interviews, focus group interviews and reflective diaries. The results were then analysed thematically and generated into three main themes. The first theme details the two types of leadership provided by the lead teachers, namely leadership involving organisation and management for teaching, as well as leadership relating to the content or pedagogy needed for teaching. The lead teachers differing views of

their leadership responsibilities are described in the second theme, along with their perceptions of the workload involved in leadership. In the third theme the differing leadership approaches of the lead teachers will be considered and the section concludes with an overall summary of the main results generated within study 1.

### **Theme 1: Differing types of leadership**

Focussing on the activities of leaders has been considered to be more important than analysis of personality traits when investigating leadership (Timperley 2005, Spillane and Diamond 2007). The leadership activities undertaken by the lead teachers were, therefore, given central importance as the research questions of this thesis examined teachers' experiences of PE leadership. Leadership activities were defined as any task, duty, or job undertaken by the lead teacher relating to the implementation of the ultimate frisbee unit over the three classes in each school. From the early stages of the data generation process, it became apparent that different types of leadership were emerging. These significant variances in the leadership delivered provided valuable insights into the lead teachers' experiences. To facilitate discussion and analysis, the leadership recorded was divided into two areas, namely leadership relating to organisation and management for teaching, and leadership relating to content or pedagogy needed for teaching. Leadership which focussed on organisation and management for teaching was concerned with non-technical aspects of teaching. The second type of leadership involved influence of the content being taught or the teaching methodology. The lead teachers use of both types of leadership will be discussed in turn within this section.

#### **Organisation and management for teaching – non-technical aspects of teaching**

All of the lead teachers undertook a variety of leadership activities which were primarily logistical in nature. This type of leadership sought to ensure that the necessary resources and conditions were in place to aid the effective implementation of the ultimate frisbee project.

The leadership activities included within this type of leadership were managing the equipment, booking halls, creating timetables and passing on information.

### Managing the equipment

Each school had a set of frisbees and the lead teachers co-ordinated the storage and access to this equipment during the research. Jane and Noel did this by putting any equipment that was needed for the lessons in a frisbee pack in the equipment room, as illustrated by the following comment from Noel '*Organised bibs and frisbees into frisbee-pack, ready to use when teachers needed same. Discussed and organised simple rota with participating teacher to avoid clash when equipment is needed*' (Reflective Diary (RD) 2). Bruce had also originally stored the frisbees in the equipment room, but as other teachers became aware of their presence, it became difficult to find them. To ensure the teachers involved in the project had a full set of equipment for their timetabled classes, Bruce decided to move the equipment to his classroom. The two remaining lead teachers, Hannah and Gail, also chose to keep the equipment out of their schools' PE storeroom '*we have a huge PE store and we have kept the frisbees out of that because they would get lost very easily there*' (Hannah Focus Group (FG)). These lead teachers were acting as gatekeepers for the equipment, which suggests that they had taken ownership of the project from an early stage. It was felt that frisbees could get lost or would be difficult to find in the store room if the other teachers were using them and that priority needed to be given to those teachers partaking in the research.

### Booking halls and creating timetables

Another element of leadership for organisation and management of teaching was the booking of halls and the creation of PE timetables. Ultimate frisbee can be played indoors or outdoors but it is recommended that where possible introductory classes be held indoors, as wind can create significant difficulty for novice players. All of the schools participating had some form

of indoor hall or area that was used for PE classes. Two of the schools did, however, have concerns that their halls were not suitable to hold ultimate frisbee classes due to size limitations. This created a difficulty for the lead and participating teachers in those schools as weather conditions in Ireland are unpredictable. One of the schools immediately made the decision to hire a nearby hall for the duration of the project. This measure proved helpful and was financially supported by the school.

In Noel's school attempts were also made to secure an indoor space. He took the initiative himself and asked the principal to enquire about using another nearby school hall. This initial attempt at securing the use of a nearby hall was unsuccessful and so Noel set about trying to prepare the available indoor space in his school for use. He liaised with the principal and the caretaker and attempted to adapt the school's indoor space to make it more suitable for ultimate frisbee. This proved difficult, however, with Noel recording that there was *'too much furniture inside and hall too small'* (RD 1). The hall was deemed unsuitable and so teachers had to conduct their lessons outside. As there were only enough frisbees for one class, this created another issue for Noel, as all classes were then attempting to use the frisbees at the same time when the weather was good *'slight problem with teachers needing equipment at same time, but now sorted to satisfaction of all'* (RD 2). Noel created a simple rota to overcome this issue by assigning different days to teachers, but inclement weather conditions continued to prove problematic in this school. The issue of acquiring the use of a larger indoor facility was raised by the participating teachers involved in the research at the focus group interview. The teachers enquired about the availability of the nearest hall and Noel discussed how he was unsuccessful in gaining its use. The teachers suggested that another alternative hall in the locality should be considered. Interestingly, the participating and lead teacher had not discussed this possibility prior to the mid-point focus group interview. Noel acted on this suggestion and, with the

permission of the principal, he managed to secure another nearby local hall for three hours each week for the remainder of the intervention.

Even those schools that had their own suitable indoor facilities encountered some difficulties in organising a timetable that was suitable for everyone. Bruce tried to change the existing hall timetable in his school to benefit the classes involved in the ultimate frisbee project. This attempt to alter the existing hall arrangements proved more challenging than he had expected,

*'I finally got the timetabling issues sorted, a new timetable made in conjunction with the relevant post holder has given the frisbee classes use of the full hall for PE. This was much more complicated than I thought because of all the other people who need the hall for various things at various times'* (Bruce RD1)

Bruce had to negotiate access to the hall with a variety of people to achieve his goal. He first approached the principal for permission and then went to the post holder responsible for timetabling and explain why changes were required. After getting agreement from the post holder, Bruce then had to discuss the matter with other teachers in the school not involved in the project, who also wanted similar access for their own PE classes. Finally Bruce then had to negotiate with the caretaker regarding the use of the hall for ultimate frisbee.

### Passing on information

As well as managing equipment and timetables the lead teachers also acted as a link between the researcher and the rest of the teachers involved in the research. They passed on organisational information they received from the researcher to the other teachers involved in their school *'I sent the teachers the emails I received and printed out the sheets for them'* (Hannah RD 5). The lead teachers also had a role in passing on resources and pedagogical information relating to the content of the project to the other teachers. They differed in their approach to the distribution of this information, with some of the lead teachers simply passing

on this information without reviewing it in advance. Other lead teachers reviewed the information they received before passing it on to the participating teachers. This section will only detail instances of resource sharing which were purely organisational, while resource sharing that involved a pedagogical element will be dealt with later. Noel, for example, explained that he was neutral to the process of passing on resources,

*'The notes that you gave, all I did really was give them those notes. So that was really different to what I had expected. I thought I might have been organising every class and saying this class you must do this, this and this, second class you must do this this and this and so on, that there would be a kind of progression. But they all took on their own'* (Final Interview (FI))

There was no interpretation undertaken by Noel and he simply passed on the resources that had been provided to him at the outset of the project. This was not the case for all of the lead teachers, however, as Bruce and particularly Gail had a part in reviewing resources before passing them on. These instances of resource sharing that involved a pedagogical element will be discussed in the next section.

### **Content or pedagogy needed for teaching**

In addition to leadership for the organisation and management of teaching, further leadership activities relating to the pedagogical approaches to teaching the ultimate frisbee unit were undertaken by the lead teachers. Whilst each of the lead teachers reported a similar level of engagement with the first type of leadership, differences emerged in the amount and extent of leadership related to content or pedagogy. Several of the lead teachers actively sought to provide leadership to participating teachers related to the content or pedagogy needed for teaching. Gail, for example, in contrast to Noel spoke of how she reviewed materials relating to the project before passing them onto the other teachers *'I liked getting the information from*



*you and going through it first and letting them know it was there, so I actually enjoyed all that'* (Gail FI). Gail liked reviewing materials and felt that the opportunity to consider PE content and pedagogy added to her job satisfaction.

In addition to the review of materials, teacher discussion related to the content and pedagogy of the research was stimulated by the lead teachers. All of the participants identified that discussion and teacher collaboration specific to teaching and learning in PE was virtually non-existent prior to this research. Having a PE lead teacher, and more than one teacher from each school participating in the research, provided a stimulus to PE discussion amongst teachers. While all of the lead teachers referred to the benefits of teacher discussion over the course of the study, Bruce and Gail were particularly vocal in their support of teacher interaction as a leadership activity. These were the two lead teachers who were most deliberate and explicitly planned informal discussion as a leadership activity. They specifically referred to teacher discussion in their reflections and interviews and talked about its benefits. Bruce, for example, felt that by starting conversations he was encouraging collaboration and reflection on the PE teaching being undertaken *'the discussions in the staffroom about the same (PE) will help spark more thought about how we are teaching'* (RD 5). During these discussions advice relating to the pedagogy or content of the project was shared. Gail passed on practical tips from the lessons she had taught, often in the changeover between classes going in and out of the hall *'As I was leaving the hall Thursday morning after my lesson, and the next teacher was walking in, I quickly gave her some tips that I felt would help with her lesson'* (RD 3). Gail was comfortable giving advice to other teachers and enjoyed this leadership activity throughout the project, as demonstrated further by her organisation of weekly meetings for the teachers involved. These weekly meetings were an opportunity for the teachers to discuss content and pedagogical issues. Practical demonstrations were provided and different ultimate frisbee skills were revised with teachers before they had to teach them,

*'As we were introducing a new skill this week, the forehand throw, I revised this with both teachers. I showed them again the hand and frisbee position for this particular throw and we spent some time in my room throwing and catching' (Gail RD 3)*

Although the teachers in Bruce's school did not have an assigned weekly meeting time, during the study they also practised and provided demonstrations to each other of different frisbee throws and techniques,

*'You came into me and I went into other teachers like and just being shown how to do something is massive. Different ideas like, you go off and do it yourself first maybe but once someone else comes in you are like gee, I could do it so much differently or I could change it slightly on my own' (Gavin in Bruce FG).*

As well as providing practical demonstrations, two of the lead teachers also organised practice interclass tournaments where teachers and pupils from different classes within the school worked together during a shared session *'this week I organised a tournament day between three classes in the school. As a rehearsal for next week, I asked the teachers to put their classes into teams and we played them off against each other'* (Bruce RD7). These interschool PE classes were new to both schools involved and were started by the lead and participating teachers themselves within their schools without any external input. These sessions were initially seen as a chance for the pupils to practice playing, but they actually led to the teachers discussing aspects of their teaching,

*'there was one thing that we were each doing different. It was the rule about the picking it up, my class were doing it one way and Michael's were doing it another and Fiona's were doing it different again. So at that point we had to decide to come to a common rule between us' (Jane FI)*

Teacher discussion was again, therefore, highlighted as an important component of leadership which added to the success of the project. Gail exemplified this outlook when noting that,

*'Each teacher feels confident and I think that was the key actually to the success. That each teacher walked in on the morning confident that they exactly knew what they were doing because it was discussed the day before'* (FI)

Although the lead teachers provided leadership related to organisation and management, as well as content and pedagogy, they still felt that their leadership influence was not as significant as anticipated. A lack of prior specific content knowledge was cited as a reason which contributed to the lead teachers' uncertainty surrounding their leadership role. Both the lead and participating teachers were teaching ultimate frisbee for the first time and undertook the same CPD workshop, so in some instances the lead teachers did not perceive themselves as having any additional content knowledge specific to ultimate frisbee *'I am not experienced in ultimate frisbee to give any tips the way I could have in another subject. I, as leader, had no previous skill to draw on'* (Bruce RD 1). As the project progressed, however, several of the lead teachers began to see how their expertise and experiences in PE and school sport more generally could be applied to ultimate frisbee and facilitate them in providing leadership. Gail, for example, was confident in leading and she largely traced this back to additional PE elective modules she had undertaken as part of her initial teacher education. This experience in combination with content knowledge she had also built through youth sport coaching gave her confidence in providing leadership *'I had a lot of that (expertise and experience in PE and school sport) in my background anyway so I suppose I brought these things with me into the Frisbee so that would have helped yea'* (Gail FI). Leading without specific content knowledge expertise was still, however, a different concept of leadership for those involved,

*'any other kind of leadership thing was always me helping others with an expertise I had. In this I actually didn't have any expertise or an idea that I had. None of this was my idea, none of it, I wasn't skilled in any of it so that was a different concept of leadership. That you could actually lead a project that you didn't necessarily am, that you weren't a natural leader you know?'* (Bruce FI)

As the content of the intervention was new to everyone, the lead teachers had difficulty conceptualising themselves as leaders. Jane and Bruce even suggested that they may have approached their leadership role differently if they perceived themselves to have specific content knowledge or expertise in the topic being introduced. Bruce suggested he may have been more authoritarian, while Jane intimated that she may have taken a more hands on role,

*'say if it was some music thing that had been introduced, Michael and Fiona they wouldn't really know what to do so if it was something like that I would be able to teach them you know? So it depends I suppose what the project is'* (Jane FI)

These viewpoints raised interesting questions in relation to the link between having lead teachers with expertise and their role in supporting other teachers. Although the lead teachers felt that any teacher could potentially take on leadership, it was identified as most beneficial if those involved in PE leadership *'would have the best expertise or advice on their topics'* (Noel FI). This viewpoint was common between all of the lead teachers and it was also predicted that teachers would be reluctant to take on leadership without feeling very proficient in the topic *'Very few people will take on something that they don't feel confident at'* (Noel OI). Having someone with expertise involved in the project was, therefore, seen as vital even if this person was not the lead teacher *'You definitely need a level of expertise initially but they don't necessarily need to be the leader but you need to have someone who knows at the start to help and guide'* (Bruce FI).

## **Theme 2: Differing views of leadership responsibility**

This research was concerned with the lead teachers' experiences of PE leadership. To understand and interpret these leadership experiences, it is important to examine the lead teachers' perceptions and views of leadership. They held differing views in relation to their perceived leadership responsibility and the workload involved in leadership, both of which will be discussed in this section.

### **Classroom versus school wide leadership**

Differences emerged between the lead teachers' perceptions of their leadership responsibility, ranging from a narrower focus within an individual class right up to a broad outlook that considered leadership across a whole school. Noel, Jane and Hannah when discussing leadership within the project saw their role as leader of their own class. Hannah, for example, identified her role as *'just as kind of leader of my class and teaching them. I don't see myself kind of checking up on the other teachers, I don't think that's my kind of role'* (OI). Gail and Bruce, however, had a broader view of leadership perceiving it to involve more than their own class,

*'That's not leadership that's just teaching these 30 children. That's my job. Leadership is then saying to people, I have this and it worked well for me, here you try it and see what you can do with it and if you need support come talk to me and I will help you further'* (Bruce OI)

In addition to these responses, the predictions they made at the outset as to the challenges that would be involved in leading the project also provided insights into their perceptions of leadership. The lead teachers who defined leadership within the confines of their own classroom did not predict that issues surrounding content knowledge would be a challenge they might face. Their concerns instead centred on organisational issues, which indicates that they

had generally not envisaged their leadership role involving content or pedagogy outside of their own individual classes. On the other hand, teachers who envisaged leadership on a schoolwide basis referred to a lack of content knowledge as one possible challenge they could face. These differing views and perceptions of leadership responsibility were reflected in the types of leadership provided and were one factor which informed their leadership. Despite providing a limited amount of leadership related to the content and pedagogy needed for teaching, three of the lead teachers, Jane, Noel and Hannah, primarily defined their leadership roles within organisation for management and teaching. The two remaining lead teachers, Gail and Bruce, were less rigid in the characterisation of their leadership provision. They recognised that they had a role in leadership for organisation and management, as well as in content or pedagogy and felt that the leadership provided was context specific. As Bruce noted,

*'it (leadership) is all about doing whatever it takes to ensure that the teaching happens to maximum potential. If that means getting the admin done at a particular time and if it means forgetting about the admin at some stage and sitting down and chatting to people that's the...'* (FI)

For Gail and Bruce, the opportunity to engage in these PE leadership tasks further affirmed and strengthened their beliefs in the value of teacher involvement in leadership. PE leadership was an enjoyable experience and it was felt that this enjoyment could increase job satisfaction and provide motivation to engage in PE leadership in the future. The lead teachers now felt that lines of communication were opened between teachers and as a result the opportunities to engage in PE leadership activities were enhanced. As one of the lead teachers put it,

*'the door for the communication is now open, like as in I know now I could pop into Daisy and Michelle and say what did you do in PE this week or what are you doing next week or could we come together'* (Gail FI).

In addition to increased opportunities for communication, as the lead and participating teachers were engaged in a collaborative work project, there were also additional opportunities for the provision of leadership. They were teaching the same PE content at the same time using the same set of resources and so numerous overt PE leadership opportunities were created.

Furthermore, it was also felt that the experience of engaging in a collaborative project could begin the process of changing classroom teachers' attitudes towards involvement in leadership.

*'So maybe a change of attitude among teachers, but then again that starts with things like the frisbee project ...if people had the experience they might be more inclined then to help out in the longer term'* (Bruce FI). This sentiment appears to be supported by the experiences of Hannah, who described how engagement in the research started to alter her views on leadership and willingness to become involved on a more regular basis *'It kind of opened my eyes to be more open (to leadership)'* (FI)

### **Workload and time involved in leadership**

Despite differing views amongst the lead teachers as to their leadership responsibilities, there was general agreement that the workload involved in leadership was less than they had envisaged *'I found there was less like, in terms of leadership, there wasn't as much that I thought like I'd have to do'* (Jane FI). In the initial interviews with the lead teachers it was apparent that some of the teachers were initially apprehensive about taking on the role of lead teacher. The use of the word 'leader' or 'leadership' seemed to be off putting, with teachers reluctant to use the term and associating it with a huge increase in workload *'I suppose when you said the word leader, I thought there would be more work maybe to it'* (Gail FI). The combination of an informal position and less of a workload than they had envisaged created doubt amongst all of the lead teachers as to the role they had played in the project, as Hannah noted *'I didn't feel like I had a big role'* (FI). In some instances the lead teachers also seemed

unsure if activities that they carried out over the course of the project were part of leadership and this contributed to uncertainty about their roles. Gail, for example, was unsure as to the amount of leadership she had provided during the intervention *'To be honest I didn't find there was too much being the leader'* (FI). This ambiguity around what leadership entails can be demonstrated by the limited amount of responses to the question in the reflective diaries regarding the lead teachers' impact on teaching and learning. Informal discussions, for example, were not always listed in the reflections, but the evidence from all the interviews suggests this was a leadership activity undertaken by all of the lead teachers. The fact that these instances were not always reported in the lead teachers' reflections suggests that discussions were sometimes not considered as part of the leadership process.

While the lead teachers felt that the work involved in leading the project was not overwhelming, in certain instances, it was still felt that the time involved in this work could be underestimated by the other teachers. In one focus group interview, for example, a lively debate developed between the lead and participating teachers as to how much work was actually involved in leading the project. The participating teachers felt that issues cited as challenging by the lead teacher such as timetabling were not major and would not be difficult to solve. Nicola, for example, noted that *'I think once you have the initial introduction it would be quite easy'* (Nicola in Bruce FG). On the other hand, the lead teacher Bruce felt that the issues encountered were significant and took considerable time and effort to resolve *'I don't agree! I just think that it's not as straight forward as that like. Like you were like, oh the timetable wasn't an issue, the timetable was a big issue. It took ages to sort out!'* (Bruce FG). This exchange illustrates that Bruce felt the work involved and the time needed for leadership was underestimated by others.

Despite a less than anticipated leadership workload, all of the lead teachers found it challenging to find time for leadership during the busy school day. Bruce commented on this noting that



*'if you were leading anything... it's really hard to balance that with the daily teaching'* (FI). As the lead teachers were class teachers without any assigned time for leadership activities they found it especially hard to carry out leadership activities that *'needed to be done there and then and you don't really have that time in school to do those jobs'* (Bruce FI). Noel, for example, had to leave his class and co-ordinate with the school secretary in relation to the booking of halls. Bruce similarly faced challenges in organising the hall *'Finding the time to sort the timetable was a big issue. The post holder has a different break so it means interrupting class time for either me or her'* (RD 3). These time issues usually proved most challenging when the lead teacher had to deal with someone outside of those implementing the project. In general, the lead teachers found it easier to find time to deal with the other teachers involved in the project, as they would normally meet on most school days. There were still instances, however, in all schools where the lead teacher found it challenging to find a mutually suitable time to meet all the other teachers involved *'what was challenging? Finding time to collaborate - getting the time to have quick chats with other teachers about the lessons'* (Jane RD1). The lead teachers' reflections suggest that it was hardest to find time at the beginning of the project and in the final weeks preparing for the culminating activity day, as there was more leadership activity during these times. Despite the challenges encountered, most leaders were happy to make an effort to find time for leadership. As Noel (OI) commented,

*'You might have a teacher who wants to be in school at 9 and be gone out the door when the kids leave, that's fine you know. There are no problems there, but most teachers, like the teachers I know anyway give that little bit extra'*

As long as those involved felt that there were tangible benefits for their pupils, it was intimated by Bruce that teachers would make significant efforts to find time for leadership *'It has proved people do want to do a good job regardless of the circumstance at the moment with pay...or anything like that...people want to finish their day and think that was a success'* (FI). One

lead teacher did, however, identify that any additional time spent on leadership outside of class time was outside of her role *'I don't mind doing the work in class but anything outside of class it just kind of eats into my time. Like I do my bit and that's it like'* (Hannah FI). This viewpoint raises issues regarding the feasibility of classroom teachers engaging in leadership practice on a large scale.

At the end of this study, there was, however, a prevailing belief that that some form of teacher led PE leadership was beneficial *'It would be helpful I suppose if schools had a kind of a go to teacher'* (Noel FI). The lead teachers felt that relying on external expertise was not the most effective means of providing this leadership *'It is easy for an expert to come in from the outside but you don't have support then from that person on a daily basis'* (Bruce OI). It was felt that it is more beneficial if leadership is provided from existing members of staff, as support is then easily accessible. In this study leadership was provided by an existing classroom teacher which was seen as hugely beneficial in stimulating teachers to support each other and work together *'if everyone was just a normal teacher people might be more willing to step up to the mark'* (Bruce FI).

### **Theme 3: Different approaches to leadership**

Within this research the leadership provided was considered to be informal as the lead teachers were all full-time generalist teachers and aside from Noel did not have official PE leadership roles. Variations emerged, however, in relation to the approaches the lead teachers adopted to leadership. In this theme it will be shown how the lead teachers adopted both unplanned and planned approaches to leadership. It will also be demonstrated to varying degrees that the lead teachers sought, and in many cases succeeded, in sharing leadership with the participating teachers in their schools. Some of the benefits and challenges of this shared approach to PE leadership will be considered within this section.

## **Unplanned and planned leadership**

In many instances the leadership provided by the lead teachers was unplanned. On these occasions, leadership provision often took place when the lead and participating teachers met each other by chance during the course of their everyday routines. Each of the five lead teachers engaged in some unplanned leadership and typically these meetings occurred in the corridor, at lunch times or at the end of the school day. The lead teachers usually used these discussions as an opportunity to chat generally about the project and to get feedback from the other teachers as a means of gauging how the ultimate frisbee lessons were going *'I just say something to her like oh how did ye get on with the frisbee yesterday'* (Jane Interview (OI)). The lead teachers also sometimes enquired about logistical issues during these discussions, but they were mainly used as a form of encouragement. Noel commented on how he often provided some sort of motivation to the other teachers during these unplanned informal chats *'I encourage people to try and do it as much as I can and then just make sure they have all they need for it'* (OI).

In other instances two of the lead teachers deliberately planned their informal leadership. Bruce, for example, sought out the other teachers to chat about the content of the project *'I need to make sure to meet the teachers before the next PE class to see if I can help them with anything. That may be more proactive rather than reactive'* (RD1). Gail was also proactive in that she initiated a weekly meeting with the participating teachers at a set time to meet and go through the PE lesson they were going to be teaching the following day. These informal discussions were intentionally planned and started by Bruce and Gail with specific teacher learning outcomes in mind. Despite being deliberately planned, these discussions and meetings were still classified as informal by the lead teachers involved owing to their relaxed nature *'it didn't need to be all like, let's take notes, let's write the date. It didn't have to be all formal things. I'll email you the times of the meeting, you know there was none of that'* (Gail FI).

## Shared leadership

In addition to planned and unplanned approaches to leadership, a shared approach to leadership was adopted by the lead teachers as they sought to involve the participating teachers in leadership to varying extents. Gail provided a prime example, as she felt that leadership in this project was shared and that the other teachers were involved in the leadership process: *'I actually found instead of kind of being on top as a leader, I found that I kind of led from you know, with them more'* (FI). This sharing of leadership by Gail with the other teachers seemed intentional, as she actively sought to involve the participating teachers *'I received the hall times from the secretary and then rang Daisy and Michelle to come up with a plan'* (RD 1). Gail's use of language in the reflective diaries also suggests that leadership was shared amongst all three teachers involved in the project in her school. When referring to leadership activities undertaken she consistently used the term 'we'. Examples include her description of discussing the initial workshop and lesson plans *'We jotted down a list of drills we remembered from our training day and ones we thought the children would enjoy most'* (RD 2), *'We discussed the lesson plan and what way we would go about teaching it'* (RD 4). As these quotes illustrate, Gail shared leadership widely with the participating teachers. She even refers to the group involved as a team *'All three of us are happy as we have a good relationship and are working well as a team'* (RD 5).

This sharing of leadership between the lead and participating teachers was also evident in Bruce's school. In this case all of the teachers worked together to solve any issues that they encountered over the course of the project *'I wasn't able to answer it if people came to me, all I could do was chat and try to help them come up with a solution, which is probably a better way of doing things anyway you know?'* (Bruce FI). Bruce, like Gail, also encouraged the other teachers to become involved in the leadership. He actively sought their opinions and involved them in the decision making process by acting on their feedback and suggestions. The purchase

of additional frisbees and the provision of the use of the full hall were both examples of leadership activities that Bruce undertook as a direct result of the participating teachers' influence. Initiatives from the participating teachers relating to new ideas were welcomed and encouraged. Bruce's use of the word 'we' again suggests that leadership was shared on these matters '*a teacher in this school came up with the idea of recording some sessions as a way of explaining and demonstrating to other classes. This is something we have agreed to look into*' (RD 8). Whilst Bruce was proactive in trying to involve the other teachers in the leadership process, the level of involvement of the participating teachers in leadership was not something that he had foreseen '*It definitely surprised me how willing the other teachers were to get involved and how willing they were to take their own initiative*' (Bruce FI).

Although leadership was also shared with participating teachers within their respective schools by Noel, Hannah and Jane, the extent to and the way in which leadership was shared differed. While Bruce and Gail actively encouraged other teachers to become involved in leadership, the teachers involved in the project in Noel's school, for example, claimed leadership for themselves. They used the focus group meeting as a platform to discuss with the lead teacher issues they were encountering and changes they wanted. An example of this was when teachers came up with the idea of hiring a suitable hall nearby,

*Alan: 'Or the hall down the road?'*

*Noel: 'oh...we can hire the hall yea...'*

*Alan: 'might be no harm'*

*Noel: 'well that is something to keep in mind so. We could hire the hall yea'*

*Alan: 'it's only down the road'*

*Raquel: 'we could actually for a couple of weeks until Easter'*

*Alan: 'yea because there would be no problem then about wind you know'*

*Noel: 'okay fair enough'*

*Alan: 'you could do that so maybe for next week?'*

*Noel: 'yea grand'*

*Alan: 'if you hired it for two hours in the morning maybe? Well three hours an hour each'*

*Noel: 'that's fine'*

*Raquel: 'that would be brilliant' (Noel FG)*

In this example with Noel there is a significant difference between the sharing of leadership to that seen in the case of Gail and Bruce. A conscious effort to share leadership was made by Bruce and Gail, while in Noel's case the sharing of leadership was more reactive and initiated by the participating teachers rather than the lead teacher.

Despite these differences, Noel, Jane and Hannah did still share some leadership with the participating teachers in their schools, albeit to a lesser extent. In Jane's school for instance, one participating teacher missed the initial professional development workshop which introduced participating teachers to ultimate frisbee. It was, however, another participating teacher who attended the workshop, rather than the lead teacher, who took on leadership by explaining and demonstrating to the absent teacher what they had missed. Hannah's use of the word 'team' to describe her relationship with the other teachers taking part in the project also provides an indication that some leadership was shared in her school *'I didn't feel like as if I had an extra role or, it was everybody kind of more like in kind of a team instead of a leader'* (FI). She further elaborated and discussed how the participating teachers undertook tasks that she would have considered to be part of her role as lead teacher,

*'I know if Rob found something like something to do with frisbee he would pass it on to the rest of us which is kind of like, I felt my role but he would do it as well. Any of us would, that is the way we are anyway'* (FI)

This suggests that in certain instances within Hannah's school leadership was shared and taken on by other teachers. Whilst still considering themselves as teams, the sharing of leadership differed between Noel, Jane, Hannah and Bruce and Gail, as their 'teams' operated differently.

As a result of the shared approach to leadership adopted, it was felt that both the lead and participating teachers involved in the project were equal. The assigned lead teachers did not feel or identify themselves as different to the other teachers who participated in the project *'we were all just people doing it and I happened to get selected as leader'* (Bruce FI). This was the case for all the lead teachers involved regardless of the level of leadership provided. Two of the lead teachers, Gail and Hannah, who had approached leadership very differently, provided the exact same response when questioned on their involvement, *'I didn't feel like I was any different to the other teachers doing the project'* (Gail FI, Hannah FI). This homogeneity between the lead and participating teachers led to both positive and challenging experiences for the lead teachers. On the one hand, conceptualising all teachers on the same level helped create a positive attitude amongst teachers towards innovation within this project. Teachers valued learning and professional development led by a teacher at the same level as themselves *'it would be well received especially if it is coming from other people who are at your level teaching in the same school'* (Bruce OI). The teachers assigned responsibility for leading the project were most identifiable as classroom teachers, rather than as lead teachers and this was seen as positive *'Things that involve the classroom definitely need to involve more classroom teachers'* (Bruce FI). Teachers were open to discussing PE and asking each other questions as everyone was considered to be on the same level.

Conversely, as the lead teachers did not hold formal leadership positions and considered themselves the same as all other teachers, they did not feel they had the authority to direct others. Before the beginning of the research one of the lead teachers outlined concerns that they may have difficulty in leading, as there was not going to be any specific authority allocated with leadership *'you are relying on everyone else's good will and that is where a lot of things kind of fall through the cracks then'* (Bruce OI). He felt that the project might struggle as it didn't have any formal mandate from the school management and he would be leading informally. As it transpired, Bruce had difficulty with organising the hall, as he needed the help of the caretaker preparing it for ultimate frisbee. He didn't officially have the authority to assign tasks to others,

*'I am not in a paid leadership role, a visible leadership role in the school. It's harder to pin people down and say this needs to happen, you don't have that authority to knock on someone's door'* (FI).

The caretaker helped Bruce and the problem was averted but this was entirely down to the good will of those involved. Although this difficulty only presented itself in Bruce's case, it still merits attention as a significant challenge experienced by one of the lead teachers.

### **Summary**

Despite the challenges of finding time for leadership, teaching the same content at the same time across a number of classes presented the lead teachers with significant opportunities for leadership. To differing extents, the lead teachers partook in a variety of leadership activities relating to organisation and management, as well as content and pedagogy. These leadership activities facilitated the development of teacher discussion pertaining to PE, with leadership related to the content and pedagogy of the project in particular a strong stimulus of teacher interaction focussed on PE. The results also demonstrated that the lead teachers held differing



views of their PE leadership responsibility, ranging from a primary focus on leadership within their own individual class up to and including leadership across the whole school. These views influenced the lead teachers' approaches to leadership, with examples of both planned and unplanned leadership evident over the course of the project. All of the lead teachers were, however, reluctant to refer to themselves as leaders as a result of their informal position, concerns around their content knowledge and a perception that the activities they undertook were not what they had envisaged as leadership. Accordingly, the lead teachers were united in the belief that shared approaches to PE leadership were most beneficial and they consequently sought to involve the participating teachers in leadership, albeit to differing extents. The lead teachers did, however, identify that having a lead teacher within a shared approach was helpful, and even more so one with PE expertise.

### **Discussion Study 1**

The purpose of this research was to examine generalist teachers' experiences of PE leadership while leading an innovation in Irish primary schools over the course of an intervention. The lead teachers' reflections on their experiences of leadership were extremely positive indicating that lead teachers can have a positive role in PE innovation. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital will be drawn upon throughout this discussion to provide further insight into the participants' experiences of leading innovation through the lens of human, social, decisional and leadership capital. The influence of human capital expertise and leadership beliefs on leadership practice will be firstly be considered. The role of collaborative work practices and shared leadership in leadership capital development as well as innovation will then be considered. The final section will address the development of social capital

through PE leadership. The chapter will finish by discussing the conclusions which can be drawn from this first study.

### **Use of human capital**

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p.89) identified that for quality teaching to take place, teachers must have or develop the requisite knowledge, skills and individual talent. They refer to the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter and how to teach it as their 'human capital' and consider it an essential ingredient of quality teaching. Whilst the term 'human capital' is relatively new, teachers' personal beliefs about subject competence have previously been linked with willingness to adopt curricular reforms and classroom practices (McCaughy *et al.* 2006, Martin *et al.* 2007). Teacher expertise has also been identified as important to the development of leadership capabilities (Crowther *et al.* 2009). Within this study the lead teachers' beliefs about their individual human capital relating to PE influenced not only their enthusiasm for the project and classroom teaching practices, but also their leadership practices. All lead and participating teachers required support to develop their content knowledge specifically related to the topic of the intervention, ultimate frisbee. This support was provided in the form of a two hour workshop led by the researcher which all the lead and participating teachers undertook together. The basic knowledge gained from the workshop was seen as a prerequisite to the implementation of the project. Although all of the lead teachers participated in the same workshop, there were significant differences in the subsequent leadership approaches adopted. While all the lead teachers provided leadership relating to organisation and management, several of the lead teachers provided more leadership relating to content or pedagogy and were more comfortable in doing so. Silva, Gimbert and Nolan's (2000) conceptualisation of the three waves of teacher leadership is useful in this regard to help us understand the lead teachers' differing experiences of leadership and the influence of human capital on this leadership. The first wave of teacher leadership involves mainly organisational

tasks focussing on school operations, the second phase involves the use of the instructional expertise of teachers, while the third stage involves the development of a culture of collaboration and continued professional development with teachers at the centre of this culture. The experiences of three of the lead teachers, Jane, Noel and Hannah, corresponds primarily with the first wave of teacher leaders identified by Silva *et al.* (2000) as these leaders prioritised leadership relating to organisation and management. They perceived themselves as having limited human capital relating to the content of the intervention and so did not engage extensively in leadership relating to content or pedagogy. The activities they undertook were typical of duties traditionally carried out by PE post holders in Irish primary schools (Department of Education and Science 2003). Conversely, the PE leadership experiences of the other two leaders were different and are somewhere in between the second and third wave identified by Silva *et al.* (2000), as the instructional expertise of teachers was starting to be utilised within collaborations between teachers. These lead teachers provided more leadership related to content or pedagogy and attributed this partly to positive perceptions of their wider human capital relating to PE. This finding is compliant with the work of Sun *et al.* (2013) who suggested that teachers with greater expertise may help their colleagues more. These findings suggest that human capital relating to PE can be one important stimulus of PE leadership, particularly leadership relating to content or pedagogy.

### **Development of leadership capital**

While human capital was one important influence on the lead teachers' approach to leadership, another contributing factor was the leaders' perceptions and beliefs about leadership in a school context. These beliefs had a significant influence on the leadership capital of the lead teachers. Leadership capital contributes to the development of professional capital within schools (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Hargreaves and Fullan 2013, Fullan *et al.* 2015, Ainscow 2016), and it has been identified by the OECD (2014) as a prime driver of reform. Yet, despite strong

advocacy of the importance of leadership capital, none of these references provided an explicit definition of leadership capital. For the purposes of this research, a more explicit understanding of the term leadership capital was sought and accordingly a working definition was created. Drawing on the implied meanings of existing references to leadership capital within the literature, leadership capital within this research was considered to be the capability of lead teachers within a school to drive reform through the development of professional capital. This definition aligns with the understanding of leadership as the process of influencing others leading to change, which was presented within the literature review of this thesis.

Research suggests that primary school teachers predominantly view leadership within the realm of their own classroom rather than on a whole school basis (Angelle and Schmid 2007, Angelle and DeHart 2011). Within this study three of the lead teachers primarily conceptualised leadership in terms of their own classroom, while the other two lead teachers had a broader concept of leadership and envisioned leadership more on a whole school basis. The lead teachers who primarily viewed leadership in terms of the pupils within their own individual class focussed their efforts on leadership relating to organisation and management. The lead teachers who had a whole school understanding of leadership, equally prioritised leadership within their own class and across other classes. A broad whole school understanding of leadership, was also linked to participant engagement in more planned forms of leadership, especially related to content and pedagogy. Mascall *et al.* (2009) have also previously connected beliefs of shared whole organisation goals to more planned and effective types of leadership. Central to this whole school understanding of leadership is the idea of collective responsibility. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital forefronts the importance of collective responsibility, where teachers take collective responsibility for all pupils within a school and not just those within their own class. This concept of shared professional responsibility has also been advocated for in an Irish context by the Teaching

Council (2015). Lead teachers with this outlook started to identify with all pupils taking part in the project. This viewpoint seemed a significant factor in the willingness of these teachers to become involved in leadership outside of their own classroom, particularly related to content and pedagogy and contributed significantly to their leadership capital.

While the lead teachers' pre-existing beliefs about leadership influenced their leadership capital, engaging in the collaborative work practice of teaching the same content at the same time offered significant opportunities for the further development of leadership capital. The lead teachers had greater opportunities to develop the human, social and decisional capital of the participating teachers. In relation to human capital, the capacity of the lead teachers to influence the PE practices of participating teachers in their school was enhanced as they were teaching the same content simultaneously. Prior to this study the lead teachers reported limited opportunities to influence the PE content or pedagogy used by other teachers within their schools. During the collaborative PE project they had significant opportunities to advise and support participating teachers in their pedagogical approaches to teaching an innovative topic such as ultimate frisbee. As will be discussed in the next section, social capital was also developed through these collaborative practices as teachers were participating in the same project, delivering the same content at the same time and had common experiences which facilitated discussion. Increased opportunities to develop decisional capital through leadership experiences and the sharing of leadership with participating teachers also meant that leadership capital was enhanced through collaborative work practices. These additional opportunities to develop social, human and decisional capital, allied with the enthusiasm of the lead teachers for PE leadership, confirms that collaborative work practices can facilitate the development of leadership capital.

The leadership capital of the lead teachers was also enhanced by adopting a shared approach to leadership. The lead teachers sought to share leadership with the participating teachers as

this was considered the best means of facilitating PE innovation. In sharing the leadership of the project it was felt that the participating teachers would become more invested and that positive personal relationships could be maintained. Typically teachers who take on leadership do not see themselves as leaders, reserving that title for individuals who hold formal leadership roles (Hammersley-Fletcher 2002, Angelle and DeHart 2011, Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain 2011, Ó Ruairc 2013). The title of leader can also have negative connotations and be associated with formal hierarchical leadership structures by teachers (Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007). The lead teachers were similarly reluctant to refer to themselves as leaders, as they did not consider themselves to be any different from the participating teachers and they sought to share leadership with other participating teachers. Although a belief in the value of shared leadership was articulated by all of the lead teachers, leadership was shared to varying extents and in different ways by them. The sharing of leadership seen within Noel, Jane and Hannah's schools is comparable with Gronn's (2002) description of additive forms of distributed leadership. This involved an uncoordinated pattern of leadership where a variety of different people become sporadically involved in the work of leadership, often resulting in a disjointed and inharmonious approach. In these schools, teachers took on leadership, often of their own accord, without taking account of the leadership efforts of others, and in some instances this resulted in an incoherent approach to PE innovation. Whilst the project was still considered successful in those schools that adopted a sporadic approach to leadership, research elsewhere has shown that the difficulties associated with this type of leadership may not become fully evident in the short term (Leithwood *et al.* 2006b, Harris 2009, Mascal *et al.* 2009). As this intervention was carried out over a relatively short time frame, issues around this leadership approach did not become immediately evident. The other lead teachers were more deliberate in their sharing of leadership and their leadership practice consequently differed. For example, weekly meetings were organised in one school and each of the three participating teachers were

encouraged to provide input into both logistical and pedagogical issues associated with the project. This intentional distribution or sharing of leadership follows Leithwood *et al's.* (2007, p.84) presentation of 'planful alignments' of leadership distribution. Planful alignments of distributed leadership involve prior thought, planning, reflection, dialogue and co-operation among those involved in leadership (Leithwood *et al.* 2006b). Planful alignments, as seen in these schools, have been shown to be the most likely patterns of leadership distribution to positively contribute to an organisations productivity in the long term (Mascall *et al.* 2009). Within this study, a planful approach was also considered successful and indicates that PE leadership is more beneficial when it is thought out, planned and shared between members of staff to facilitate innovation.

As leadership was shared in this project (albeit to differing extents), both the lead and participating teachers had autonomy to implement the project and this further facilitated PE innovation. This autonomy, provided through shared leadership, promoted a positive attitude towards PE innovation. An atmosphere of goodwill towards the project was noted from the focus group interviews where all teachers involved were present together. Freedom for teachers to make decisions is defined as decisional capital by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p. 93) 'The capital that professionals acquire...that enables them to make wise judgements in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible evidence to guide them...The essence of professionalism is the ability to make discretionary judgements'. The participants were not following a set of specific leadership guidelines and the lead teachers were facilitated to draw on their own decisional capital and lead in whatever way they considered most appropriate. The lead teachers, in turn, provided autonomy to the participating teachers to implement the project. Autonomy for teachers to lead research and professional development within their own school context and with their own pupils is considered highly effective (Casey 2012, Patton and Parker 2014, Carse 2015, The Teaching Council 2015). Each

school context was different and the lead teachers had autonomy to adapt both their leadership and the content of the intervention. This flexible approach was considered effective by the lead teachers and represents further empirical evidence of the benefits of teacher led PE innovation (Ní Chróinín *et al.* 2012, Carse 2015). These results highlight the importance of, and need for, flexibility to allow for localised decisional capital to develop through autonomy and teacher leadership in the delivery of curricular innovations.

Regardless of the differing leadership approaches adopted, it is clear that all of the participants rejected traditional hierarchical one-person hero models of leadership, which are prevalent in many primary schools (Drea and O'Brien 2003, Bush 2011). In line with the findings of Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007), consultation and collaboration were highly valued elements of leadership by the participants of this research. Yet, when explicitly asked if it was important to have one assigned leader for the project, four of the five lead teachers considered it vital. This paradox indicates that the teachers rejected traditional hierarchical models of leadership in favour of shared models of leadership, whilst still preferring to work within a framework with assigned leaders. This resonates with Gronn's (2009b) presentation of leadership as a hybrid mixture of both concentrated and dispersed leadership. He advocates that leadership can come from a single individual or from a variety of individuals and that this can change dependant on the context. The reality of the leadership practice mirrors Gronn's (2009) assertion that leadership can come from both the individual leader and the wider group of teachers within a cluster at different times and to different extents. This is also in keeping with Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) theory of professional capital which promotes the involvement of all teachers in leadership. The results, therefore, emphasise the importance of shared leadership to successful PE innovation, whilst also highlighting the important role that can be played by an assigned lead teacher.



## **Development of social capital**

Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) vision of professional capital identifies teacher interaction as central to quality teaching and they refer to these interactions as social capital 'Social capital refers to how the quantity and quality of interactions and social relationships among people affects their knowledge and information; their sense of expectation, obligation and trust' (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, p.90). Participants indicated that instances of collaboration were not common place in their respective schools prior to this study, especially in relation to PE. This is in keeping with research elsewhere which has demonstrated the prevalence of cultures of isolation and individualism where teachers rarely become involved in tasks outside of their own classroom within primary schools (York-Barr and Duke 2004, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Specific to PE discussion in an Irish context, Coulter (2012) also found at the outset of her professional development intervention that PE was not a common topic of discussion between teachers. As the ultimate frisbee project progressed, however, it became evident that the teachers involved began to discuss PE and that social capital was being developed. This additional PE discussion, and in some cases collaboration, can be linked to the presence of a lead teacher providing leadership. In several instances the lead teachers purposefully sought to start conversations about PE, as well as meeting other teachers to provide them with demonstrations and advice which further stimulated discussion. These results are in agreement with those obtained by Spillane and Hopkins (2013) who found that teacher interaction was stimulated where individuals were designated to provide advice. Research also indicates that leadership is most effective when it is focussed on classroom teaching and learning rather than administrative tasks (Bush 2008, Robinson *et al.* 2009). The experiences of the lead teachers also support these claims, as the leadership they provided related to content and pedagogy was considered central to the success of the project. Although the organisational leadership provided was also important, the participants highlighted leadership related to content and

pedagogy as particularly significant in the development of teacher interaction. This is in accord with the suggestions of Hammersley-Fletcher (2002) and the OECD (2014) who both recommend that middle leaders in schools are facilitated in leading curriculum and pedagogical change rather than focussing exclusively on administrative tasks. Discussion relating to PE was more prevalent in schools where a greater amount of leadership relating to content and pedagogy was reported and this indicates that the provision of this type of leadership was a central factor in the development of social capital.

The informal nature of the leadership provided by the lead teachers also facilitated social capital development related to PE within this research. Similarly to Frost and Durrant (2002), informal leadership was understood to be the actions of a teacher without a formal position to plan and deliberately contribute strategically to school improvement. The lead teachers were all full-time generalist classroom teachers and with the exception of Noel, did not have formal leadership roles within the school. Although recruited specifically for this project, these lead teachers voluntarily sought to support the implementation of the ultimate frisbee project through the provision of informal leadership. The participants seemed comfortable with the more relaxed nature of informal leadership and this lack of formality succeeded in maintaining and developing positive relationships amongst the participants. Positive personal relationships between school staff members are central to the development of teacher collaboration (Bush and Glover 2012). These positive collegial relationships can be endangered when a teacher takes up a leadership role, with isolation and conflict often becoming more prevalent (York-Barr and Duke 2004). The lead teachers were, however, extremely positive about their experiences of leadership and collegial relationships, much of which they attributed to adopting and maintaining an informal leadership role. Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012, p.114) vision of professional capital also outlines the importance of maintaining informality. 'Collaborative cultures not only *can* be informal but they also *must always* be informal because without

investment in underlying relationships, collaboration will be stilted, forced and even damaging'. The results support this theory, as the teachers' positive relationships were facilitated by informal leadership and this was the bedrock upon which social capital developed. The lead teachers felt that the informal leadership approach they adopted was beneficial and could be linked to increased levels of PE discussion. This increased PE discussion created opportunities for informal learning to take place, the importance of which has been emphasised by a number of researchers (Colley *et al.* 2003, Richter *et al.* 2010, Banks and Smyth 2011, The Teaching Council 2015). The lead teachers did note, however, that certain aspects of leading informally could be challenging. In particular, finding time to meet people proved difficult when leading informally, especially in larger schools. In one school, for example, weekly meetings were organised in an attempt to overcome this challenge. Within the literature, creating time for professional dialogue has been identified as vital to successful teacher leadership (Harris 2003, Angelle and DeHart 2011, Bush and Glover 2012, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Carse 2015). This would suggest that to maximise the benefits of an informal leadership approach, structures such as assigned meeting times need to be put in place to scaffold and support informal leadership. Ultimately, the teachers felt that positive personal relationships, facilitated by an informal leadership approach, contributed to the development of social capital.

Social capital has been identified as a key variable required for innovation to succeed (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Ó Ruairc 2013). As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p.105) note 'if you want to change peoples' practices and beliefs you have to alter patterns of communication and build new kinds of relationships'. The development of social capital provided opportunities for collective participation and leadership, both of which have been identified as elements of high quality professional development (Patton and Parker 2014). The context specific, collaborative and continuous nature of the support provided by several of the

lead teachers through social capital interactions also resonated with several other characteristics of high quality professional development (O'Sullivan and Deglau 2006, Armour and Yelling 2007, Patton *et al.* 2012). Although not an explicit aim of this study, or an outcome that was overtly measured, it is evident that PE leadership resulted in a form of professional development for both the lead and participating teachers. In particular the development of a positive collegial atmosphere appears to be a significant by-product of PE leadership. This type of supportive environment is central to teacher learning (Patton *et al.* 2013), and could, therefore, potentially play a role in the future development of a professional learning community. In line with other PE professional development studies (Armour and Fraser 2004, Coulter 2012, Parker *et al.* 2012, Patton *et al.* 2013, Hastie *et al.* 2014), the participants began to value increased communication and opportunities to discuss PE and learn from each other. This recognition of the social nature of learning is significant, as in many instances teachers do not recognise the potential of everyday practices such as interaction to act as a form of PE professional development (Keay 2005, Keay 2006). Opening social capital channels of PE communication could potentially be an important precursor to leadership impacting on practice at the classroom level, through the creation of significant opportunities for professional development.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to further our understanding of generalist classroom teachers' experiences of leading PE innovation. It also sought to identify the skills and supports needed when providing PE leadership. The results demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of leading PE innovation, as well as the complexity of carrying out the dual role of classroom teacher and lead teacher. It is clear, however, that school based PE lead teachers can have an important role in leading innovation. Whilst all of the lead teachers provided valuable leadership related to organisation and management, some of the lead teachers went a step further and also

provided leadership related to content and pedagogy. Although many factors can influence leadership, the lead teachers' human capital relating to PE and their understanding of leadership in a primary school context were found to be strong influences on the leadership approach adopted, particularly leadership related to content and pedagogy. The provision of this leadership related to content and pedagogy by several of the lead teachers was also significant in the development of the social capital. Engagement in a collaborative project where teachers simultaneously teach the same content and the informal leadership approach adopted were other factors which contributed significantly to the development of teacher interaction. These results indicate that school based lead teachers providing leadership can have an important role in developing social capital relating to PE. The lead teachers utilised this newly developed social capital as a way of sharing their own individual human capital expertise with participating teachers and also to tap into the human capital of their colleagues within the school. Accordingly, these interactions acted as a form of professional development for the teachers involved. In turn, the development of this social capital facilitated a shared approach to leadership, where the lead and participating teachers collaborated to further support PE innovation. This shared approach to leadership and the project based collaborative approach used also enhanced leadership capital, as the lead teachers now had further opportunities to develop the aforementioned social capital, as well as decisional and human capital. Maintaining an informal leadership approach was, however, found to be one of the most important aspects of the project, as it was felt that positive collegial relationships were developed and maintained. A feeling of autonomy and the potential to utilise one's own judgment or decisional capital also contributed to the positive attitude towards innovation. The success of informal leadership highlights the need for flexibility in curricular innovation to allow for localised leadership. It also showed the importance of utilising structures to scaffold informal leadership such as assigned meeting times and explicitly planning for leadership.

Whilst structuring informal leadership may be challenging, if the right balance can be found it could potentially represent the most effective means of utilising school based lead teachers in Irish primary schools.

Overall the results are encouraging and suggest that if schools wish to innovate in PE, school based PE lead teachers can play an important role. The PE lead teachers provided a valuable form of continuous and easily accessible informal support, as well as facilitating teachers to begin collaborating and working together in PE. School based PE lead teachers with human and social capital relating to PE, as well as autonomy to utilise their own decisional capital, can have a positive role in promoting and facilitating PE innovation.

## **Chapter 7: Study 2**

### **Research design Study 2**

#### **Study 1 to Study 2**

Study 1 investigated teachers' experiences of leadership while promoting PE innovation within their schools. Overall the results were encouraging indicating that school based PE lead teachers can have a significant role in supporting PE innovation. These positive findings led to the consideration of further ways in which informal school based lead teachers could be utilised within primary schools to provide PE leadership in Study 2. Class swapping was identified within the literature as another way in which informal school based lead teachers could provide PE leadership and positively influence PE provision. The results of Study 1 also strongly suggested the potential of class swapping for PE as a means of building on the conclusions of Study 1. Accordingly, Study 2 investigated teachers' leadership experiences of teaching additional PE through class swapping. Each of these factors which guided the design of Study 2 will be discussed in this section.

Class swapping for PE has been identified as another form of informal PE leadership within primary schools. Instances of class swapping for PE have also been documented in Australia, New Zealand, England and Finland (Pühse and Gerber 2005, Morgan and Hansen 2007, Petrie 2008, Jones and Green 2015). The potential of lead teachers to class swap for PE has also been promoted within an Irish context (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007, Ní Chróinín and Murtagh 2009). Furthermore, within study 1 there were also several occasions when teachers spoke about class swapping for PE and the possibility of engaging in this practice. While class swapping did not occur in the first study, in keeping with the literature it was identified as another beneficial form of PE leadership. Noel was one of the lead teachers, and had engaged in class swapping before in PE and suggested it was a good arrangement,

*Noel: 'It might happen for something like music or PE where some teacher might have felt, you know, wasn't proficient enough you know'*

*Liam: 'and did you feel that was a good arrangement?'*

*Noel: 'oh yea, yea certainly sure why not. If one teacher feels a bit inadequate and another teacher is happy to do it you know it's a win win situation both ways' (OI)*

This opened up an interesting line of inquiry, as it appears class swapping is already being used in some Irish primary schools as a means of utilising the unique expertise of teachers and PE leadership. Despite these references to class swapping by the participants and also within the literature, the merits of this practice as a form of PE leadership have not been explicitly investigated. Accordingly, class swapping for PE was identified as an area warranting further investigation within the context of informal primary PE leadership research.

In addition to references within the literature and the experiences of participants, the results of Study 1 further confirmed the value of investigating class swapping in the context of primary PE leadership. Social capital was highlighted as central to the success of Study 1. The design of study 2, therefore, took into account the importance of teacher interactions and social capital development within PE leadership. Class swapping in itself was identified as an activity that could potentially facilitate social capital development. Teachers within the same school would be working with the same group of children and so a level of collaboration could be required. The lead teachers selected for Study 2, therefore, had to meet predetermined criteria in relation to social capital. A new set of lead teachers with a collective responsibility outlook were consequently sought for Study 2, as teachers with these perspectives were found to be well placed to facilitate teacher interaction and social capital development in Study 1. These selection criteria could be fulfilled by involvement in whole school projects and PE initiatives outside of their own classroom.



Human capital expertise was also identified as an important factor in Study 1. Making use of this human capital relating to PE was, therefore, another consideration when creating Study 2. Class swapping for PE was identified as a means of potentially effectively utilising school based lead teachers with PE expertise. In Study 1 the lead teachers who had positive perceptions of their human capital relating to PE were the most comfortable and confident in leading the PE project within the school. The lead teachers who were not as confident in their human capital relating to PE were, for example, less comfortable in providing leadership related to content and pedagogy. This indicated the importance of the lead teachers having sufficient human capital relating to PE. Other researchers have also noted that expertise is important to leadership (Woods *et al.* 2004, Spillane and Diamond 2007). Human capital for the lead teacher was, therefore, important to facilitate leadership and ensure that poor quality PE teaching practices would not be perpetuated or reinforced by ineffective teachers holding the position of lead teacher. Timperley (2005, p.417) referred to the dangers of the ‘distribution of incompetence’ and this phenomenon has also been noted elsewhere in the literature (Casey 2012). Selection criteria, therefore, included participation in PE professional development activities or elective PE modules in college. The rationale for these criteria was that lead teachers with human capital expertise relating to PE would be well placed to provide PE leadership through class swapping.

While Study 1 demonstrated the potential of school based lead teachers to promote and facilitate innovation as one form of PE leadership, it also highlighted the more general potential of PE leadership to positively influence PE provision. In keeping with the overall research questions, Study 2 was concerned with exploring these PE leadership possibilities further. Class swapping was identified within the literature and by the participants of Study 1 as another form of informal PE leadership which could potentially positively influence PE provision. Class swapping was also identified as way to building on the results of Study 1, as both human

capital expertise and social capital development were considered to be inherent within the process. These factors combined led to the decision to consider class swapping in the context of primary PE leadership in Study 2.

### **Research design Study 2**

Study 2 investigated the experiences of lead teachers who taught PE to classes other than their own in primary schools. Three generalist primary school teachers with additional expertise in the teaching of PE were recruited for this case study. As with Study 1 no leadership instruction was provided to the lead teachers. They were asked to teach at least two hours of PE to classes other than their own over the course of twelve weeks. The lead and participating teachers, principals and children in each school provided valuable insights into the practice of generalist primary school teachers teaching additional PE.

### **Research questions**

As has been outlined, each study contributed to answering the overarching research question outlined in chapter 1. Study 2 did this by answering the following secondary research questions:

- What are the experiences of teachers with additional PE expertise teaching PE to classes other than their own in primary schools?
  - (a) What are the PE leadership experiences of teachers who teach additional PE?
  - (b) What are the benefits and challenges of PE lead teachers teaching PE to classes other than their own from the perspective of the other teachers, children in the PE class and the school principals?
  - (c) What skills and supports does a PE lead teacher need when teaching additional PE across the primary school?

### **Research design: Case study**

A case study typically involves intensive investigation into a setting or location (Bryman 2004), which contains a specific phenomenon of interest (Yin 2009). Yin (2009, p.18) defines case study as ‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context’. Several other definitions for case studies have also been offered, notably by Stake (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994). These definitions are summarised succinctly by Simons (2009, p.13) as having in common ‘a commitment to studying a situation or phenomenon in its “real life” context, to understanding complexity and to defining case study other than by methods’. A case study approach was considered most appropriate for this research study as the phenomenon of class swapping was being investigated within the real life context of the primary school. The focus of a case study can be on one specific case or on a small number of cases (Bryman 2004). Stake (1994) identified three different types of cases; intrinsic, instrumental and multiple or collective. Intrinsic case studies investigate one particular case of interest, instrumental cases are when a particular case is chosen to shed light on a wider issue, while a multiple or collective case is an extension of an intrinsic case to include more cases which provide insight into the phenomenon or group of interest. This study can be considered a multiple case study, as the location was three primary schools and the phenomena being investigated was the experiences of teachers with expertise teaching additional PE through class swapping. In essence, a case study approach can be viewed as a strategy rather than a specific method of analysis (Punch and Oancea 2014), as it does not dictate which methods are chosen (Denscombe 2010). In this case study observation, interviews and reflective diaries were the methods chosen to answer the research questions. Providing a clear definition of what the case entails and the boundaries of the case is an important part of case study research (Miles and Huberman 1994, Denscombe 2010, Armour

and Griffiths 2012). Accordingly, the boundaries of the cases were recognised as the teachers, principal and the childrens' experiences of class swapping over the period of twelve weeks.

Case study was considered especially appropriate for this research as it allowed for the subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations to be examined (Denscombe 2010). This focus on relationships and social processes can provide insight into outcomes and also into some of the processes underpinning these outcomes. The opportunity to closely examine social processes resonates with the research questions of this study which focus on the PE leadership experiences of teachers who teach additional PE. The significance of context is also accounted for within case studies (Cohen *et al.* 2011), and this was considered important as a result of the uniqueness and diversity within primary schools. Case study research is also useful when investigating areas where little research has been done in the past (Merriam 1998). By adopting a case study approach, a thorough account of the specific phenomena being investigated could be created (Armour and Griffiths 2012). As this is the first piece of research to explicitly investigate class swapping, case study is a particularly appropriate research strategy.

Critics of case study research would suggest that many of these studies can be unscientific, pointing to a perceived lack of objectivity and generalisability (Armour and Griffiths 2012). It must be noted, however, that these questions of objectivity and generalisability are evident within any research method (Yin 2009). Researchers such as Flyvbjerg (2004) and Walton (1992) have argued strongly and persuasively specific to case study research that one can generalise. Rather than attempting to generalise within this research, however, the results are seen as valuable in their own right. In keeping with the work of Flyvbjerg (2004, p.395), the present research has been informed by the outlook that "formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' is underestimated". Accordingly in place of generalisability within this case study, the reader will gain insights through the connections they draw between their own experiences and those recorded within

the case study (Thomas 2011). This research was approached from the perspective of a teacher and practitioner seeking to contribute to practical knowledge, which may in turn contribute to theoretical knowledge and the broader context. This perspective resonates with the case study research approach chosen, as case studies can be viewed as centrally concerned with practical wisdom (Thomas 2011). The narrative derived from this case study provides a rich description and insight into class swapping that is unique within current literature. It can contribute to the practice of teaching in schools, and may, in turn, help to inform policy.

### **Case selection**

Having decided on case study as an appropriate research strategy it was necessary to consider case selection. The type of case study and selection of appropriate participants within each case depends largely on the research question (Armour and Griffiths 2012). In this case, the research questions sought to examine the experiences of teachers with additional PE expertise teaching PE to classes other than their own in primary schools. As this research was attempting to generate detailed information about a specific phenomenon of interest, random sampling was not considered the most effective selection strategy. A random or representative sample may not provide the richest source of information on the phenomenon in question and random sampling is also often prioritised by those seeking generalisability and representativeness from a case study (Flyvbjerg 2004). As has been discussed, generalisability was not the main concern within the social constructivist research paradigm adopted. Other means of case selection, such as purposeful sampling were, therefore, considered more appropriate. Purposeful sampling involves deliberately focusing on a relatively small number of instances with desired attributes, based on the belief that valuable data can be generated (Denscombe 2010). In Study 2 importance was consequently attributed to recruiting participants with positive perceptions of their PE content knowledge and a whole school understanding of leadership. Both of these attributes were found to be important to PE leadership in Study 1.

Purposeful sampling was therefore, utilised, and took place in the form of a checklist which specifically asked candidates if they had built up additional PE content knowledge. Case selection was on the basis of greatest potential for learning rather than on representativeness (Stake 2005). Similarly to Study 1 potential participants were also asked to consider if they met other relevant criteria. The participant checklist was as follows:

*Figure 7.1: Participant suitability checklist*

<p><b><u>Suitability checklist to take on the role of PE leader</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are you a class teacher?</li><li>• Do you enjoy teaching physical education?</li><li>• Would you value the opportunity to teach additional PE lessons across your school?</li><li>• Have you gained additional expertise or experience related to primary PE teaching in any of the following ways:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Postgraduate study e.g. Diploma or Masters in physical education</li><li>➤ PE specialisation in college through elective modules</li><li>➤ Worked as a PE local facilitator with the PDST</li><li>➤ Delivered PE continuous professional development (CPD) courses</li><li>➤ Completed additional PE CPD courses/ related coaching courses or certificates</li></ul></li></ul>
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The suitability checklist used is largely in keeping with guidelines suggested for identifying teacher expertise when choosing research participants (Palmer *et al.* 2005). Aside from one criteria, all guidelines outlined by Palmer *et al.* (2005) in relation to teacher expertise were met by the three participants chosen for this research. Despite not fulfilling the final criteria, which was documented evidence of teacher impact on student performance, the researcher was

satisfied that the chosen participants had PE expertise and accordingly could provide insight into the research questions.

The broader context of primary PE in Ireland was also taken into account when designing the candidate criteria. Whilst participants were purposively selected for their relevance to the research question, the selection of teachers with additional PE expertise was also considered important as a result of recent changes in initial teacher education. Students in colleges of education may now benefit from five modules of instruction in a chosen elective subject (The Teaching Council 2012b), and this may contribute significantly to the number of teachers with specific PE expertise in Irish primary schools. It was, therefore, identified that schools and teachers may be able to learn and apply the knowledge gained from the class swapping in this case study to their own settings.

### **Contacting participants**

Having decided on the criteria for case selection the process of contacting potential participants began. Specific groups of teachers who were thought to be more likely to meet the criteria in the suitability checklist were targeted. In the first instance, a letter of recruitment was emailed to all teachers within the PDST with a responsibility for PE. These are generalist primary school teachers who on a part-time basis receive additional education in the area of PE and deliver PE professional development to other teachers. The email was sent to twenty five teachers and three replies were received. Two of the teachers who replied did not meet the criteria as they were not currently classroom teachers, while the third reply was added to a list of potential candidates for further consideration. As a result of the low response rate other alternatives means of contacting potential participants were considered. A recruitment email was also sent to a local PE community of practice mailing list for which the researcher was acting as co-ordinator. Three responses were received from this email, with two candidates

meeting the participant criteria being added to the list for further consideration. The recruitment email was also sent to past cohorts of students who had completed elective modules in PE during their initial teacher education. One of the three teachers who responded to this email met the criteria and was considered as a possible participant. As well as sending recruitment emails, contacts which were built up with PE teacher educators in Irish colleges of education were utilised. They passed on details of teachers who had completed postgraduate study relevant to primary PE. Contact was made with several of these teachers and one further potential candidate was identified through this process. While five participants who met the criteria had been identified, the vital importance of case selection was identified and so further candidates were sought before making a final decision. The researcher was invited to present a workshop at the IPPEA annual conference and took this opportunity to briefly explain details of his research study and hand out information leaflets. A further four teachers in attendance at the conference came forward and were added to the final list of nine participants for consideration. At this point each of the nine potential participants identified were contacted again and discussions took place in more detail on their backgrounds and school context. The final three participants were chosen because of their strong expertise relating to PE as well as their passion and commitment to PE as a subject within the primary school. After gathering informed consent from each of the three lead teachers, each of the case study schools were visited. This visit was used as an opportunity to meet the gatekeepers of the schools and to acquire consent for the research to be carried out within the setting. These visits were also used as an opportunity to meet the participating teachers who were going to swap classes with the lead teachers. These teachers had been recruited by the lead teachers and so it was considered important to meet them before the research began. These participating teachers were provided with information on the study and it was made clear to them that there was no compulsion to participate. Following these meetings informed consent for participation was gathered from



the participating teachers. It was also considered important to gather consent from the pupils, as they had an important role within the research. Informed consent for the children to participate in focus groups was sought firstly from the parents or guardians, and then from the children themselves (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Specific information sheets were created for both the parents and the pupils themselves in appropriate language. The pupils were also spoken to about the purpose of the research and their potential role. Following this, pupils who had already received parental consent were then invited to provide their own consent for participation.

### **Case study context and participant biographies**

When using a case study methodology it is important to provide the reader with sufficient context and background on the case (Silverman 2005). As has been previously discussed, it was considered imperative to provide detailed context and background on the case so that readers can make comparisons to their own context (Thomas 2011). Background information on the lead teachers, participating teachers, principals and the research setting will now be discussed in more detail.

#### **Tara**

At the time of the study, Tara had over five years teaching experience, spread across several schools. She was in her third year teaching at Riverhedge School, an urban mixed gender designated disadvantage primary school with over one hundred and fifty pupils. Tara was extremely passionate about PE and sport provision. Whilst not considering herself an active child, she found a love for physical activity and sport late in her teenage years. She initially trained as an outdoor and adventure instructor and worked within this sector for several years, often with children of primary school age. She then completed a postgraduate qualification in primary teaching and began working as a generalist primary school teacher. Since qualifying

as a primary school teacher, Tara has completed numerous continuous professional development and coaching courses related to primary PE. All of these course were undertaken voluntarily, the majority of which took place after school hours and at her own expense. She valued learning new skills and her strong commitment to professional development is demonstrated by her membership of the IPPEA and involvement in a regional PE community of practice. Since attaining a position in Riverhedge, Tara has acted as a catalyst for some improvements in the PE and sports programmes being delivered within the school. She had been centrally involved in improving the schools PE equipment, as well as whole school physical activity and PE initiatives. While she felt that her enthusiasm for PE had rubbed off on several of her colleagues, she noted that PE is not a top priority within her school. This was partly attributed to the schools designated disadvantaged status and emphasis on literacy and numeracy. She maintained a personal involvement in several sports, as well as coaching and teaching extra-curricular sporting activities after hours in her own school, as well as in other settings.

Hayley and Maura were the participating teachers in Riverhedge in Study 2A. All of the participating teachers taught different class levels to Tara. Hayley had almost ten years of experience teaching and has taught a wide range of age levels. Hayley did not have a massive passion for teaching PE and had a limited knowledge of sports. Maura was a newly qualified teacher in her first full year of teaching. She was very interested in PE and thoroughly enjoyed teaching the subject.

The principal in Riverhedge school had over thirty five years teaching experience, six of which were in her current role as an administrative principal. Philomena had in the past a strong involvement in one particular physical activity and participated at a high level. She actively promoted this physical activity within the school through the PE curriculum. Aside from this

strand of the curriculum, Philomena identified the teachers as the main drivers of PE within the school.

## **Henry**

Henry was an experienced primary school teacher with over twenty five years of experience. Much of his career has been spent in Glasswood primary school, a large mixed gender urban primary school with over 600 pupils. The majority of children who attend Glasswood primary come from middle and higher socio-economic backgrounds. From childhood Henry had a special interest in physical activity and participated in a variety of sports to a high level and was part of a very active family. As part of his initial teacher education Henry took an elective module in the area of PE which further developed his passion in this area. Having taught in Glasswood for several years, his interest in teaching and learning in PE led him to complete a postgraduate degree in primary PE. He found this very useful and it prompted him to develop his competency across the whole PE curriculum, as opposed to focussing on his areas of strength. Henry also spent a number of years out of school working with a national body responsible for delivering PE professional development to teachers. Throughout this time Henry had an involvement in the IPPEA and remains a member today. Upon returning to his position as a classroom teacher he continued his involvement in PE professional development by both attending and delivering courses and workshops. In particular he had a strong influence on PE within Glasswood primary school from his position as a post holder and PE curriculum leader. As part of this role he was responsible for the allocation of the PE and sports budget within the school, as well as having a role in the school PE plan. Henry has been a central figure in the PE provision delivered within the school and he reported it to be of a good standard. He still had a strong personal involvement in sports and is very active in the provision of extra-curricular sporting activities within the school and across the wider community.

The participating teachers in Glasswood were Catherine and Rachel, both of whom taught the same class level as Henry. Catherine was in the school for almost ten years and although she was more passionate about other subjects on the curriculum, she has a positive disposition towards PE teaching. Rachel was a newly qualified teacher and had been in Glasswood for less than two years. Rachel did not feel particularly competent or competent in her own teaching of PE and identified it as one of the most difficult subjects to teach effectively on the primary curriculum.

Becky was the principal teacher in Glasswood. Becky was an administrative principal and had over twenty years teaching experience. Beck felt strongly that teaching PE was a valuable opportunity for the class teacher to learn about the pupils in their classes and accordingly she placed a strong value on the subject.

### **Amy**

Amy has been a teacher at Summeracre primary school for almost ten years. Summeracre primary school is a medium sized suburban primary school with around 200 pupils. PE is a subject that has been prioritised by the school management in recent years, with the school taking part in several related initiatives. Amy herself has played active role in many of these initiatives but does not perceive herself as the central PE leader within the school. Amy comes from a very sporty background and from a young age participated in many sports. She subsequently narrowed her focus and competes in one sport at an elite level. Amy first completed a degree in sports recreation and leisure management where she was exposed to working with young people in a sporting context. Having completed this degree Amy pursued further postgraduate study and qualified as a primary school teacher. Since taking a teaching position she has attended several professional development course specific to PE. She has also undertaken some of the preparatory training necessary to become a facilitator with a national

body responsible for delivering primary PE professional development. Amy was confident in teaching PE, much of which she attributed to the additional expertise and experiences she gained when working with children in a sporting context as part of her first degree. Whilst this confidence extends across most areas of the PE curriculum, Amy viewed this research as an opportunity to further develop her expertise in certain strands of the PE curriculum. She was involved in the provision of extra-curricular sports within the school and remains an active participant in her own chosen sport.

Jessica the first participating teacher in Summeracre primary school had taught for over five years, while Grace the other participating teacher had been in the school for more than ten years. Neither participant considered PE to be one of their strongest subjects, but both Grace and Jessica still had positive attitudes towards teaching PE.

Sean was the administrative principal in Summeracre primary school. Sean had over twenty years of teaching experience and was extremely passionate about PE. Sean had been instrumental in promoting PE across the school since taking up the position of principal in Summeracre primary school.

### **Data generation**

The data generation techniques chosen within the qualitative case study approach were interviews, lead teacher reflective diaries, focus group interviews and researcher observations.

Data generation took place over a fourteen week period as follows:

*Table 7.1: Data generation Study 2A*

<b>Week 1</b>	Initial interviews with PE lead teachers, participating teachers and principals. Focus group interviews with children taught by PE lead teacher in each school. Three children from each class which were taught PE by the PE lead teacher randomly selected for interview.
<b>Week 2-13:</b>	Lead teachers teach PE to three classes in school and complete weekly reflective diary.
<b>Week 2-3:</b>	Initial observation of each lead teacher teaching PE to a class other than their own.
<b>Week 5:</b>	Interview with PE lead teachers, informal discussions with other teachers and principals.
<b>Week 7</b>	Second observation of each lead teacher teaching PE to a class other than their own.
<b>Week 9</b>	Interview with PE lead teachers, informal discussions with other teachers and principals.
<b>Week 12-13:</b>	Final observation of each lead teacher teaching PE to a class other than their own.
<b>Week 14:</b>	Final interviews with PE lead teachers, participating teachers and principals. Final focus group interviews with children taught by PE lead teacher in each school.

### **Individual interviews**

#### Lead teacher

Individual interviews were used extensively to generate data in Study 2. The lead teachers were interviewed four times over the course of the intervention, with interviews ranging in

length from twenty five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes. These interviews were all audio recorded as well as transcribed and took place at a variety of different times in the participants' schools. Usually these were held in a classroom or staffroom at the end of the school day after the pupils had left. On several occasions, however, these interviews took place during school hours, with the participants being released from their class by another teacher. The initial interview sought to gather in depth background information about the teacher leading the project and the school. This information was considered particularly important to provide a comprehensive case study context. The participants' perspectives on leadership and of class swapping were also discussed in the initial interview.

Follow up interviews were held with the lead teachers after four weeks, eight weeks and at the conclusion of the intervention. The schedules for each of these interviews was strongly shaped by the lead teachers' weekly reflective diaries, the observations carried out, as well as interviews with other stakeholders involved in the study.

### Principal

Individual interviews were also held with the principal in each of the case study schools. These took place in the principals' offices, often during school hours and ranged in time from fifteen to thirty minutes. The initial interviews were concerned with further developing insight into the workings of the case study school, as well as gathering the principals' perspectives on leadership and class swapping.

The final interview with the principal took place during the last week of the intervention or after it had finished. The principals used this as an opportunity to reflect on the project as a whole and to make sense of class swapping. These interviews were used to probe and further examine topics that had emerged from the other data sources and this aided the process of triangulation.

### Participating teachers

Individual interviews also took place with all of the teachers who had been swapping their classes with the lead teacher over the course of the intervention. These interviews took place in the interviewees schools, either after school had finished or during school hours and lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. When the interviews took place during school time teachers received cover for their class. As with the other initial interviews, these were audio recorded and transcribed and context on the case setting was sought, as well as each individuals' perspectives on class swapping.

The teachers who were swapping with the lead teachers also took part in a final interview at the end of the intervention. The participants' perspectives were sought as in many cases the lead teachers was unsure as to how the project was perceived by others. The participating teachers were also questioned further on events that the lead teachers had spoken about in their reflective diaries and interviews.

### **Focus group interviews**

Focus group interviews took place with a random sample of pupils (age range 5-10 years) who were taught by the lead teacher during the intervention. The names of the pupils who had provided consent were mixed and a random order was selected, with those at the top of the list chosen for interview. The pupils' perspectives on class swapping and its perceived impact on their learning was sought in these focus groups. Two focus group interviews took place in each school prior to the start of the intervention. Groups of three or four pupils from each class who had provided consent were randomly selected to participate. Quiet places within the schools such as empty meeting rooms or resource rooms were sought to undertake these focus groups. The use of child friendly language was prioritised when designing the interview scripts. Icebreaker activities were utilised at the beginning of each focus group to ensure pupils were



comfortable and willing to converse. During the focus groups pupils were also encouraged to draw pictures to express their feelings relating to PE. The approach taken was in keeping with guidelines put forward by Mitchell *et al.* (2011) for using drawing as a visual methodology. A reassuring invitation to draw pictures of their PE classes was provided and a range of drawing materials such as coloring pencils and markers were made available to the participants. The children were given ample time to draw and were asked to explain their drawings as they were working. The commentaries provided by the children, rather than the finished drawings, were most valuable in providing insights into the pupils' experiences of class swapping. Accordingly the childrens' commentaries of their work were utilised in the results chapter rather than the pictures themselves. An example of a drawing with accompanying commentary is available in Appendix K. These focus group interviews ranged in length from eight to twenty five minutes.

Follow up focus group interviews took place with the same group of pupils at the end of the study to provide insight into the children's experiences of being taught PE by a different teacher. The same group of pupils took part in the follow up focus groups, as they were familiar with the researcher from the first interview and observations. A positive relationship had developed with the pupils in the first interview and this facilitated the process in the final interviews. These focus groups had a similar format to the initial focus group with participants also asked to draw and describe pictures of their PE experiences, this time with lead teacher. These follow up focus group interviews lasted between thirteen and twenty eight minutes. An overview of the pupils involved in focus groups in Study 2A is provided in table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Pupils involved in focus groups Study 2A

<b><u>School</u></b>	<b><u>Pupils involved in focus group</u></b>	<b><u>Class level</u></b>	<b><u>Class teacher</u></b>	<b><u>Lead teacher</u></b>
Riverhedge	Tracey, Noelle, Kyle	First Class	Maura	Tara
Riverhedge	Joseph, Katie, Sarah	Senior Infants	Hayley	Tara
Glasswood	Callum, Triona, Andrea, Denis	Third Class	Catherine	Henry
Glasswood	Fay, Sadey, Evan	Third Class	Rachel	Henry
Summeracre	Matthew, Mark, Sophie	First Class	Grace	Amy
Summeracre	Niamh, Jerry, Britney	Second Class	Jessica	Amy

A summary of the interview schedule prompts used across all interviews in Study 2A is provided in table 7.3. A total of 349 pages of interview transcriptions were generated within this study. Exemplars of the full interview scripts used are available in appendix E.

Table 7.3: Study 2A interview schedule outlines

<u>Initial interview lead teachers</u>	<u>Initial interview principals</u>	<u>Follow-up interview principals</u>	<u>Initial interview participating teachers</u>	<u>Follow-up interview participating teachers</u>	<u>Initial focus group pupils</u>	<u>Follow-up focus group pupils</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background information</li> <li>• PE in the school</li> <li>• Participants own teaching of PE</li> <li>• Class swapping</li> <li>• Leadership experiences and perspectives</li> <li>• Looking ahead to the intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background information on principal and school</li> <li>• PE in the school</li> <li>• Perspectives on class swapping</li> <li>• Perspectives on leadership</li> <li>• Looking ahead to the intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges of class swapping</li> <li>• Benefits of class swapping</li> <li>• Logistics</li> <li>• Teacher interaction</li> <li>• Holistic development</li> <li>• Legacy of class swapping</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background information</li> <li>• PE in the schools</li> <li>• Teachers own teaching of PE</li> <li>• Class swapping</li> <li>• Perspectives on the upcoming intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges of class swapping</li> <li>• Benefits of class swapping</li> <li>• Logistics</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Legacy of class swapping</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Overall perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice breaker activities</li> <li>• School/background</li> <li>• Current PE class</li> <li>• PE with a different teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice breaker activities</li> <li>• PE with a different teacher</li> <li>• Perspectives on class swapping</li> </ul>

## Reflective diaries

Each of the lead teachers were asked to complete a weekly reflective diary to gather insights into their experiences of teaching additional PE and class swapping. The lead teachers were given the choice of completing the reflections electronically or by handwriting hard copies. Two of the lead teachers chose to complete the diaries by hand and the third lead teacher completed copies electronically. A total of thirty reflective diaries were generated by the lead teachers. The reflective diary contained the following four questions detailed in figure 7.2.

*Figure 7.2: Reflective diary questions Study 2A*

1. Using the table below please outline details of the PE you taught over the past week
2. What were the benefits of teaching PE to other classes this week?
3. What were the challenges of teaching PE to other classes this week?
4. Who did you talk to about PE this week? Use the questions below to help give a brief description.
  - (A) Did you seek information or advice about PE this week?
  - (B) Did anyone ask you for advice or information about PE this week?

Through the first three questions, it was hoped to gain insights into the lead teachers' experiences of class swapping and the perceived benefits and challenges. The final question was designed to consider the wider PE leadership role of the participants within their schools, as well the influence of class swapping on teacher interactions relating to PE. Information and advice-seeking patterns were considered specifically, as they have been noted as precursors to knowledge development and subsequent changes in instructional practices (Hopkins *et al.* 2014). Overall the reflective diaries provided a rich source of data which was invaluable in creating subsequent interview and focus group scripts. The reflective diaries also offered the

lead teachers an opportunity to clarify their thoughts about the study and helped them to engage fully with subsequent interviews. The full reflective diary template can be viewed in appendix F.

### **Observation and field notes**

Observations provided invaluable insight into the lead teachers and pupils' experiences of class swapping within Study 2. Three observations of each lead teacher teaching PE to another class took place. These observations lasted the duration of one PE class ranging in length from thirty to sixty minutes and took place within the respective school grounds in week 1, week 5 or 6 and in week 12. Repeated observations of each lead teacher at different points throughout the research facilitated the development of the relationship between the researcher and the pupils. A non-participatory approach to observation was adopted and a template was designed to systematically record these observations. Each of the observation categories were cross referenced with the research question and also drew on information gathered in the initial participant interviews. The observations which were undertaken proved extremely useful in generating subsequent interview schedules and questions. It was also helpful in aiding the triangulation of data sources. The full observation template used can be viewed in appendix H.

In addition to these observations, accompanying notes were also recorded throughout the study. These notes were handwritten and where possible were completed directly after visits to the case study schools. These notes were used to collate initial impressions on data generation that had just occurred. They also proved useful in recording anything of relevance which may not have been already captured, such as informal discussions and chats with staff in the case study schools.

## **Study 2 case study school withdrawal**

Study 2 started as per the research design outlined above with three case study schools. One case study school did, however, withdraw having completed only six weeks of Study 2 due to an unforeseen circumstance outside of the control of the researcher. The departure of this school from the research prompted significant reflection as to whether further data needed to be generated. With just under half of the anticipated data generated within the school in question at the time of withdrawal, the researcher was unsure if there was enough depth in two complete cases. The question of how much data is enough, is the subject of considerable debate within academic circles and different answers to this complex question have been presented by a variety of authors (Denscombe 2010). A common argument put forward within debates surrounding sample size is that there comes a point where further data will not add to a study (Mason 2010). This idea is often referred to as saturation and was first put forward by Glaser *et al.* (1967) as an element of grounded theory. The underlying principle of saturation which contends that a certain number of interviews can comprise the total amount of facts, is however, contrasting to social constructivist perspectives of learning (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009). As a result of the social constructivist outlook adopted saturation was, therefore, not considered as the most appropriate means of determining sample size.

The concept of information power has been offered as an alternative means of guiding adequate sample size in qualitative studies (Malterud *et al.* 2015). The basic premise of information power is ‘the more information the sample holds, relevant for the actual study, the lower amount of participation is needed’ (Malterud *et al.* 2015, p.1). This model identifies five specific criteria all of which have an impact on the information power of a study, namely, aim, sample specificity, use of established theory, quality of dialogue and analysis strategy (Malterud *et al.* 2015). Each of the five criteria were evaluated in relation to Study 2 to consider whether additional detail might help in comprehensively answering the research questions. On

the one hand, preliminary analysis of the data generated in Study 2 indicated that the quality of the data generated was good. Conversely, the overall aims of the research as well as the use of professional capital, a relatively new theory, indicated that some further data generation could be beneficial. In particular, it was deemed that further data could help answer the research question more fully and provide further insight into the use of professional capital within educational research. In terms of sample specificity, the leaders in Study 2 demonstrated characteristics highly specific to the research questions of the study. This led to the decision to involve the same participants in any follow on studies, as a means of developing further depth of understanding. While information power can be useful in guiding appropriate sample size, it should be noted that this concept was developed in the context of individual interview studies (Malterud *et al.* 2015). Decisions around sample size become more ambiguous when a number of different data generation methods are involved, such as the observations, focus groups and reflections used in this study. To this end, while information power helped inform the research design, the decision to generate further data was not based on this alone.

While the early withdrawal of one of the case study schools undoubtedly prompted further reflections on the depth of data already generated, the main motivation to pursue additional data generation was the potential for further learning. Valuable insights into the lead teachers' experiences of class swapping had already been generated in Study 2 at the time of the participant withdrawal. Using the concept of information power as a guide, investigation of the available evidence indicated that another phase of data generation would provide further opportunities for learning. It was envisaged that this further research could build on the results of Study 2 and more comprehensively interrogate and address the research questions posed at the outset of this study. A range of measures which could potentially improve the process of class swapping were, for example, identified by participants in Study 2. These included shortening the timeframe and number of classes involved in the swap, ensuring both teachers

are teaching a subject in which they are interested, changing the time of year in which the swap takes place, increasing the level of teacher interaction and discussion and consequently improving the overall planning of the swap. The opportunity to implement these suggestions in practice and explore the impact of adjusting these variables on class swapping was appealing. Whilst an all-encompassing approach was not sought, it was hoped that a set of practical guidelines could be created to inform schools and teachers with an interest in operating a system of class swapping. Accordingly, an additional phase of data generation was designed as a follow on to Study 2, which will be referred to as Study 2A. This additional phase of data generation will be referred to as Study 2B and details of the research design used will now be provided.

### **Research design Study 2B**

Study 2B of this research was a follow on study from Study 2A which sought to further answer the research questions posed at the outset of Study 2A. Two generalist primary school teachers who had participated in Study 2A were recruited for this study and asked to teach one hour of PE to a class other than their own for six weeks. The design of Study 2B was strongly influenced and informed by the results of the 2A and the feedback of the participants. The number of classes involved and the length of the class swap was reduced, a class swapping planning document was introduced, and a collaborative weekly reflective diary was created. Using a case study approach, qualitative data were generated through interviews and reflective diaries to provide insight into the participants' experiences of class swapping for PE.

### **Case selection**

The two lead teachers who had completed the previous phase of data generation were contacted and asked to consider participating in Study 2B. These lead teachers were considered most appropriate as a result of their experience and understanding of the class swapping process



from the previous phase. Both of the lead teachers were eager to be involved in further class swapping and agreed to participate. The data generated in the previous phase of class swapping indicated that minimising the number of teachers involved in the swap would be beneficial. The lead teachers were, therefore, asked to find only one teacher in their school with whom they would swap. Study 2A also highlighted the need for both teachers participating in the swap to have equal levels of interest and enthusiasm. The importance of ensuring that both the lead and participating teachers were teaching a subject in which they had a special interest was consequently emphasised to the lead teachers. In Glasswood, the participating teacher Rachel chosen for Study 2B had also taken part in Study 2A, while in the other school the participating teacher Sally was a new participant. Sally enjoyed teaching PE and was teaching in Riverhedge for almost ten years. Informed consent was sought and gathered from this new participant.

### **Data generation**

A planning document, qualitative interviews and reflective diaries were the methods of data generation used in Study 2B. The data generation which took place over a six week period in Study 2B is summarised in table 7.4.

*Table 7.4: Data generation Study 2B*

<b>Week 0</b>	Lead and participating teacher collaboratively complete class swapping planning document
<b>Week 1-6</b>	Lead teacher class swaps weekly to teach PE to one additional class in their school
<b>Week 1-6</b>	Lead and participating teacher collaboratively fill out class swapping reflection document
<b>Week 7</b>	Individual interviews undertaken with lead and participating teachers

## **Planning document**

Participants in Study 2A suggested that a planning template could enhance the class swapping process. To this end, a class swapping planning document was created for Study 2B. This document outlined a number of areas for the participating teachers to consider before they began the class swap. Topics addressed in the planning template included details of teachers expertise, aims of the swap, logistical arrangements, behavioural management procedures, as well as details of content to be covered, inclusion and reflection. These topics were included in the class swapping document as they had been identified as important to the class swapping process in Study 2A. Both the lead and participating teacher in each school were asked to complete this document together prior to the beginning of Study 2B.

## **Individual interviews**

In Study 2B individual interviews were only undertaken with the lead teachers at the end of the six week case study, as the researcher was already familiar with the background of all the participants and the schools. These interviews took place after school in the classrooms of the participants involved and lasted between 57 and 72 minutes.

The participating teachers who took part in Study 2B were also interviewed individually and these ranged in length from 23 to 31 minutes. These interviews were carried out at the end of the six week block of swapping and took place in the participating teachers' classrooms at the end of the school day. All of the interviews undertaken in this study were audio recorded and transcribed with a total of 74 pages of interview transcripts generated. The following is a brief summary of the topics explored in the interviews with the lead and participating teachers.

Table 7.5: Study 2B interview schedule outlines

<u>Interviews with lead teachers</u>	<u>Interview with participating teachers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class swapping</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Reflection</li> <li>• Teacher interaction</li> <li>• Changes in Study 2B</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Collective responsibility</li> <li>• Looking back over both phases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class swapping</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Teacher interaction</li> <li>• Reflection</li> <li>• Collective responsibility</li> <li>• Legacy of class swapping</li> <li>• Overall reflections on class swapping</li> </ul>

### **Reflective diaries**

Reflective diaries were completed in conjunction with the participating teachers as teacher interaction was found to be central to the class swapping process in Study 2A. In Study 2B the lead teachers were, therefore, asked to complete the reflective diary in consultation with the participating teacher in the swap. It was envisaged that completing this reflection document together would act as a stimulus for discussion between the lead and participating teacher. The four questions which the lead and participating teachers were asked to answer each week are outlined in appendix F.

Notes were also kept by the researcher in Study 2B to document any interactions with participants outside of the data sources already mentioned. For example, several telephone conversations between the researcher and the lead teachers took place prior to the final

individual interviews to discuss progress and agree on dates for the final interviews. Notes relating to these conversations were helpful in facilitating the design of the interview schedules.

### **Summary**

In this section the research design of Study 2A and 2B has been outlined. Using a case study approach, two generalist lead teachers with additional PE expertise were recruited to teach PE to other classes within their respective schools over two separate intervention periods totaling eighteen weeks. Data generation included individual interviews, focus group interviews, reflections, observations, and the results generated are discussed in the next section.

## **Results Study 2**

Within this study, teachers with additional PE expertise taught PE to classes other than their own in two<sup>5</sup> case study primary schools over two separate intervention periods. The participants' experiences of class swapping for PE were analysed using qualitative data generated by individual interviews, focus groups, researcher observations and reflections. Illustrative quotes and examples have been chosen to demonstrate the lead teachers' experiences of class swapping for PE and have been organised into four main themes. The first theme explores how class swapping led to perceived richer PE experiences for pupils. The wider impact of class swapping on the long term and holistic development of pupils is then considered in theme two. The third theme describes how teacher interaction was central to the class swapping process. The final theme focuses on the role of class swapping in developing PE leadership and collective responsibility within the case study schools. Each of these four themes will be presented in turn before an overall summary will be provided.

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<sup>5</sup> Initially three schools began Phase 2A, but one school withdrew after week 5.

## **Theme 1: Class swapping led to perceived richer PE experiences for pupils**

The data generated over both phases of this two-part case study indicates that class swapping for PE led to richer PE experiences for the pupils involved. The PE lead teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and focus on learning were cited by a wide range of participants in both schools as the main factors underpinning these claims. Each of these three elements of the teaching of the PE lead teachers were predominant in adding richness to the pupils' PE experiences and will now be explored.

### **Expertise**

The lead teachers perceived that class swapping for PE led to better quality PE lessons for pupils. After engaging in class swapping over the course of two separate interventions they were convinced of its merits and felt that the expertise of the lead teachers positively influenced PE provision. Henry observed that class swapping '*Certainly led to a better quality PE, absolutely*' (Lead Teacher 2B Interview (2BI)), while Tara similarly noted that '*Definitely, 100%, class swapping led to a better quality of PE*' (Lead Teacher 2BI). A belief in their own personal PE expertise and teaching competence was one of the primary reasons for the lead teachers' conviction that class swapping contributed to the provision of better quality PE lessons. Expertise was considered beneficial in the provision of a greater breadth and depth of PE provision. Accordingly, the expertise of the lead teachers was considered as beneficial to pupils over the course of the swap, as Henry noted '*I would like to think that it does benefit the children if they have a teacher with a little more expertise*' (Lead teacher 2AFI). This viewpoint was overwhelmingly shared by all stakeholders. As Becky remarked, '*It's potentially very beneficial for the children, because they get expertise that they wouldn't otherwise be exposed to*' (Principal 2AFI). As well as the principals, the participating teachers also identified that the lead teachers had PE teaching expertise. Maura, for example, noted that

*'Tara is absolutely fantastic with the PE'* (Teacher 2AOI). Similarly, the pupils also recognised the lead teachers to have additional PE expertise. As is demonstrated in the quote below, however, some of the pupils' belief in teacher expertise was fuelled by the lead teachers' personal sporting backgrounds and attire,

*C: 'he (Henry) is so good (at PE) because he actually played on the old county [GAA]<sup>6</sup> team'*

*L: 'did he?'*

*C: 'yea he is really good at PE, he comes in wearing tracksuit bottoms and different stuff'* (IFG 3 Pupils Glasswood 2A)

Although traditional stereotypical perceptions about what equates to teacher competence in PE emerged, the lead teachers' commitment to professional development and their willingness to attend courses were other significant factors in this perception. In the case of Henry, in particular, working as a national PE professional development provider was heavily linked to the understanding that he had a high level PE expertise *'Henry would have had, you know, the expertise in terms of, you know, being involved in the PPDS (Primary Professional Development Service)'* (Catherine Teacher 2AOI). It was understood that this expertise enabled the lead teachers to teach PE topics which may not have been typically covered by all class teachers. Henry, for example, explored concepts around creating space within invasion games and he felt this was a topic that the class teacher would not have the expertise to cover,

*'This would definitely not have been a development that their regular teachers would have been able to facilitate. So again I felt I was providing the children with a richer PE experience than they would otherwise have got'* (Lead Teacher RD 5 2A)

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<sup>6</sup> The Gaelic Athletic Association is an Irish amateur sporting organisation responsible for the governance and promotion of traditional Irish sports such as hurling, Gaelic football, handball and rounders.

The pupils themselves also recognised that the lead teachers were able to offer them PE activities which differed from those usually provided by the class teacher. The chance to participate in different PE activities was exciting for the children,

*L: 'why were you so excited?'*

*K: 'because I wanted to do new games because we only do like soccer sometimes and then basketball'*

*N: 'so it (PE with the class teacher) was kind of boring' (FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A)*

In many cases the content the lead teachers' chose to deliver in their PE lessons was new for the pupils. In particular, orienteering and group challenge activities which both lead teachers covered as part of the outdoor and adventure strand of the PE curriculum were noted as a novel experience for the children. Pupils indicated that they had very limited, if any, experience of these types of activities previously. These new experiences added significantly to the pupils' enjoyment of the PE lessons with the lead teachers. As well as providing these new PE experiences to the pupils, it was also felt that the lead teachers' expertise enabled them to provide better quality PE lessons than the class teacher. This belief in higher quality PE was not only related to the breadth of content covered, but was also linked to the depth in which the PE curriculum was delivered by the lead teachers. The reflective diaries and observations noted significant progression between each of the lead teachers' PE lessons *'similar topic (covered) to last observation but much more advanced'* (Riverhedge observation 3). In Study 2B, for example, Henry completed a module of gymnastics during the class swap and he felt strongly that these lessons were superior to the gymnastics lessons pupils would have received with the class teacher *'I know I did gymnastics work that they wouldn't have done...yea they might have dabbled in it, but they wouldn't have got what I did with them'* (Lead Teacher 2BI). This

perspective was also shared by the participating teachers who felt that the lead teachers were able to cover content in more depth than the class teacher. Sally, for example, cited the tag rugby lessons completed by Tara as being superior to those she would provide herself *'I would be able to teach tag rugby myself... but definitely not as good as Tara'* (Sally Teacher 2BI). Furthermore, the teaching expertise of the lead teachers was evident in the PE classes observed. Their classes were highly active and enjoyable, with emphasis on improvement through practice, as well as a positive environment where learning objectives were shared and feedback was sought from pupils. The participating teachers did not observe the lead teachers teach in the majority of instances, however, and consequently one participating teacher had some reservations and suggested that any benefits to the children in terms of PE were negligible *'I didn't see any benefits really, to be honest, for the Infants<sup>7</sup> ...the children would have still had PE.* (Hayley Teacher 2AFI). Despite Hayley's critique of class swapping, she still identified several instances where the pupils benefited from Tara's PE expertise during the class swap *'Maybe there were skills that, you know, I wouldn't have that Tara has as well.'* (Teacher 2AFI). Aside from Hayley, all other participants were effusive in their praise of the lead teachers' expertise and the impact this had on the pupils' PE experiences. Overall, these examples illustrate how the lead teachers' expertise positively influenced PE provision during the class swap.

### **Enthusiasm**

In addition to expertise, the lead teachers' enthusiasm for PE was highlighted as another factor which contributed to perceived improved quality PE lessons during the class swapping process *'I think you had teachers that really, really were enthusiastic about it. I think it does enhance the quality of the learning'* (Rachel Teacher 2BI). PE was considered to be a subject where

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<sup>7</sup> The terms 'infants' is used in Irish contexts to denote the first two years undertaken in primary school



teacher enthusiasm was vital, *'PE out of everything like, if you have someone teaching PE that doesn't like sport, like that's not going to be beneficial'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2BI). The lead teachers' passion for PE was palpable throughout the study and noted in the observations. All of the stakeholders interviewed similarly recognised the importance of PE to the lead teachers, with Rachel, for example, noting that Tara is *'so passionate about PE'* (Teacher 2AOI). The children especially noted the lead teachers' enthusiasm for PE, as evidenced by one pupil affectionately referring to Tara as *'the teacher who loves playing'* (FFG 1 Pupil Riverhedge 2A). The lead teachers felt that their enthusiasm rubbed off on the pupils and consequently added to the children's enjoyment and motivation for PE *'I have a high interest level in PE and I think that feeds into the kids then so then they have an interest in it'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). Both Tara and Henry cited examples of how excited the pupils became when they arrived at the door to take the class and this illustrates the importance of teacher enthusiasm. In the observations the enthusiastic greeting the lead teachers received when collecting their classes was similarly noted *'Pupils excited being collected by Tara. All enjoyed time in hall'* (Observation 1 Riverhedge). Other teachers equally commented on the pupils' attitude towards PE when with the lead teacher *'I could see that my class were enthused about going doing PE with Henry'* (Rachel Teacher RD 1 2B). In addition to the lead teachers' enthusiasm, it was also noted that the novelty of having a different teacher added further to the pupils' motivation to participate in PE at the beginning of the swaps *'the idea of going to a different class and a different teacher and a change of scenery is a motivation in itself'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2A Week 8 I). Experiencing PE lessons with a teacher who was passionate about PE was, however, the main reason for increased enthusiasm and this was also considered beneficial in providing a good example to children. Tara felt that class swapping provided the pupils with role models in the respective subject areas being taught during the swap *'at least for that six week block, there's good role models in both classes for those subjects because they're both enthusiastic*

*about it* (Lead Teacher 2BI). Despite the relatively short length of the swaps, the provision of an enthusiastic role model was considered advantageous to the childrens' development.

The enthusiasm of the lead teachers for PE was also considered beneficial to the quality of the PE, as the lead teachers' perceived their lessons to be well planned. In both Glasswood and Riverhedge, after initial consultation with the participating teachers, the lead teachers took full responsibility for planning the PE taught during the class swap. Tara explained how the PE lessons she taught were thoroughly prepared and planned out in advance *'There is forethought and planning gone into it'* (Lead Teacher 2A Week 8 I). She felt that a motivated teacher would invest in the planning process and that this would ultimately be beneficial *'I think it can't but be beneficial for their learning. If the teacher coming in is interested in it and is well prepared for the lesson'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). Despite the lead teachers already putting considerable thought into PE, teaching additional lessons also provided them with an extra impetus to focus on their PE planning *'because you are spending more time at it you will probably spend more time planning it and thinking about it and I suppose there is a bit of pride in it too'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). The lead teachers began to research new ideas for their lessons, where previously they may have relied on activities they had used repeatedly *'I went and did a couple of little activities that might have dropped off my radar before, or even I found one or two new ones'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2AFI). Although not directly stated, it was inferred that this level of planning for PE may not have been achieved by a teacher with less enthusiasm as *'PE would be down the pecking order unfortunately.'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). By the same token, the enthusiasm of a teacher for a particular subject was also linked to the amount of reflection they would have undertaken. Although the lead teachers were asked to use reflective diaries in this project Henry noted that *'Because I'm so interested in PE, I would always probably reflect on my PE teaching anyway...A lot depends on your level of interest in what you are actually teaching.'*(Lead Teacher 2BI). Reflecting on their

teaching and wider beliefs around PE was considered to be a valuable learning experience which ultimately benefited the pupils. Facilitating the lead teachers who were passionate about PE to teach their preferred subject through class swapping also meant these teachers had an increased level of job satisfaction *'it just made my teaching a bit more enjoyable.'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). The chance to teach their preferred subject to more than their own class was highly valued by the lead teachers *'I mean I'm enthusiastic about PE so therefore it makes teaching more exciting for me, doing this.'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2BI). This increased job satisfaction was thought to contribute to the quality of the lead teachers' teaching.

### **Focus on learning**

Although many of the teachers and principals concluded that the lead teachers were delivering better PE lessons primarily based on the enjoyment levels of the pupils, the lead teachers had a different perspective. Their criteria for rich PE experiences extended beyond enjoyment to also include the pupils' learning,

*'From the teacher's perspective, I suppose you want the kids to enjoy it too. But did they learn, you know?'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2BI).

*'I enjoy seeing the children enjoy their PE and more importantly I would like to think they are learning'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I)

Consequently, PE with a teacher who recognised the importance of pupils' learning was considered beneficial. The lead teachers emphasised the importance of learning in PE throughout the project and this was clearly translated into their teaching approach *'they got good (PE), it wasn't just games and playing around the place. We did proper learning I think and skills'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). In an attempt to document the pupils' learning Tara also had individual PE journals for each of the pupils so that their progress could be monitored in some way over the course of the intervention. Although her use of these journals was

restricted by her limited access to the other classes, Tara still attempted to chart the pupils' PE learning experiences. Henry also emphasised pupils learning and this was abundantly clear during observations of his lessons '*Good learning evident over lessons observed. Questioning pupils on learning at the end and asking for their feedback*' (Glasswood Observation 3). As evidenced by his questioning of the pupils, Henry felt that learning should be a central consideration when evaluating the overall success of class swapping. The lead teachers' emphasis on learning within PE was also recognised by the pupils who had been taught by the lead teachers during the class swap. Prior to this research, learning within PE had not always been explicitly evident to all pupils, with one student commenting '*we probably do (learn) but I can't think of anything*' (IFG 1 Pupils Glasswood 2A). At the end of the swap, however, the pupils were able to identify several examples of what they had learned in their PE classes with the lead teacher. As children in both Riverhedge and Glasswood pointed out,

*'She taught us how to do gymnastics tumbles and tuck rolls and log rolls... and called us up to teach us how to do cartwheels and flips'* (FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A)

*'How to jump. We were doing all different types of jumps'* (FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A)

*'Teamwork...because we were like passing the ball as a team'* (FFG 1 Pupils Glasswood 2A)

*'How to run fast... he built up our stamina to help us run faster'* (FFG 2 Pupils Glasswood 2A)

*'How to throw a ring'* (FFG 2 Pupils Glasswood 2A)

In some instances the pupils were also facilitated in linking their learning in PE classes to physical activity outside of the classroom '*we did things related to actual sports. Like the rings were for javelin*' (FFG 2 Pupils Glasswood 2A). This emphasis on learning was considered beneficial to the quality of the PE lessons being delivered '*I think my class, I think they would have learned more skills in that time than they would have with me.*' (Rachel Teacher 2AFI). Henry felt that an emphasis on learning within PE was not reflective of the way in which PE

would typically be taught by many teachers *'I would treat it as a lesson where I am teaching and they are learning, same as any other lesson. Like again unfortunately not every PE lesson is delivered in that manner'* (Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). Henry's assertions were matched, as apart from the lead teachers, learning within PE was not generally identified as the most important success criteria for class swapping. Although identified as important by several participants before the project started, the same emphasis on PE learning outcomes was not replicated in the final interviews. Sally reflected the general feeling among the participating teachers about successful student outcomes for PE when commenting,

*'For the PE and the history and the geography and the science, you know, it's more that, you know, you'll give them a love of it, you know, an enjoyment of it, so you don't have to be too worried about kind of, you know, what they've retained by next week'*  
(Teacher 2BI)

Tara commented on the less visible nature of PE assessment, as well as on the difficulties faced by many teachers in carrying out PE assessment as potential reasons why learning was not prioritised, *'it is a harder one, less obvious their learning, how their learning is getting on than sometimes like maths or English or something isn't it?'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). She felt that the wider worth placed on PE perhaps also had a role in why learning within PE was not valued the same as in other subject areas by teachers *'Maybe that is the problem, they have PE so low down on the radar they don't care what I do'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). Class swapping was considered to be one means of starting to place greater emphasis on student learning in PE.

## **Theme 2: The legacy of class swapping can be positive for participating teachers and pupils**

Whilst there was general agreement that class swapping led to richer PE experiences for pupils over the course of the intervention, concerns were initially raised about the long term impact of class swapping. It was feared that participating teachers' confidence and competence to teach PE might be negatively affected during the class swap. Prior to the beginning of Study 2A it was also intimated by some participants that class swapping might have an adverse effect on the pupils' holistic development. These fears proved unfounded, however, and it will be demonstrated how class swapping positively influenced participating teachers' PE confidence and pupils' holistic development on several occasions.

### **The impact of class swapping on participating teachers' confidence to teach PE**

It was highlighted by different participants that class swapping might have a potentially adverse effect on participating teachers' confidence and competence to teach PE. As the participating teachers were not teaching PE over the duration of the class swap, there were some concerns about the lasting impact this break from teaching PE could have. Tara, for example, felt that the teachers she had swapped with would likely experience a deficit of skills in the topics she had covered after the swap *'I would imagine they would feel a bit rusty. Like I did gymnastics and outdoor and adventure, I'd imagine in those two topics they might feel a bit lost next year'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). In this way some of the participants perceived class swapping as a short term fix *'if a teacher lacks confidence in teaching PE, then another teacher taking their class is only a temporary solution really'* (Hayley Teacher 2AFI). Becky concluded that class swapping could actually have a negative effect on a teachers' desire to improve their competencies within PE *'Whether or not it brings on the teachers' skills in the area of perceived deficit, it actually doesn't, because it just relieves them of the burden of having to do*

*it'* (Becky Principal 2AFI). Apprehension surrounding the participating teachers' confidence to teach PE created some doubts for both Hayley and Becky about the long term benefits and the legacy of class swapping for PE within the school.

Despite these concerns, none of the participating teachers themselves who swapped their classes for PE felt less confident or competent in teaching PE at the end of the interventions. Apprehension surrounding the negative impact of class swapping was unfounded as both Hayley and Catherine indicated that no changes had occurred in their confidence to teach PE as a result of the class swap. As Catherine noted *'I'd feel the same. Yes, I'd feel the same. I don't think I'd feel less confident or more. Like I would feel the same about teaching PE'* (Teacher 2AFI). Similarly Hayley also noted that a twelve or six week absence from teaching PE was not long enough to negatively influence the teachers' ability to teach PE *'Would I have forgotten how to teach PE? I don't think so really, to be honest.'* (Teacher 2AFI). In fact, two participating teachers actually felt more confident in their capacity to teach PE at the conclusion of the project. Despite not having taught PE for a period of twelve weeks, Maura and Rachel both felt significantly more confident about teaching PE after the swap in Study 2A,

*'More confident. I was never not confident to teach PE but I feel more confident which is great'* (Maura Teacher 2AFI)

*'Much more confident actually. You would think it would be the other way. But I actually feel more confident'* (Rachel Teacher 2AFI)

They accounted for their increased confidence to teach PE in two ways. Firstly, swapping with the lead teacher who was passionate about PE increased their enthusiasm and heightened their interest in the subject. As Rachel noted *'it just made P.E. a bit more relevant in my mind, it kind of highlighted it or something'* (Teacher 2AFI). Talking about PE with the lead teacher and seeing the pupils' enjoyment of the lessons affirmed the value of PE to the teachers and also increased their curiosity in the subject. Henry also recognised the potentially positive

impact class swapping could have on the participating teachers' disposition towards PE *'it might give them a little bit of renewed enthusiasm, you know'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). Secondly, the teachers felt they had learned about teaching PE from the lead teachers during the process of class swapping. As Maura noted *'I definitely learned more PE wise, I have learned a lot from her that way which is great'* (Teacher 2AFI). Rachel, for example, learned from the structured way in which Henry planned his lessons and learning objectives,

*'I was looking at his PE plans and yes, I think I'd have that in the back of my head now when I'm planning for PE, to really break it down into those parts...so that helped me, seeing that'* (Teacher 2BI)

A large proportion of the participating teachers' learning also took place during the informal interactions they had with the lead teachers throughout the project *'I suppose also listening to her, what she did and how she did things. I definitely learnt'* (Maura Teacher 2AFI). Part of the participating teachers' learning was linked to the opportunity to team teach a lesson with the lead teacher during Study 2A. Team teaching was not part of the class swapping framework but it emerged organically in each case study school. Rachel and Maura, at the invitation of their respective PE lead teachers, team taught a lesson involving both classes participating at the same time. While this opportunity to team teach with the lead teacher did further their learning, it was still felt that swapping with the lead teacher in itself offered considerable potential for learning and could be a form of continuous professional development.

As a result of the class swap these two teachers felt more confident and enthusiastic in delivering PE and were excited about the opportunity to put into practice what they had learned. Rachel in particular had gone from feeling anxious about teaching PE to being excited by the prospect *'that (PE) would have been my really scary subject and now I can't wait to teach it next year'* (Teacher 2AFI). This change in outlook was undoubtedly facilitated through the



class swap. Maura identified the teacher's attitude as the key ingredient as to whether class swapping can be beneficial to a teachers development *'I think it depends on the teacher. I kind of took it as a learning experience and wanted to learn'* (Teacher 2AFI). The fact that both Maura and Rachel were relatively newly qualified teachers at the time of this study must also be factored in when considering the participants' perception of class swapping as a learning experience.

### **The impact of class swapping on childrens' holistic development**

Some concerns were raised about the precedent set by class swapping and the potential impact of the class teacher not teaching PE on pupils' holistic development. The importance of adhering to the values of the Irish primary school curriculum which emphasises pupils' holistic development was, for example, highlighted by the participants. The special relationship which develops between the class teacher and their pupils was identified by Hayley as an important feature of holistic development, *'the class teacher is almost like the pastoral carer of the child when they're in school really'* (Teacher 2AFI). Nurturing the development of this special bond between teacher and student was highlighted as an important aspect of school life *'you need to get, like I say, get to know your class and get really close with them, I think that's really important too'* (Rachel Teacher 2AFI). PE was highlighted as a lesson conducive to developing the bond between teachers and pupils *'they are a different type of lesson and it's nice for you to be able to be with your class and for further developing your relationship with each other'* (Catherine Teacher 2AFI). It was also suggested that PE offered a different type of learning experience for the teacher and pupils *'I felt myself that PE was a lesson where I really got to know children, could see their quirks. I could see sides of their personality that I wouldn't see in class'* (Becky Principal 2AOI). Teachers valued seeing these elements of the child's character which were not ordinarily evident in the classroom. The class swapping utilised was, however, not considered to negatively influence the pupils' holistic development. Henry, for

example, noted that, *I don't think a limited amount of class swapping would be any detriment. In fact it probably freshens things up and they might have a better relationship with their teacher*' (Lead Teacher 2AFI). As alluded to by Henry and Tara, class swapping was considered beneficial to the pupils' holistic development. Tara began to consider teacher discussions relating to pupils in the context of holistic development *'Do you know like if you are planning with your teacher partner person...does that become more holistic?'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). The inference here is that that through focussed teacher discussion, the needs of the children become central to class swapping and this in turn added to the pupils' holistic development. Sally, a participating teacher in Study 2B also identified class swapping as beneficial to pupils holistic development, provided teachers only swapped for one subject *'I think it's beneficial if it's just one subject'* (Teacher 2BI). As noted by Henry, keeping the swap to one subject meant that pupils were still spending the majority of the day with the class teacher,

*'I think if children once a week throughout the year or twice a week for one subject were getting half an hour with a different teacher, they are still spending 20 teaching hours or whatever it is with their class teacher'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI)

The timeframe of the swap was consequently perceived to be of central importance in ensuring that the classroom teacher maintained their role as the pupils' primary educator. In Study 2A class swapping lasted for twelve weeks and participants felt that this was quite long and that a shorter period would be more beneficial *'I think six or eight weeks would be a better kind of time frame'* (Catherine Teacher 2AFI). Based on this feedback, class swapping in Study 2B only lasted for six weeks. This shorter concise period was welcomed by all participants as it meant that the class teacher could maintain an involvement in PE over the majority of the year. Similarly the children also wanted their class teachers to maintain an involvement in PE

provision. Whilst a couple of students indicated a preference for PE to be taught by the lead teacher at all times, the majority of pupils favoured both teachers being involved in the delivery of PE *'I think the two because it is very hard to choose'* (FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A). Although all pupils enjoyed PE with the lead teacher, they still had a special bond with their class teacher and did not wish to lose the opportunity of experiencing PE with them. A combination of PE with the class teacher and PE lead teacher was put forward as the best option in Glasswood *'one Friday with Henry and one Wednesday with Rachel'* (FFG 1 Pupils Glasswood 2A) and in Riverhedge *'the first week we have Tara, the next week we don't, and then we get Tara again and then our teacher'* (FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A). The lead teachers also supported this sentiment, identifying that they wouldn't be comfortable teaching all of another teachers PE classes *'I wouldn't like to take it that the other teacher would never ever teach PE'* (Henry 2AFI). A mixture of PE being primarily delivered by the class teacher with some input from the PE lead teacher through class swapping was, therefore, considered beneficial to the overall holistic development of the pupils.

### **Theme 3: Teacher interaction is central to the class swapping process**

There was a general consensus that class swapping led to richer PE experiences for children. There were, however, a number of factors which had an influence on the success of the class swapping process, such as the level of discussion between the lead and participating teachers. In Study 1 of the class swap a very limited amount of discussion took place between teachers. This was especially the case at the beginning of the swap with teachers only briefly discussing the subjects to be covered during the twelve weeks. Any interaction that did take place was done informally, most often in the changeover between classes. Discussion during these changeovers was often only at a superficial level, with teachers briefly mentioning if the lesson had gone well or not with few details of the content covered or pupils' experiences discussed. Aside from the changeovers, opportunities for discussion were generally limited to chance

meetings during the school day, with no real emphasis on systematically exploring how class swapping was progressing. The lead teachers themselves also noted that discussion between teachers was conspicuous by its absence *'it's weird they don't even ask what did I do or nothing. It is kind of strange'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 D). The absence of meaningful teacher interaction manifested itself in the form of logistical, inclusive and behavioural challenges during the first few weeks of the swap. Although each of these challenges naturally receded as the project progressed, it was felt that more teacher discussion and interaction was required to maximise the benefits of class swapping. In the second six week block of swapping, the lead and participating teachers were consequently asked to collaboratively fill out planning and reflection documents. Increased levels of more in-depth teacher interaction were subsequently documented in Study 2B, with participants noting a reduction in the logistical, inclusive and behavioural challenges they had previously faced. These logistical, inclusive and behavioural challenges will now be discussed in detail, with examples demonstrating the influence of teacher interaction on these challenges.

### **Logistics**

The logistics of class swapping proved challenging in both case study schools. The transitions between classes in particular were problematic. The difficulties Tara encountered when swapping with Hayley exemplified the adverse effect limited teacher interaction could have on the class swapping process,

*'So we had agreed like or I thought anyway we had agreed that she can leave the Special Needs Assistant in your class while you come up to me and then nobody is left unsupervised. But that very rarely happened and I ended up having to leave my class to go down...so that was a bit annoying at times'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI)

Hayley, however, had a different perspective on the procedures in place for the transition *'I had to wait on Tara to come down and there were days then something might happen and there'll be a miscommunication... I suppose confusion may have arisen on occasion'* (Teacher 2AFI). Irrespective of the details of the original agreement, it was clear that a lack of discussion meant both teachers were left unsure as to how exactly the transition would take place. In the midst of this confusion, one of the classes was occasionally left unattended for a couple of minutes during the transition. While special needs assistants or other members of staff sometimes supervised, there was not always another adult available to cover the transition. Hayley justifiably had concerns as to how the teachers would be held accountable if an incident occurred in a class that was left unsupervised *'I don't know how we'd be covered if something would have happened, you know'* (Hayley Teacher 2AFI). In Glasswood, a lack of communication also meant that the swap over between teachers could be problematic. As well as the aforementioned issues around supervision, uncertainty meant that several minutes could be lost during each transition period *'at the start, we were kind of sending people over kind of going, do you want us now...or?'* (Rachel Teacher 2AFI). The first few scheduled minutes of the swap could sometimes be lost, resulting in students not receiving their full time allocation for PE. Due to these difficulties the lead and participating teachers were asked to document agreed weekly swap times and the procedures for managing transitions before the second phase of swapping. Where utilised fully, the planning document was successful in aiding the logistical running of the project. Tara noted how this document provided clarity that may have been missing in the first phase of swapping *'the last time and it was a bit like... "oh are we still doing that thing now this week?"...there was none of that this time because it was down in black and white'* (Lead Teacher 2BI). In Glasswood, increased discussion around logistics also proved helpful in Study 2B. Notably, however, despite using the planning document an assigned weekly time was not allocated for the second thirty minutes of the swap at the outset

of the project. Issues around hall availability and pupils' learning support timetables meant that Henry and Rachel attempted to find time for the second half of their swap on a weekly basis. This arrangement proved problematic with planned lessons sometimes being postponed. For Henry, this experience underlined the importance of fully utilising the planning document and agreeing on a set time for swapping each week from the outset of the project '*there is definitely a need to have it very structured and set in the timetable*' (Lead Teacher 2BI). Whilst other logistical challenges surrounding the busy nature of schools were evident in both phases of class swapping, teacher interaction positively influenced those factors within the control of teachers. The logistical components of class swapping such as transitions and timing were certainly made more manageable for the participating and lead teacher where planning and dialogue took place between those involved.

### **Inclusion and differentiation**

The main challenge faced by all teachers in class swapping was getting to know the pupils they were teaching. Although the lead teachers may have been familiar with some of the pupils in the other classes they were not aware of the unique characteristics of each child. In Study 2A of the swap the lead teachers and participating teachers did not discuss the abilities, characteristics or personalities of the pupils prior to the start of the swap. This limited discussion and interaction between swapping teachers made the task of getting to know the children even more difficult. The difficulties associated with not knowing the pupils manifested itself in a number of practical ways. Henry, for example, reflected on the difficulties he had in making groups during the PE lessons '*I made the mistake the first couple of days of letting them make up their own groups and then certain groups just didn't gel*' (Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). Differentiating the content of lessons to suit the abilities of all children was another area in which the teachers had difficulty '*you don't have the full knowledge of their needs in the same way as you do when you've been with a group all year*' (Catherine

Teacher 2AFI). Several of the lead teachers' early lessons were observed and the practical challenges presented by not having in-depth knowledge of the pupils were noted. The effect of this limited teacher interaction was perhaps most evident when the lead teachers were teaching pupils with special educational needs. Observations detailed examples of the difficulties faced by them in working with these pupils '*Child with Special Needs Assistant behaviour more challenging, must consider how to best manage*' (Glasswood observation 2). The change in routine through class swapping had an adverse effect on many of the pupils with special educational needs in the first few weeks of the swap,

*'They would be acting up at the beginning. I don't think they really understood what was happening. Kids with autism were a bit crying and upset with the routine and weren't sure what was going on'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I)

How to prepare these students for a change in routine or how to best accommodate them within the lessons had not been considered in advance by the lead and participating teachers. Information about specific strategies which would help these particular pupils, or the other pupils, was not shared between the participating teacher and lead teacher at the beginning of the project. In Study 2B based on this feedback, a planning document was designed so that the teachers involved could explicitly consider how to best meet the needs of children with special educational needs involved in the swap. The class teacher provided practical tips and advice to their swap partner on how to cater for these children. Rachel, for example, noted in the planning document that a particular child in her class with Down syndrome needed visual demonstrations during PE classes. In Riverhedge, a specific 'stop and think' strategy for a child with emotional difficulties was shared by the class teacher with Tara. This sharing of knowledge proved extremely helpful. Henry detailed how this increased level of discussion was beneficial to the class swapping process,

*'Having spoken to Rachel about her class and children with particular learning challenges I was in a better position than in previous swaps to understand the children I was teaching and to cater for their needs. However it will still take me time to know exactly how to cater for them all'* (RD 1 Glasswood 2B)

Undoubtedly, increased teacher interaction facilitated inclusion and differentiation in the second phase of class swapping. The fact that the lead teachers were only swapping with one other class in Study 2B was also helpful in this regard. As Henry noted, however, regardless of the amount of discussion, it still takes time for the lead teachers to get to know the children and develop their own relationship with them.

### **Behavioural management**

The participating and lead teachers had not explicitly discussed how they would deal with challenging behaviour prior to the first swap. As the leaders were already unfamiliar with the pupils they were teaching, this lack of discussion contributed to the behavioural difficulties which arose within several of the classes during the initial stages of the swap. It was felt that some pupils were testing the boundaries and attempted to take advantage of differences in the teachers management styles which became apparent *'There had been behavioural issues that I know wouldn't have happened if I was there. So I suppose the older classes can chance their arm<sup>8</sup> a bit'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). In some instances these differences in classroom management approaches became a source of conflict for the teachers themselves. Tara and Hayley, for example, had very differing perspectives on how to deal with the challenging behaviour of one particular pupil. While Tara felt a strict classroom management approach was required, Hayley favoured a less direct approach,

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<sup>8</sup> Chancing your arm is a colloquial term used in Ireland. In this context it denotes taking a risk in order to get something that you want.



*'we had to have a conversation about him obviously but we differed you know...I suppose I felt I needed to give in then because she is the class teacher even though it went against every bone in my body to give in to the child.'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2A Week 8 I)

Although Tara felt very strongly that she was correct, she felt compelled to accede to the wishes of the class teacher as there was no agreement in place. The ambiguity surrounding who was ultimately responsible for the class was one reason why Tara followed the class teacher's rules. This uncertainty was observed first hand in early observations *'Argument develops over who is the line leader. Tara says 'your teacher will sort it out'. Whose responsibility is this?'* (Riverhedge observation 1). This ambiguity often meant that issues which surfaced during the course of the class went unresolved and were referred back to the class teacher *'I end up coming up then and having to give out when it could have been maybe dealt with at the time so discipline is an issue'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2AFI). Even though differences in behaviour management styles were not as obvious in Glasswood, uncertainty still prevailed as to who was ultimately responsible. Henry noted that it was something which the teachers had not considered in advance *'It is not something we discussed in the terms and the conditions before we started!'* (Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). At the end of Study 2A, there was general consensus that the teachers involved in the swap needed to discuss classroom management procedures to facilitate the smooth running of the project. In Study 2B the teachers involved used the planning document to decide at the outset of the swap on approaches to behavioural management. In both schools an agreed set of behavioural management expectations and procedures were recorded in the planning document at the outset of Study 2B. In Glasswood, for example, responsibility for behaviour management was apportioned as follows *'The teacher teaching the class will handle behaviour management issues unless they are of a serious nature. Teachers will report on general behaviour to the class teacher each week'* (Glasswood

Planning Document 2B). In Riverhedge the planning document also listed a number of consequences and rewards to be utilised by the teacher when taking the class. The ability to refer to this written record as the swap progressed was considered particularly advantageous *'it's one thing saying things out, when you've to write them down, I think you become more clear about what you're actually meaning to say'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2BI). The clarity garnered from these guidelines ensured that the behavioural management indecision and ambiguity seen in Study 2A was eliminated. Therefore, increased teacher interaction positively influenced the lead teachers' ability to deal with any occurrences of challenging behaviour in the second phase of class swapping.

#### **Theme 4: PE Leadership and collective responsibility within class swapping**

This section will consider how class swapping developed PE leadership and collective responsibility. Consideration will firstly be given to how the opportunity to teach additional PE through class swapping increased the lead teachers' ability to provide PE leadership within their school. It will also be discussed how their desire to provide further PE leadership was also enhanced when provided with additional PE teaching opportunities and this will be discussed in the second sub theme. Finally, the role of class swapping in the development of collective responsibility amongst the teachers involved in this research will be explored.

#### **PE leadership**

Within both phases of the class swapping project the lead teachers had the opportunity to teach PE to more classes within their own schools and this enhanced their ability to provide PE leadership. In Study 2A the lead teachers taught PE to two other classes, while in Study 2B they taught PE to one other class. By teaching more PE across the school the lead teachers felt that they gained a broader understanding of the PE competencies of pupils within the school. Henry described the way in which class swapping facilitated this development, *'You become*

*aware, I suppose, of the general standards across the school of the simplest of motor activities. Running, jumping, throwing, catching, you know generic type activities and you are watching things'* (Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). Tara similarly felt better able to identify the competence of pupils in PE as a result of the class swap. She found this particularly useful in identifying pupils who might be struggling in PE,

*'if you were worried about a child's ability if you thought they might be dyspraxia or something, like you would see how much weaker or stronger they are...you get an eye for it because you are doing it with so many people'* (Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I)

Prior to this research the lead teachers only taught PE to their own class and so they were not facilitated in comparing pupils' PE competence across the school. Henry was surprised by what he perceived to be relatively low overall ability of pupils in PE *'maybe their levels of, their skill levels and levels of understanding might not have been at the level that I would have hoped'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). Tara also identified a number of pupils whom she felt had a low standard of PE competence. This improved knowledge of pupil standards within the school was considered beneficial to the lead teachers' ability to provide PE leadership within the school in the future. Areas of the PE curriculum where pupils were struggling within the school could now be more easily identified by the lead teachers. Consequently it was surmised by the lead teachers that these areas of difficulty could be specifically targeted for improvement through focussed periods of class swapping or by other means.

The ability of the lead teachers to provide PE leadership was highlighted to other staff members within the school through class swapping. Although both lead teachers already had the label of being a 'PE person' within the school, class swapping made their promotion of PE visible in a practical way. Tara felt that by participating in class swapping it sent out a message to the other teachers that she was willing to provide PE leadership and work with other teachers in

the school *'People see you doing PE more, so it just, yes I think it does open you up to being....I don't know, more of a leader in PE or whatever'* (Lead Teacher 2BI). Ultimately it was considered that class swapping would facilitate her in taking on further PE leadership within the school.

In addition to developing the lead teachers' ability to provide PE leadership, class swapping also developed the lead teachers' motivation to provide PE leadership within the school. While both lead teachers had been involved in leading PE on a whole school level prior to this research, they had not previously had the opportunity to observe for themselves the competencies of students across the school. The lead teachers started to consider PE on a wider level across the whole school *'I suppose when you are only teaching your own class you don't think so much about the broader level, even though as a curriculum leader I know I should be'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2A Week 4 I). Witnessing a wide level of pupils' PE abilities first hand stimulated and facilitated the lead teachers' desire to lead PE and improve student outcomes for all pupils in the school *'As a curriculum leader I have begun to consider the need to standardise and improve the learning experiences of all children in the school'* (Henry Lead Teacher RD 3 2A). Tara, for example, became further involved in supporting the delivery of PE across the wider school outside of the additional classes she was teaching during the project. On one occasion in Study 2A Tara provided advice to other members of staff in relation to orienteering, a topic she was teaching as part of the class swap. Tara also passed on a number of resources she had created to other teachers outside of the class swapping project as well as ordering new equipment for the school. The opportunity to class swap was considered significant to her involvement in further PE leadership within the school,

*'I've definitely broadened my own PE horizons we'll say within the school...I feel my role has probably gone beyond the class alright. But whether it's totally just due to that, it's probably part of it you know?'* (Tara Lead Teacher 2BI)

Henry also supported the delivery of PE across the wider school during the class swap. Yet he didn't feel that engaging in the class swap influenced the amount of further leadership he provided,

*'there hasn't been a parallel increase in the amount of leadership I've done while I've been involved with this, but now that you say it, it probably does put in mind the fact that yes, that you can be a leader doing more for the school, you know?'*

(Lead Teacher 2BI)

Examination of the data would suggest, however, that class swapping did have some influence on the amount of PE leadership provided by Henry. Similarly to Tara, Henry was also teaching orienteering and he created a new set of resources for the school. He felt that teaching additional PE provided him with an extra impetus to create this resource,

*'I had to create a new set of photo resources....would I have done this for my own class alone? I am not sure but it certainly spurred me on to do it when I knew that I had a couple of classes to teach'* (Lead Teacher RD 8 2A)

On a visit to the school the researcher witnessed Henry setting up this new orienteering resource on the school grounds. Interestingly as he was not teaching PE on that day, Henry was setting up the photo orienteering course for other teachers in the school and not for himself, *'Henry putting out orienteering controls that aren't even for his classes use that day'* (Glasswood observation 2). This would suggest that class swapping did in fact motivate Henry to provide further PE leadership. It may not have been overtly apparent to him but Henry did note the effect of class swapping on one's mind set *'it broadens your focus instead of just thinking of your own class for PE'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2BI). Therefore, Tara and Henry's involvement

in class swapping added further to their desire to be involved in the wider leadership of PE within the school.

### **Collective responsibility**

As has been discussed, the development of PE leadership facilitated the lead teachers in broadening their focus onto pupils outside of their own individual classrooms. In this way class swapping started to develop a sense of collective responsibility, as teachers started to identify with pupils in the other classes, not just those within their own individual class *'I think I'd feel the same responsibility for each...it is a different kind of responsibility'* (Rachel Teacher 2AFI). Although the teachers acknowledged that their primary focus remained with the pupils in their own classes, they also began to consider pupils in the other classes. Initially the lead teachers' primary focus in terms of the other pupils may have been in the area of PE and behaviour management, through class swapping and increased teacher interaction their focus widened to also include the holistic development of the pupils. Henry described how teacher interactions often became more focussed on the pupils, as opposed to the content of the lessons *'I think the key consultation is about the children, the learners, rather than the content of the lesson'* (Lead Teacher 2BI). This perspective on the teacher interactions which developed was also shared by Tara *'Yea more about the children, how the children were getting on as opposed to what was being taught'* (Lead Teacher 2AFI). Teachers were also getting to know more pupils within the school through this process, which was considered advantageous *'I suppose children like as well that more teachers know them too. I think every child appreciates when another teacher knows them'* (Henry Lead Teacher 2AFI). Conversely pupils were also becoming aware of more teachers within the school than they would have ordinarily. Becky the principal in Glasswood also stressed the value of class swapping in getting teachers working together within a school *'I think in terms of getting staff working together collaborating, sitting down and working on a project, I think that's very beneficial'*

(Principal 2AFI). This familiarity between staff and students was seen as positive for the whole school community,

*'I think you are emphasising the community, the whole school community. That there are other people.... You don't just have to deal with one person in the whole year, me or whoever, there are other people in the school. Everyone can help each other.'* (Tara Lead Teacher FI)

Class swapping, therefore, provided a good starting point for the development of collective responsibility.

### **Summary**

Class swapping led to richer PE experiences for the pupils involved in the class swap in both case study schools. The lead teachers' expertise enabled them to provide pupils with a broader and more in-depth PE experience. The lead teachers' enthusiasm for PE and focus on learning also led to better PE experiences for the pupils involved in the class swap. Teacher interaction was, however, a central factor in the class swapping process. Teacher interaction was initially limited and at a superficial level in Study 2A, but additional interaction in Study 2B reduced logistical challenges, led to better behaviour management, inclusion and differentiation. Explicitly planning for class swapping and the development of more in-depth structured teacher interaction was therefore highlighted as beneficial. Adopting a relatively short and focussed timeframe for the swap also ensured that the legacy of class swapping was positive for the pupils' holistic development and in several instances the participating teachers' confidence to teach PE. The opportunity to teach additional PE also increased the lead teachers' ability to provide further PE leadership outside of class swapping, as they became more aware of pupils competence in PE across the wider school. In turn, this added to their motivation to provide PE leadership and also highlighted their PE teaching expertise to a wider range of teachers

within their school contexts. Collective responsibility was also developed through engagement in class swapping, as teachers were provided with opportunities to work with pupils outside of their own individual classes and across the wider school.

## **Discussion Study 2**

This section discusses the results of study 2A and 2B which investigated the experiences of teachers with additional PE expertise teaching PE to classes other than their own in primary schools. It is argued that class swapping for PE can positively influence PE provision in primary schools. The discussion has been organised into three main threads, each of which will draw on Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital to provide insights into the participants' experiences of class swapping through the lens of human, social and decisional capital. In the first thread it is argued that class swapping led to rich PE experiences for the pupils involved as the lead teachers human capital expertise was effectively utilised. The second thread considers how class swapping contributed to the development of social capital and teacher collaboration by altering the schools organisational structures and informal social contexts. The final thread explores the concept of leadership capital and reflects on the contribution of class swapping to PE leadership in the case study schools.

### **Use of human capital**

A teacher's unique expertise and talents often lie trapped within the confines of their own classroom and only the pupils in their classes benefit from this expertise (Ainscow 2016). Class swapping facilitated these lead teachers to utilise their human capital expertise relating to PE on a wider scale within their school to positively influence PE provision. Discussion in this section will explore how the lead teachers' enthusiasm, expertise and focus on learning in PE led to richer PE experiences for the pupils involved.



The participants perceived the lead teachers' enthusiasm and passion for PE as one factor which led to the delivery of better quality PE. It was intimated by the participants that as the lead teachers were passionate about PE they would spend more time planning and reflecting on their lessons. It was also believed that the lead teachers' enthusiasm would rub off on the pupils, leading in turn, to better quality PE for pupils. These results mirror those of Jones and Green (2015) who also found that practitioners in England associated teacher enthusiasm with improvements in the quality of PE delivered. This link between teacher enthusiasm and student outcomes has been considered within the literature. Day (2004) and Sammons *et al.* (2016) contend that enthusiasm and passion for a subject are fundamental motivators for successful teachers and that practitioners with these traits are well situated to be leaders of learning in their schools. The results of this research support these claims as the lead teachers' enthusiasm was central to the success of the class swapping process. While the results confirm the importance of teacher enthusiasm, the value of teacher expertise has also been highlighted. As the lead teachers were teaching additional PE lessons they must have the requisite level of PE expertise to ensure that class swapping does not lead to the 'distribution of incompetence' within the school (Timperley 2005, p.417). Although lead teachers have the opportunity to positively influence pupils' experiences of PE through class swapping, equally there is the potential risk that inappropriate or ineffective practices could be perpetuated which negatively influence pupils' experiences of PE. It is, therefore, suggested that teacher expertise and enthusiasm for the subjects being taught must be considered as prerequisites for class swapping to take place within a school.

The participating teachers, principals and children all agreed that the lead teachers had PE expertise. With the exception of one participating teacher, all of the participants felt that this expertise contributed to the provision of better quality PE as pupils were perceived to receive a better breadth and depth of PE. In relation to breadth, there was a perception amongst the

participating teachers that the pupils received a superior PE experience with the lead teacher as they covered a greater variety of PE content in comparison to that taught by the class teacher. The pupils were exposed to new activities as both of the lead teachers taught gymnastics as well as outdoor and adventure activity modules. Although both of these activities are outlined as core elements of the Irish primary PE curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999b), many teachers find these topics challenging to teach (Coulter 2012). As a result some teachers avoid teaching these topics altogether, as evidenced by statistics which found that a staggering 89% of Irish primary school pupils reported not having any exposure to outdoor and adventure activities (Woods *et al.* 2010). Similarly 70% of the survey respondents indicated that no gymnastics instruction was received during PE (Woods *et al.* 2010). In keeping with these statistics, the pupils who participated also indicated that they had very limited, if any, experiences of outdoor and adventure activities and, to a lesser extent, gymnastic activities prior to the class swap. The human capital expertise of the lead teachers enabled them to expose pupils to these areas of the PE curriculum. The opportunity to participate in these activities was highly valued by the pupils and contributed to their enjoyment of the class swapping experience. In terms of depth, it was outlined by the participants that the lead teachers' expertise allowed them to cover topics in greater detail than would be possible with the classroom teacher. Researcher observations of PE lessons confirmed that the lead teachers demonstrated many characteristics and behaviours associated with effective PE teaching. These included, for example, sequentially planning lessons to ensure connection with past and future lessons, ensuring high levels of physical activity during their lessons, allowing children plenty of opportunities for practice and success, creating a positive emotional environment, emphasising learning in the physical, cognitive and affective domain as well as ensuring that their PE classes were enjoyable for the pupils (Graham *et al.* 2013). As quality PE can have different characteristics and meanings in different settings (Penney *et al.* 2009, McLennan and

Thompson 2015), it also necessary to consider the lessons in the context of Irish guidelines for quality PE. The lessons observed were also in keeping with the features of a quality PE experience outlined by the Irish Primary Physical Education Association (2010). These observations indicate that the PE lead teachers provided the pupils with rich PE experiences consistent with the characteristics of quality PE, specific to an Irish context. Together with the testimonies from the pupils and the participating teachers, these observations further support the assertion that class swapping positively influenced PE provision.

In addition to offering the pupils a greater breadth and depth of PE activities, it was also perceived that the lead teachers positively influenced the pupils' learning in PE. It was clear from the interviews and reflective diaries that the lead teachers explicitly planned for the pupils' learning and sought to assess this learning. Tara, for example, utilised PE journals to facilitate the pupils in recording their learning. Assessment has been identified as another important element of quality PE (Penney *et al.* 2009). In their position as role models, the lead teachers emphasised and modelled the importance of learning in PE to the pupils. Their approach contrasted with that of the participating teachers who did not prioritise learning and assessment in PE to the same extent. The pupils themselves were able better able to identify their learning in PE classes with the lead teachers, in comparison with their classroom teacher. Although this perception of increased learning is more likely a result of the lead teachers' pedagogical skills and focus on learning outcomes, the positive effect of experiencing PE with a teacher who acts as a role model with clear values who demonstrates positive behaviours, efficacy, motivation and enthusiasm towards PE should also be recognised. The children outlined how PE with the lead teachers was an extremely enjoyable experience which exposed them to new activities. Kretchmar (2008) has argued that pivotal PE experiences which are particularly enjoyable and meaningful can contribute positively to participants intrinsic motivation to be physically active throughout the life course. This sentiment appears to be

supported by Woods *et al.* (2012) within an Irish context who found that high levels of enjoyment of PE were associated with high levels of physical activity. It is conceivable, therefore, that seminal PE experiences provided through class swapping could potentially have an influence on pupils' perceptions of PE and dispositions towards physical activity in the future. It is clear, therefore, that the pupils who had PE with the lead teachers during the class swap had rich experiences which offered significant opportunities for breadth, depth and learning within PE. The evidence from this research is promising and suggests that utilising teachers' human capital expertise through class swapping can provide a greater number of pupils with richer PE experiences.

Although class swapping positively influenced PE provision, the participating teachers all agreed that they would not want to defer complete responsibility for delivery of their full PE curriculum to another teacher. Whilst the participating teachers were happy to accede a level of responsibility for their class to the lead teachers during the swap, ultimately their views were in keeping with the Irish primary school curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999a), which identifies class teachers as ultimately responsible for the development of children in their class. All of the other stakeholders involved also agreed that responsibility for delivery of the full PE curriculum should not be delegated to lead teachers. The participating teachers in Study 2A, for example, considered a twelve week absence from PE teaching to be too lengthy. The opportunity to work with their students outside of the classroom context was considered as a valuable opportunity for teachers to learn about their students and their holistic development. Teaching PE was also valued by the participating teachers as an important and enjoyable part of the generalist primary school teacher role which should not be compromised. These views are in line with those previously expressed by other Irish teachers in support of PE provision by generalists teachers (Irish National Teachers Organisation 2007). In light of this feedback from Study 2A, the length of the class swap was shortened to six weeks in Study 2B. This

shorter intervention further strengthened the convictions of the participants that class swapping should be used as a means of supporting generalist PE provision by engaging the specialist expertise of other teachers on a short term basis, rather than as a means of replacing generalist teachers. Research in Australia by Ardzejewski *et al.* (2010) and in England by Thornton (1990) also concurs that generalist teachers consider any form of PE specialisation as supplementary to the PE being delivered by the class teacher. Although more recent studies in England have highlighted a desire amongst generalist teachers to avoid teaching PE (Jones and Green 2015), the teachers in the present research were steadfast in their support of generalist teachers maintaining an active involvement in the delivery of PE. Adopting a relatively short and focused time frame for class swapping can go some way towards ensuring it is understood as supplementary to generalist PE provision. This outlook offers the most sustainable approach to improving the quality of PE within primary schools, as the human capital expertise of lead teachers is not only utilised directly, but also begins to be shared across the school with other participating teachers through the development of social capital.

### **Development of social capital**

Spillane and Hopkins (2013, p.724) noted that ‘interactions among teachers that support learning and development are not natural occurrences’. As mentioned in the literature review, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to these teacher interactions which are focused on student learning as social capital. The way in which schools are structured can affect the amount of contact teachers have with other teachers and this in turn can facilitate or hinder the development of social capital. In this section it is argued that class swapping facilitated the development of social capital by changing organisational structures and by altering the shared norms of the informal social context within the schools involved. The type of teacher interaction created by class swapping and the potential impact of this social capital development will also be considered in this section.

Network evolution and analysis studies have shown that organisational structures within schools can be an important factor in the maintenance and development of teacher relationships and social capital (Coburn *et al.* 2010, Hopkins *et al.* 2014, Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc 2016). The participants in the present research indicated that teacher interaction within PE was extremely limited prior to the class swapping project. This is in line with other research in an Irish context which found that teacher interaction is limited in primary schools, especially in the area of PE (Coulter 2012). Individualism is often evident in the teaching profession with teachers spending large proportions of their day in their own classrooms in isolation from other adults in the school (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Class swapping introduced a new organisational structure for one part of the day which led teachers to interact more with their peers. Physically, teachers had more opportunities for interaction as they were meeting other teachers when swapping their classes. Teaching the same class level and physical proximity of classrooms have been associated with the increased likelihood of tie formation between teachers (Hopkins *et al.* 2014), and this was also the case during the class swap. In Glasswood, Henry swapped with teachers of the same class level in close proximity to his room and this presented additional opportunities to develop social capital, for example in the walk to the staff room or yard. In these instances, the formal organisational structure of class swapping, contributed to development of informal ties and relationships between teachers, which are vital to social capital (Hopkins *et al.* 2014). Classroom proximity and teaching the same class level also appeared helpful to the class swapping process as logistical challenges were reduced and teachers were familiar with the curriculum content and materials for that class. Whilst helpful in the short term, Hopkins *et al.* (2014) noted that restricting teacher interaction to those within the same class level could significantly inhibit teacher learning. Applying these findings to the present research suggests that learning cannot be neatly compartmentalised according to classes and that class swapping across levels is important. Teachers who class swap only at the same

level could lose sight of the broader holistic spiral approach to learning that is advocated within the Irish primary school curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999a). Class swapping across class levels, whilst more logistically challenging, could potentially lead to the development of richer social capital and teacher learning within a school as new patterns of teacher interaction would likely be facilitated.

This new organisational structure provided by class swapping also facilitated social capital development by providing teachers with a common experience. Teacher interaction was facilitated further as they now had the shared task of teaching the same group of pupils. Shared experiences between teachers can facilitate the evaluation and critiquing of pre-existing assumptions about groups of learners (Ainscow 2016). Class swapping is, therefore, a prime example of an activity which Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p.105) refer to as ‘reculturing’. Reculturing involves changing patterns of communication and developing new kinds of relationships between teachers within a school which in turn can change practices and beliefs (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). This process of reculturing had an impact on some of the teachers as they began to interact with different teachers in relation to pupils teaching and learning. The results of this research provide further empirical evidence of how change in a schools’ organisational structure, in this instance class swapping, can promote teacher interaction, which in turn is considered important to social capital development (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Spillane and Hopkins 2013, Hopkins *et al.* 2014).

In addition to organisational structures within a school the informal social context, such as the shared norms and values in place within the school, can also influence teachers’ social capital (Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc 2016). Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc’s (2016) findings emphasised the importance of the informal social context over other factors in the maintenance of social capital. A cohesive school community where ‘every member tends to interact with every other member’(Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc 2016, p.15) is considered central to a

positive informal social context which facilitates teacher interaction. Although Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc's (2016) study focussed on the maintenance rather than the development of social capital, their endorsement of professional tasks which allows teachers to develop new patterns of interaction is of relevance to this research on class swapping. Class swapping is one such professional task that can put teachers in closer proximity to each other and offer them the opportunity to build patterns of interaction with each other in an informal manner. In some instances, the lead and participating teachers used class swapping as a means of maintaining and further developing existing relationships. In addition, on other occasions class swapping led some teachers to develop new links and ties with other teachers in their school context. Class swapping, therefore, offers a means of improving cohesion and the informal social context within a school, particularly where it occurs across class levels. Increased cohesion garnered from the class swapping process may in turn be beneficial to the development of social capital.

While class swapping increased the level of teacher interaction, however, it is important to carefully consider the type of teacher interaction which was generated to ensure social capital development can have a positive impact. For example, teacher interaction related to teaching and learning can influence teachers' instructional productivity (Jackson and Bruegmann 2009) but not all types of teacher collaboration are equally effective (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Schools with greater levels of teacher collaboration have consequently been associated with improved student outcomes through the medium of improved teacher instruction (Goddard *et al.* 2007). Little (1990) outlined a continuum of four different types of teacher collegial relations and collaboration found in the literature. Arranged in order, their continuum of collegial relations starts at a point of independence and continues up to interdependence. Listed respectively in relation to their place on the continuum these include, scanning and storytelling, aid and assistance, sharing and joint work. The interactions of the teachers in Study 2A of the



class swap were consistent with the characteristics of the scanning and storytelling category. Interaction was sporadic with some exchange of ideas and sharing of anecdotes from time spent teaching the other teacher's class. Whilst the shared experience of teaching the same group of pupils led to increases in teacher discussion, participants felt that the quality and depth of teacher interaction in Study 2A was largely in keeping with existing trends. The effectiveness of teacher interaction at the level of scanning and storytelling in advancing teachers' practice has been questioned (Little 1990, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Although the effect of this shallow interaction was not transformative in itself, one could argue that teacher interaction at the level of scanning and storytelling acts as an important precursor to the development of further collaboration. Researchers have indicated that the development of teacher collaboration takes time, with trust and positive teacher relationships crucial to social capital and teacher leadership (Frost and Harris 2003, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). The development of trust can also be a slow process and informal teacher interaction through class swapping may be one means of developing this trust. Where trust was in place between teachers, social capital developed and this facilitated the smooth running of the project. Therefore, the results of this study further support the association between trust and social capital development.

In addition to social capital, class swapping also developed the lead teachers' decisional capital as they reflected upon and learnt from their experiences. Reflection has been identified as central to leadership development (Roberts 2008) and within this research the process of reflection also had a significant influence on leadership. The lead teachers identified that the level and quality of teacher interaction present in Study 2A needed to be improved to maximise positive outcomes from class swapping. Based on these insights, a formal element of teacher interaction was introduced to the class swapping process in Study 2B through the use of planning and reflection documents. These documents further stimulated teacher interaction and also enhanced the quality of teacher interaction, as there were a number of prompts and a

requirement that the teachers involved fill out these documents collaboratively. The teacher interaction which became evident in Study 2B was, therefore, more in line with the advanced sharing category of collegial relations identified by Little (1990). Teachers began to share materials such as lesson plans and physical resources with each other and mutually considered how best to meet the needs of pupils in the classes. They also began to share with their swapping partner some of their teaching strategies which proved effective with the pupils in their classes. Behavioural management strategies, teaching style and strategies for individual pupils with special educational needs were shared during teacher interactions. These examples indicate that embedding interaction within class swapping can ensure it is understood as a learning process which caters for the holistic development of children, as advocated for in the Irish primary school curriculum (Government of Ireland 1999a). Teacher interaction at the level of sharing within class swapping also provided teachers with the opportunity to build their human capital through social capital and this was highlighted as beneficial by all the participants. This type of teacher interaction can promote collaborative learning and be a valuable form of professional development (Duncombe 2005, Keay 2006, Armour and Yelling 2007). Furthermore, on two occasions, in addition to sharing, team teaching of PE also developed in two of the case study schools. Team teaching aligns with the strongest form of collaboration identified by Little (1990) as joint work and has also been identified by Duncombe (2005) as a useful opportunity for teacher learning in PE. On these one-off occasions, the lead and participating teachers taught PE collaboratively at the same time to both classes. Although primarily led by the lead teachers, the participating teachers were actively involved in the delivery of the lesson and considered these occasions as valuable learning experiences. These instances of team teaching occurred organically between the teachers involved without any involvement from the researcher. These team-taught lessons would most likely not have taken place had the teachers not been involved in class swapping. Although

outside the scope of this research, further studies may seek to examine how team teaching and joint work practices could be embedded in the class swapping process. The examples which occurred in this study do, however, provide further convincing evidence that class swapping can facilitate the development of social capital which in turn can lead to meaningful teacher collaboration.

### **Development of leadership capital**

Leadership capital has been put forward by the OECD (2014) as another important factor which works in combination with human, social and decisional capital to produce professional capital. It is clear, however, that ‘Strong leadership capital however does not just emerge; it must be developed and cultivated’(OECD 2014, p.79). Promoting leadership from the ‘middle’ within schools has been identified as an effective way of cultivating leadership capital (OECD 2014). The results of this research indicate that class swapping is one such means of developing leadership capital.

Class swapping promoted leadership capital by further developing the ability and motivation of the lead teachers to provide PE leadership. With regard to the lead teachers ability to provide PE leadership, both the literature and Study 1 of this research confirm the importance of teacher expertise to the development of leadership capabilities (Odell 1997, Crowther *et al.* 2009). Class swapping presented teachers with the opportunity to develop their teaching competence in PE as they were delivering a larger number of classes. The opportunity to teach additional PE lessons was motivational and used by the lead teachers to further their own learning. They researched new ideas for their lessons and engaged in detailed PE planning and reflection. The lead teachers also taught a wider range of pupils within the school, sometimes across different class levels. This contributed to their knowledge of the standards of PE more generally within the school and further added to their ability to provide leadership, as they began to recognise

patterns of strengths and weaknesses in the schools' PE programmes. Teaching additional lessons also offered the lead teachers the opportunity to demonstrate their PE expertise to a wider number of teachers in the school. Peer respect is important when trying to change behaviours (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012), and teachers who successfully model pedagogical excellence can experience sustained success in teacher leadership (Crowther *et al.* 2009). Successful class swapping for PE consequently added to the lead teachers' credibility amongst other teachers as PE leaders within the school.

Class swapping also enabled leadership capital to develop by increasing the lead teachers' motivation to provide PE leadership within their school. Teaching more PE broadened the leaders' perspectives and led them to consider PE on a wider level outside of their own class. When teachers were provided with autonomy to spend extra time teaching their preferred subject through class swapping, their motivation to provide leadership within the school was enhanced. Increased motivation and expertise in turn facilitated the development of leadership capital by providing teachers with further confidence to take on other PE leadership tasks. Although not always explicitly evident to them, the lead teachers became involved in a number of other PE leadership tasks outside of class swapping such as team teaching, sharing of resources and providing advice.

Class swapping in itself also developed leadership capital by pushing, pulling and nudging both the lead and participating teachers involved to develop their professional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p. 158) identified good leadership as a mixture of activities which 'draw people in with energy and excitement of your own committed practice and also push and nudge them forward with your relentless commitment to being better and doing better for all your students'. With respect to the concept of pull in relation to class swapping, it is clear that participating teachers were exposed to the lead teachers' passion for PE. In addition to passion, values are an important element of leadership (Bush 2011), and the lead teachers' commitment

to ‘the social, political and moral agendas of teaching physical education’ became evident (O’Sullivan and Doutis 1994, p.176). The lead teachers also set positive examples to their colleagues during the class swap in relation to their approaches to planning, teaching and assessing PE. Modelling behaviours through non interactional means is considered a form of leadership which can be a source of influence (Spillane *et al.* 2009), with inspiring teachers particularly well placed to provide this influence (Sammons *et al.* 2016). The participating teachers had differing perspectives on the influence the lead teachers’ passion, values and modelling of behaviours had on their motivation, competence and confidence to teach PE. As these teachers were not tracked afterwards it is not possible to ascertain the influence of class swapping on the participating teachers’ competence to teach PE, but insights were generated into their confidence and motivation to teach PE. Half of the participating teachers identified that class swapping had no effect on their confidence to teach PE and that one of the main benefits of class swapping was that they could hand over responsibility for PE to another teacher during that period. The other half of the participating teachers viewed class swapping differently, with the passion of the lead teachers considered to be inspirational and a significant draw which provided them with renewed enthusiasm to teach PE. Despite the fact that these teachers did not teach PE over the course of the intervention, they actually felt more confident about teaching PE at the end of the class swapping period. These participating teachers had a different perspective as felt that they learned by observing the lead teachers behaviours and through the medium of social capital interactions during the class swap. These results are consistent with the data obtained from generalist teachers in Australian primary schools by Morgan and Hansen (2007). They found that the involvement of a PE specialist could be viewed as an opportunity to learn new skills, or alternatively as a chance to handover responsibility for PE for a designated period of time. These results also align with the perspective of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) who outlined that not all teachers are always ready

to be pulled. The results do suggest, however, that class swapping can in certain circumstances develop leadership capital by presenting opportunities for lead teachers to elicit and develop the interest of other teachers in PE.

Class swapping also developed leadership capital by providing the lead teachers with a means of nudging and pushing participating teachers to develop their professional capital related to PE. As the teachers who were swapping had a group of pupils in common, class swapping in itself can be considered as a nudge to encourage teacher interaction. It facilitated a number of teachers to become involved in the work of other adults within the school and during Study 2A this resulted in increased levels of teacher interaction. However, as has been outlined this interaction was most often limited to scanning and storytelling rather than meaningful collaboration. Research suggests it is important that leadership focuses teacher relationships and interaction on specific pedagogical work (Robinson *et al.* 2009), and so in Study 2B of class swapping the participants were pushed to focus their interactions on issues of a pedagogical nature. Through the introduction of planning and collaborative reflection documents with pedagogical prompts, the lead and participating teachers were pushed to increase their interactions, as well as to focus these interactions on issues of a pedagogical nature. The increased level and quality of interaction which developed was considered extremely helpful in enhancing the effectiveness of class swapping and facilitating the smooth running of the project. The lead and participating teachers began to share information and knowledge and so the development of leadership capital, which became evident within class swapping, aligns with the recommendations of Nicolaidou and Petridou (2011). They advise that leadership development be embedded in the daily practices of schools through sharing and the development of learning communities. It is important to bear in mind, however, that provision of advice may not always equate with the provision of leadership (Spillane *et al.* 2009). It is not verifiable that the advice provided by the lead teachers led to sustained changes

in the participating teachers' practice. The evidence generated over the course of this intervention does suggest, however, that the teacher interaction which developed during class swapping did lead to some changes in practice. For example, advice shared relating to pupils with special educational needs was utilised by the teachers in their subsequent lessons. These results indicate that the interactions which developed between the teachers as a result of class swapping can be legitimately grounded within the confines of leadership. Ensuring that this element of collaboration and reflection is implicit within class swapping can further support the development of leadership capital within schools.

Another important aspect of the development of leadership capital is the development of collective responsibility. Collective responsibility is when teachers identify with all pupils in the school and not just those in their own classroom (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Class swapping started the process of developing collective responsibility during the swap. The teachers were invested not only in the development of pupils in their own class but also in the development of other pupils they were teaching within the school. Although the lead teachers were still primarily concerned with their own pupils, class swapping pushed the teachers to start to broaden their focus onto other pupils within the school. This also ties in with the Sergiovanni (2001) concept of leadership density which argues that as more teachers become involved in the work of others, a larger number of teachers begin to have a stake in the success of the school. Class swapping aligns, therefore, with the recommendations of Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007) that advocate for leadership structures in primary schools which allow teachers to become involved in shared professional tasks which draw on their individual expertise and interests. Class swapping is one such leadership structure which empowers teachers in areas of importance to them and concurrently develops leadership capital.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate the experiences of generalist teachers with additional PE expertise in teaching classes other than their own for PE. The results have shown that class swapping can undoubtedly facilitate teachers with PE expertise, enthusiasm and a focus on learning to positively influence the provision of PE directly by providing richer experiences to a greater number of pupils. The potential for class swapping to positively influence PE provision seems even greater, however, through the development of social and leadership capital amongst other teachers within a school. These results are in keeping with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital which outlines that a group of teachers with high social capital working together are more effective than the brilliance of individual teachers with high human capital expertise. The positive effect of the lead teachers' individual PE expertise was, for example, constrained by a lack of social capital or teacher interaction at the beginning of Study 2A. As the research progressed, however, class swapping developed social capital and leadership capital which enhanced the PE lessons the lead teachers were delivering, and elicited the interest of several participating teachers in teaching PE. New patterns of teacher interaction were created which changed the organisational structures within the case study schools. Teachers had more opportunities and reasons to interact and this in turn developed the informal social context and added to school cohesion. New types of professional relationships were formed where teachers began to talk about teaching and learning. Although initial discussions between teachers were shallow, more advanced forms of collaboration started to develop in Study 2B as the teachers involved sought to meet the needs of the pupils. In the second phase of the swap, social capital was also further stimulated through the decisional capital which had developed from the lead teachers' experiences of class swapping in Study 2A, as well as from the formalised planning and reflection documents utilised. In line with study 1 of this research, the importance of structuring and scaffolding informal leadership



was, therefore, highlighted. As teachers began to interact and work together increased teacher interaction facilitated the smooth running of the class swapping process and allowed the lead teachers' human capital expertise to be utilised more effectively. Leadership capital was also developed through class swapping as the lead teachers' ability and motivation to provide further PE leadership across the school was enhanced. Class swapping developed leadership capital through a mixture of what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as pull, push and nudge. The participating teachers were pulled in by the enthusiasm of the lead teachers, nudged to interact with other teachers and pushed to focus these interactions on the teaching and learning of pupils. In turn this started the process of developing collective responsibility as teachers became invested in the development of other pupils outside of their own classroom.

Taken together, the present results are significant in at least two major respects. First, these results indicate that generalist teachers with PE expertise can directly influence PE provision positively within primary schools through class swapping. Second, and perhaps most significantly, this study also provides empirical evidence that class swapping can contribute to the development of social and leadership capital, both of which may motivate and mobilise teachers to work together to improve student outcomes in PE across the school.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate generalist teachers' experiences of primary PE leadership and to ascertain what skills and supports are needed when taking on PE leadership in primary schools. There has been much debate worldwide surrounding the future of primary PE (Jones and Green 2015) and within this uncertain environment the importance of primary PE leadership has been advocated (Griggs 2015). Notwithstanding this strong advocacy of PE leadership, there is a very limited amount of guidance and research available relating to primary PE leadership, particularly in an Irish context. Utilising a professional capital framework (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012), this thesis contributes to our understanding of PE leadership in an Irish context for the first time and considers the potential role of school based lead teachers in promoting innovation.

In this chapter, the overall conclusions generated will first be presented. The recommendations accruing from these conclusions will then be detailed, followed by the limitations of this research and directions for future research. The chapter will conclude with some final thoughts on the overall contribution of this study.

### **Conclusions**

The following six conclusions can be drawn from the present study.

#### **1. Generalist classroom teachers value PE leadership opportunities**

This research extends knowledge of primary PE leadership in Ireland by firstly highlighting generalist classroom teachers' willingness to become involved in leadership. The lead teachers engaged in leadership related to organisation and management as well as content and pedagogy. These results in themselves are unique in an Irish context and provide insight into teachers' understanding of PE leadership for the first time. The lead teachers valued the opportunities for PE leadership which were provided to them. Engaging in leadership activities outside of

their own individual classroom was an enjoyable experience for the lead teachers which contributed to their job satisfaction. In several instances the lead teachers were particularly excited and enthused by opportunities to influence the PE content and pedagogy utilised by other teachers. This finding is promising and suggests that classroom teachers would welcome greater opportunities to engage in leadership activities outside of their individual classes in relation to teaching and learning, and not just administrative issues.

Another important factor in this positive attitude to leadership was the autonomy provided to the lead teachers. Although guidelines relating to the research were provided to the participants, the lead teachers were encouraged to lead in whatever manner they considered most appropriate. In keeping with research elsewhere, autonomy was highly valued by the lead teachers and contributed significantly to their willingness to become involved in leadership (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Carse 2015). The positive attitude of the lead teachers towards leadership is encouraging and adds further credibility to calls by Fletcher and Mandigo (2012) and Ainscow (2016) to provide primary school teachers with greater autonomy and control within their schools. Providing the lead teachers with autonomy also further contributed to our understanding of primary PE leadership, as subject specific empirical examples of leadership were generated. These examples provided insight into both the commonalities and uniqueness of primary PE leadership compared with leadership in other subject areas. Leadership in areas such as maths and music is often considered to be highly specialised, almost exclusively reliant on key individuals and dependent on external expertise (Spillane 2005, Beauchamp and Harvey 2006, Burch 2007). Although expertise was also identified as important by the lead teachers, PE leadership was found to be more in keeping with the leadership of literacy (Burch 2007), as it was more context specific, drawing on the internal expertise of a wider number of teachers within the school. In line with the findings of Burch (2007) and Spillane and Hopkins (2013) perceptions about the subject, in this instance PE, may have contributed to this less specialised

view of PE leadership. Although further unique aspects of PE leadership, such as organising sports days and external provision, were also mentioned by participants, the elements of PE leadership examined can be connected with the more general leadership literature. It is clear, for example, that a shared approach to leadership was valued. As in the case of their English counterparts, the lead teachers in this research indicated that leadership which emphasises collaboration amongst teachers is highly valued (Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain 2011). The importance attributed to shared leadership is reflective of the move away from hierarchical forms of leadership towards more distributed models of leadership within the leadership literature (Spillane *et al.* 2004). The finding that teachers valued shared leadership over traditional hierarchical forms of leadership provides us with an important insight into the meaning of PE leadership for the participants. Their perspectives are in line with the work of Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011, p.881) who critiqued the connection between formal position and teacher leadership when commenting that ‘The notion that teachers need to be labelled ‘leader’ in order to be pro-active in their role is also open to question’. In New Zealand, Robinson *et al.* (2009, p. 47) came to a similar conclusion when suggesting that ‘Leadership rather than leaders is what is needed’ in schools. The lead teachers identified their informal shared approach to leadership which drew on the intrinsic motivation of teachers to positively influence student outcomes, as being more powerful than relying on extrinsic motivation through formal position.

## **2. Informal PE leadership needs to be scaffolded and supported**

Five of the seven lead teachers did not have formal PE leadership roles within their school and their leadership was consequently classified as informal. While leading informally had significant benefits, the complexity and challenge of providing leadership whilst carrying out the dual role of classroom teacher and lead teacher was highlighted. In particular, finding time to engage in leadership activities and meet other participating teachers was challenging for the

lead teachers within the busy school environment. These findings compliment those of earlier studies which identified the importance of creating time for professional dialogue within teacher leadership (Angelle and DeHart 2011, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, Carse 2015). The capacity of the lead teachers to provide leadership informally was significantly enhanced when informal leadership was structured and scaffolded. For example, in Study 1 the lead teachers who acted deliberately to increase teacher interaction through planned discussion and assigned meeting times engaged most in leadership activities. Similarly in Study 2, informal leadership was enhanced when teacher interaction was scaffolded through the use of collaborative planning and reflection documents. Reflection within these documents and in interviews were particularly important scaffolds, as they facilitated the lead teachers to develop their leadership capital by critically reflecting on their roles. These results are consistent with research elsewhere which also found reflection to be an important part of leadership development (Roberts 2008, Carse 2015). The lead teachers demonstrated an ability to learn from their previous experiences and this was valuable in the development of their decisional capital. As previously discussed in chapter 3, decisional capital is the ability of teachers to make good discretionary judgments (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). The capacity of the lead teachers to reflect on their leadership is promising and in several instances the lead teachers' reflections prompted them to alter or change their subsequent approach to leadership. The present research, therefore, highlights the importance of structuring and scaffolding informal leadership by creating opportunities for professional dialogue and explicitly planning for reflection.

In addition to structuring informal leadership, the importance of supporting and valuing informal leadership was also highlighted. Although the majority of lead teachers were excited and enthused by the opportunity to lead, it is necessary to acknowledge that engagement in leadership activities required an investment of time and effort on behalf of the teachers

involved. Whilst outside the scope of this research, the experiences of the lead teachers indicates that this input by teachers needs to be acknowledged and accounted for by school authorities and policy makers in order for it to be maintained in the long term. In a way that mirrors findings in English schools, the evidence generated in this study suggests that collaborative school cultures which value teacher leadership must be developed (Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham 2007). Developing these school cultures can ensure that informal leadership is sustainable and that lead teachers feel their work is appreciated by their colleagues

### **3. PE Leadership can facilitate the development of social capital**

Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital outlines the importance of social capital to quality teaching, where social capital centres on meaningful pedagogical interactions between teachers. Prior to both studies, participants noted the limited amount of pedagogical discussion which typically took place between teachers. This finding matches that of Coulter (2012) who also noted that meaningful teacher interaction was limited in Irish primary schools, particularly in relation to the teaching of PE. PE leadership facilitated the development of social capital by developing new patterns and types of teacher interaction. As the lead teachers engaged in leadership activities, interactions related to teaching and learning were increased. Central to this growth in social capital was the creation of shared experiences. In both studies, teacher interaction was stimulated by common experiences between the lead and participating teachers. The teachers were open to discussion with another teacher experiencing similar issues in relation to PE teaching or working with particular students. The importance of creating shared experiences between teachers to facilitate social capital development was, therefore, highlighted.

Another factor in the growth of social capital was the development of trust and positive relationships between teachers. In some instances trusting relationships were already in place

between the lead and participating teachers and this aided the process of social capital development. In other cases, however, new relationships had to be cultivated between teachers and this highlighted that the development of social capital can be a slow process. The experiences of the lead teachers indicates, however, that investment in these underlying relationships between teachers is a worthwhile endeavour and contributes additional evidence to that of Frost and Harris (2003) which suggests that social capital is heavily reliant on positive trusting collegial relationships.

#### **4. PE leadership can facilitate innovation**

As social capital is a key ingredient for successful innovation (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012), PE leadership which develops social capital can also facilitate innovation. The lead teachers drew on this social capital, as well as additional opportunities to utilise their human capital created through PE leadership, to facilitate PE innovation and positively influence PE provision throughout their school. In relation to social capital, the lead teachers adopted a shared approach to leadership which succeeded in attaining the involvement of the participating teachers. Consequently, both the lead and participating teachers developed a sense of ownership over the PE innovation by working together, which in turn further facilitated innovation. The creation of social capital also succeeded in developing a positive collegial and in some instances collaborative atmosphere, which has been shown to be an environment conducive to teacher learning and professional learning communities (Parker *et al.* 2012).

In terms of human capital, in particular leadership related to content and pedagogy, was also highlighted as important to PE innovation by the participants. In several instances in Study 1, however, much of the lead teachers' efforts were concentrated on leadership related to organisation and management. The provision of this type of leadership appears to be largely in keeping with the role carried out by existing PE post holders in the Irish primary education

system (Department of Education and Science 2003). Although important to the success of the project, it is questionable whether a majority of time spent on leadership relating to organisation and management represents the best use of the PE expertise of a lead teacher. This sentiment is in line with the recommendations of Bush (2008), Robinson *et al.* (2009) and the OECD (2014) who all advocate that leadership is most effective when focussed on teaching and learning rather than on administrative tasks. In an Irish context there have also been calls for middle leadership in primary schools to be reconceptualised to allow for a renewed focus on pupils learning (Hislop 2014). Ainscow (2016, p.169) also argues that policy makers need to ‘allow the space for practitioners to make use of the expertise and creativity that lies trapped within individual classrooms’. The results of this study corroborate this viewpoint and demonstrate that the individual expertise of classroom teachers can be utilised to facilitate innovation through PE leadership. The collaborative ultimate frisbee and class swapping projects provided examples of leadership activities that enabled the lead teachers to utilise their individual expertise to a greater extent within their schools. The lead teachers engaged in leadership related to content and pedagogy and this provided their colleagues with support and advice in relation to their teaching which was considered to be helpful in terms of innovation. The present study, therefore, confirms previous findings that expertise is important to leadership (Crowther *et al.* 2009).

PE leadership also facilitated PE innovation by providing the participants with a form of professional development. In several instances, social interaction with the lead teacher increased the participating teachers’ confidence to teach PE and accordingly their willingness and motivation to innovate. Easily accessible and continuous support which was contextualised to the school setting was also provided. This support was highly valued as it contributed to the participating teachers’ confidence to innovate in PE and to the overall success of each study. Whilst there may not have been an explicit focus on professional



development, the potential of PE leadership to facilitate professional development is evident. Significantly PE leadership presents opportunities for professional development which may be meaningful for participants and accordingly of a high quality (Patton *et al.* 2013, Patton and Parker 2014). These results indicate that PE leadership which forefronts the importance of leadership relating to content and pedagogy, whilst at the same time recognising the need for leadership relating to organisation and management, can successfully facilitate PE innovation. Developing widespread PE leadership could, therefore, potentially represent an effective means of promoting innovation in primary PE.

5. **PE leadership can create new opportunities for the development of professional capital**

Professional capital was adopted as a theoretical framework to facilitate analysis and interpretation of teachers' experiences of leadership. Although not originally intended, the teachers' experiences of leadership did, however, also conversely provide insight into the development of capital. As previously discussed, at different points in each study PE leadership facilitated the development of human capital and social capital. Time is a significant factor in the development of decisional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012) and so it was developed to a lesser extent due to the timeframe of each study. While different elements of capital were developed, it is clear that full professional capital was not created through PE leadership as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) outline the necessity of the three forms of capital being simultaneously present. Each type of capital amplifies each other and their interplay leads to the development of professional capital. Although professional capital in itself was not created, PE leadership created conditions which may be conducive to the future development of professional capital. Opportunities for meaningful professional development can contribute to the development of professional capital (Patton *et al.* 2013), several of which were, for example, created through PE leadership. PE leadership also created further potential

for the development of professional capital through the development of leadership capital amongst the lead teachers. Leadership capital was understood as the capability of lead teachers within a school to drive reform through the development of professional capital. The development of leadership capital through PE leadership could, therefore, be significant in the future development of professional capital. Accordingly, it is pertinent to consider the ways in which leadership capital can be developed amongst teachers.

#### **6. Collaborative work practices can facilitate the development of leadership capital**

The results of this research have significant implications for the understanding of how the PE leadership capital of classroom teachers can be developed within schools. The introduction of collaborative work practices relating to PE facilitated the development of leadership capital. On a personal level, these tasks were in areas of interest to the lead teachers and consequently their motivation to engage in leadership activities was enhanced. By taking on the role of lead teacher, for example, in Study 1 when several teachers taught the same content at the same time, the lead teachers had opportunities to interact with other teachers and engage in leadership tasks. Engaging in these activities facilitated the development of leadership capital and in many instances contributed to the lead teachers' understanding of collective responsibility. As has been previously discussed in chapter 3, collective responsibility means that teachers identify with all pupils within a school, not just those within their own class (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Collective responsibility adds further to leadership capital as teachers with this outlook have a whole school understanding of leadership and were found to be more pro-active in providing leadership relating to content and pedagogy. These results add to a growing body of literature on the value of collaboration in the development of teacher leaders (Murphy 2005, Hargreaves and Fullan 2012).

Furthermore, through empirical investigation this research also established the potential of class swapping to develop leadership capital amongst teachers. This is the first piece of research to explicitly investigate class swapping and the results are promising. They indicate that class swapping offers lead teachers the opportunity to influence PE provision positively and to develop leadership capital through a mixture of what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as push, pull and nudge. Through class swapping, lead teachers have significant opportunities to develop their individual human capital expertise, as well as a collective responsibility outlook, both of which were found to be of vital importance to leadership capital. It is evident, therefore, that collaborative professional tasks provide an accessible means of developing leadership capital within primary schools.

### **Recommendations**

Based on these results it is possible to make a number of recommendations relating to PE leadership in the primary schools studied. These recommendations may be of interest to practitioners, stakeholders and policymakers concerned with primary PE.

- Generalist teachers in primary schools should be provided with informal PE leadership opportunities. Teachers should, for example, be encouraged by the DES and teacher organisations at a national level, and by school principals at a local level, to lead collaborative work practices such as class swapping and PE innovation where the same content is being taught simultaneously by teachers. Engagement in these activities over concentrated periods of time can develop PE social capital and leadership capital which may in turn positively influence student experiences.
- Informal leadership must be explicitly planned and deliberate structures must be put in place to support teachers in taking on these roles. Lead teachers should, for example, be facilitated in finding time to engage in leadership activities, as well as in the process

of leadership reflection. School principals and boards of management who endeavour to provide these supports may go some way towards ensuring that lead teachers feel that their work is valued.

- A shared approach to PE leadership should be adopted by lead teachers. Leadership which emphasises consultation and collaboration can facilitate the development of positive relationships and collaborative cultures which are beneficial to innovation.
- Generalist teachers with PE expertise engaged in PE leadership activities should be facilitated in focussing their efforts on issues of a pedagogical nature by school principals. While administrative tasks are also important, leadership which concentrates on teaching and learning is effective in facilitating PE innovation, and in utilising the individual expertise of teachers.

### **Limitations of the study**

This research provides us with the first investigation and analysis of generalist teachers' experiences of PE leadership in Irish primary schools. Although valuable insights are generated, the exploratory nature of the study has a number of limitations. The scope of the study was in some ways constrained by the timeframe of the research. It was not possible, for example, to assess the quality of the lead or participating teachers' PE teaching prior to or after this research. The lack of a point of reference made it challenging to assess the influence of PE leadership on innovation. As the participating teachers were not observed teaching PE at any point during this research, it was also difficult to make comparisons between student experiences of PE with the lead and classroom teachers during the class swapping process.

## **Future research**

The results point towards a number of areas which future studies should explore. While issues surrounding teachers' experiences of PE leadership have been considered in detail, further empirical investigations of teacher leadership in practice in Irish primary schools are required to determine the long term viability of informal PE leadership. Longitudinal studies which track lead teachers as they provide informal PE leadership over extended periods of time may provide further insight into the best means of sustaining and encouraging informal PE leadership in primary schools. Such studies may also concurrently highlight other examples of informal PE leadership activities which can be carried out by lead teachers.

Further studies are also required to assess the extent to which PE leadership contributes to continued improvements in practitioners' teaching. While PE leadership facilitated innovation, follow on studies are needed to establish whether PE leadership can facilitate sustained changes in teachers' practices leading to quality PE teaching. In particular, the potential role of explicit leadership development programmes within this process merit consideration. By extension, this research could also usefully seek to explore the impact of PE leadership on student outcomes over time.

Another area which merits further investigation is the unexpected emergence of team teaching within Study 2. Team teaching, where two or more teachers work together to deliver lessons, has previously been identified by Duncombe (2005) as potentially beneficial in terms of collaborative learning in the context of primary PE. As part of the class swapping process, a number of teachers decided to team teach PE lessons of their own accord. Whilst highlighted as beneficial by the participants of the research, further studies might explicitly investigate class swapping which prioritises teacher learning by embedding team teaching within the process.

A final area which future research might further consider is the use of Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) theory of professional capital within educational research. Building on the work of Toh *et al.* (2016) and Patton *et al.* (2013), this study provided empirical data of human, social and decisional capital in practice and further demonstrated how professional capital can link theory to practice and facilitate the development of a deeper level of understanding and meaning in educational settings. The present research did, however, utilise leadership capital as another key element of the professional capital theory. A working definition of the term 'leadership capital' was proposed in chapter 4 and utilised as another essential element in the professional capital formula. Future research may wish to consider this working definition and the potential use of leadership capital as a fourth central component of the theory of professional capital.

### **Final thoughts**

This the first study to explicitly investigate PE leadership in Irish primary schools and makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of what leadership in PE means to practitioners. Although teacher leadership in PE is more commonly associated with a formal position in the literature, this research has demonstrated for the first time the immense potential for generalist primary classroom teachers to provide PE leadership informally. Within this informal approach to leadership, the sharing of leadership was embraced by the lead teachers and further facilitated PE innovation. Teachers with a collective responsibility outlook and PE human capital expertise are particularly well placed to take on the important role of lead teacher. Structures must be put in place, however, to facilitate and support teachers to become involved in the work of PE leadership, as well as ensuring that the work of lead teachers is valued. Although each approach to engaging teachers in PE leadership used in this research has merit, it is not advocated that a 'one size fits all' approach is adopted. Rather, the approaches used, such as collaborative work practices and class swapping, can provide examples of useful starting points in the process of developing PE leadership within primary schools. Utilising

these insights to tap into the potential of informal PE leadership could be hugely beneficial to primary PE, as it has been clearly shown that when teachers are provided with leadership opportunities, they can positively influence PE provision.

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## Appendices

- A. Letters to Principals
- B. Participant information sheets
- C. Informed consent forms
- D. Ethics approvals
- E. Sample interview schedules
- F. Reflection documents
- G. Class Swapping planning document
- H. Observation template
- I. Exemplar of coding strategy utilised
- J. Sample excerpts from reflexive diary
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  - Reasons to include ultimate frisbee as part of a PE curriculum
  - Ultimate Frisbee workshop outline
  - Sample ultimate frisbee activities
  - Spirit of the game explanation
  - Ultimate frisbee fun day



## Appendix A: Letters to Principals

### Study 1



Dear Principal,

I am writing to you today in relation to a study I am conducting into physical education leadership in primary schools. My name is Liam Clohessy and I am a primary school teacher in nearby Rushbrooke National School, Cobh, Co.Cork. As part of my studies for a master's degree, I have a physical education games programme that I would like to implement across five schools in the Cobh area. It consists of an 8 week unit of games, with training and resources provided to the participating teachers. The project will culminate in an interschool pupil activity day held in the locality

I am looking to recruit one teacher to lead the project in each school with the support of two other teachers. The experiences of the teachers acting as PE project leaders within their schools over an eight week period will then be examined through interviews and short reflections.

I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read the attached information sheet with further details and consider if your school could help by taking part in this study. I will call the school in the coming days to discuss this project further with you.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Kind regards,

Liam Clohessy

0877646320

Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie

## Study 2



Dear Principal,

I am writing to you today in relation to a study I am conducting into physical education in Irish primary schools. My name is Liam Clohessy and I am a primary school teacher in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Rushbrooke, Cobh, Co.Cork. As part of my studies for a PhD, I have a 12 week PE programme that I would like to implement across three primary schools. This programme involves the use of teachers with PE expertise to teach additional PE lessons through a process of class swapping. Insights will be gained into the teachers, principals' and children's experiences of class swapping and its influence on teaching and learning in PE through a series of interviews and observations.

I am looking to recruit teachers with additional PE knowledge to lead the project and I understand that you have a member of staff with PE expertise. I have contacted \_\_\_\_\_ and he/she is willing to become involved in the research project.

I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read the attached information sheet with further details and consider if your school could help by taking part in this study. I will call the school in the coming days to discuss this project further with you.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Kind regards,

Liam Clohessy

0877646320

Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie

## **Appendix B: Participant Information sheets**

### **Study 1: Teacher information sheet**



# Participant information sheet

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN IRISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS: SCHOOL BASED LEADERS? RESEARCH PROJECT**

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Dear teacher,

I am conducting a study into physical education leadership in primary schools. I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read this information sheet and consider if you could help with this research.

### **Some information about the researcher**

My name is Liam Clohessy and I am a primary school teacher in Rushbrooke National School in Cobh, Co.Cork. I am currently taking time out from teaching to complete a Masters by research in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am completing this research in the area of primary school physical education. I am interested in improving the teaching and learning of physical education in Irish national schools through the utilisation of school based PE leaders

### **Description of the research project**

This research is investigating school-based subject leaders in Irish primary physical education. The experiences of a group of teachers, who will act as PE project leaders within their schools over an eight week period, will be examined. The leaders will be asked to implement a physical education games project within their school and their experiences of physical education leadership will be documented through interviews and a reflective diary.

### **What is the physical education project to be implemented?**

The PE project consists of eight PE lessons based on the games strand of the primary PE curriculum. Participants will be provided with a practical 90 minute training workshop prior to the beginning of the project. Following this they will be provided with a set of resources and eight lessons to help them implement the games unit in their school. One teacher will lead the project across three classes, with the support of two other teachers. The project will culminate in an interschool pupil games activity day held in the locality

### **Purpose of the research project**

International research has shown that subject leaders can have a positive influence on teaching and learning. There is, however, currently little known about teacher leadership in physical education at primary level. This study will provide insights into teachers' experiences of carrying out the role of physical education leader. The findings of this study may contribute to the development of physical education subject leaders in Irish primary schools. It will also be invaluable in identifying the skills and supports needed to carry out the role of physical education subject leader.

### **What do I have to do if I decide to participate?**

Participation in the research as the **project leader** involves four elements

1. Attend a 90 minute workshop prior to the project beginning. This workshop which will be held in the locality will provide participants with resources and information to help them lead the PE project in their school.
2. Lead and implement the new PE project with your own class, as well as with two other classes in the school, over an 8 week period
3. Take part in three voice recorded interviews about your experiences of being the PE project leader. One interview before the start of the project, one at the halfway point and one after the project has finished. These interviews will be carried out at your convenience at a time and location chosen by you.
4. Completion of a short weekly reflection on your experiences of leading the physical education project.

### **What if I don't want to lead the project but would still like to participate?**

Two class teachers in addition to the project leader are required in each school. These teachers will attend the 90 minute training workshop, help implement the project with their classes and take part in one short voice recorded interview half way through the 8 week games unit.

### **What are the benefits?**

- It will provide the school with an opportunity to implement an innovative PE project that can improve the quality of teaching and learning of physical education.
- It is an opportunity for teachers to demonstrate and develop their leadership skills.
- All the children involved in the project will also have the opportunity to partake in a culminating activity day in the locality at the end of the project.
- This research will provide valuable information on primary PE school based leadership which is currently not available. This can then inform the future development of primary school PE leadership.
- Develop links with other schools and teachers in the area with similar interests.

### **What are the risks?**

There are no risks involved in this project other than those in everyday life.

### **What happens to the information?**

All information will be treated as confidential and only the researcher and his academic supervisors will be able to view the data. The information collected will be used to write a thesis for the fulfilment of a Master's degree. Pseudonyms will be used and any details that may compromise the confidentiality of participants and their school will be omitted. Data will only be used for academic purposes and all information acquired by the researcher will be treated as confidential. Data will be kept by the researcher on an encrypted memory stick with a password and in a secure location. Ethical approval for this research project has been granted by Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee.

### **Suitability checklist**

- Are you a class teacher?
- Do you teach one or more of the following classes: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> class?
- Do you enjoy teaching physical education?
- Would you like the opportunity to lead the implementation of an innovative physical education project in your school?
- Would you like to learn new skills and introduce new PE content to students in your school?

If you answered yes to the above questions you are an ideal candidate to participate in this project.

### **Informed consent**

Before participating in this project you must give informed consent. This means that by agreeing to participate in this project you acknowledge that you have done so voluntarily and that you understand the research and your role within the project. **Please fill in the consent form if you wish to take part in the study.**

### **Contact details**

If you would like more information about this project or you have any other question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie) 0877646320

### **If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

MIREC Administrator  
Mary Immaculate College  
South Circular Road  
Limerick  
061-204515  
mirec@mic.ul.ie

## Study 2: Teacher information sheet



COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH  
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

# Participant information sheet

## PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS: GENERALIST PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TEACHING ADDITIONAL PE

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Dear teacher,

I am conducting a study into primary school physical education. I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read this information sheet and consider if you could help with this research.

### **Some information about the researcher**

My name is Liam Clohessy and I am a primary school teacher in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Rushbrooke, Cobh, Co.Cork. I am currently taking time out from teaching to complete a PhD in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am completing this research in the area of primary school physical education (PE). I am interested in improving the teaching and learning of physical education in Irish national schools by providing opportunities for teachers with PE expertise to teach additional PE lessons.

### **Description of the research project**

This research proposes to investigate the use of classroom teachers with PE expertise to teach classes other than their own for PE. This will be done through a process of class swapping, whereby one teacher with additional PE knowledge will swap classes with colleagues and teach PE to their classes. The class swapping will take place over a twelve week period, with the PE leader teaching PE to two classes other than their own each week. The benefits and challenges of teachers with PE expertise teaching PE to classes other than their own will be examined from the perspective of the PE leader, other teachers, children in the PE class and the school principal.

### **What do the teachers who swap classes have to teach?**

The teacher with PE expertise will teach PE to the other classes. The content of these PE lessons is at the discretion of the teachers involved. Teachers who swap and take the PE leaders class will teach a subject other than PE, as chosen by the teachers involved

### **Purpose of the research project**

School-based subject leaders in other countries have been found to hold a key position from which to positively influence teaching and learning. Research also suggests that when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them, student outcomes are likely to improve. Whilst subject leaders do not currently exist in Irish primary schools, the practice of swapping classes for PE has been undertaken by some teachers. There are, however, currently no research studies which specifically investigate primary school teachers swapping classes for physical education and its influence on teaching and learning experiences. Research into this phenomenon is timely, therefore, to consider how this practice takes place and its possible role within primary school physical education.

### **What do I have to do if I decide to participate?**

Participation in the research as the **PE leader** involves:

5. Teaching PE to two classes other than your own over a twelve week period. One of these classes must be a different age group.
6. Taking part in four voice recorded interviews about your experiences of teaching additional PE. One interview before the start of the project, two during the project and one after the project has finished. These interviews will be carried out at your convenience at a time and location chosen by you.
7. Allowing the researcher to observe you teaching PE to classes other than your own. The relationship you develop with the other classes rather than the quality of your teaching is the focus of these observations.
8. Completion of a short weekly reflection on your experiences of teaching additional PE.

Participation in the research as the **class teacher** who swaps classes with the PE leader involves:

1. Swapping your class for PE with the PE leader for a period of twelve weeks. You will teach the PE leaders class a subject other than PE during this time. The topic is at the discretion of the teachers involved.
2. Taking part in two voice recorded interviews about your experience of class swapping
3. Allowing the researcher to seek consent from the parents/guardians of children in your class to take part in two voice recorded interviews, one at the beginning and one at the end of the project. Six children who provide consent will be randomly selected to take part in the group interviews about their experiences of being taught PE by the PE leader.

Participation in the research as the **principal** involves:

1. Granting permission for research to be carried out in the school

2. Taking part in two voice recorded interviews about your experience of class swapping

### **Suitability checklist to take on the role of PE leader**

- Are you a class teacher?
- Do you enjoy teaching physical education?
- Would you value the opportunity to teach additional PE lessons across your school?
- Have you gained additional expertise or experience related to primary PE teaching in any of the following ways:
  - Postgraduate Study e.g. Diploma or Masters in physical education
  - PE specialisation in college through elective modules
  - Worked as a PE local facilitator with the PDST
  - Delivered PE Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses
  - Completed additional PE CPD courses/ related coaching courses or certificates

If you answered yes to the above questions you are an ideal candidate to participate in this project as the PE leader.

### **What are the benefits?**

- It will provide the school with an opportunity to implement an innovative approach to PE teaching, which may help improve the quality of teaching and learning in physical education
- It is an opportunity for teachers to demonstrate and develop their leadership skills
- The unique skills and talents of teachers will be further utilized
- Teachers will be empowered in areas of importance to them
- The research will provide valuable information on the appropriateness of class swapping in primary school PE. This may inform future curricular development in primary school physical education.

### **What are the risks?**

There are no risks involved in this project other than those in everyday life.

### **What happens to the information?**

All information will be treated as confidential and only the researcher and his academic supervisors will be able to view the data. The information collected will be used to write a thesis for the fulfilment of a PhD and academic publications. Pseudonyms will be used and any details that may compromise the confidentiality of participants and their school will be omitted. Data will only be used for academic purposes and all information acquired by the researcher will be treated as confidential. Data will be kept by the researcher on an encrypted memory stick with a password and in a secure location. Ethical approval for this research project has been granted by Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee.



### **Informed consent**

Before participating in this project you must give informed consent. This means that by agreeing to participate in this project you acknowledge that you have done so voluntarily and that you understand the research and your role within the project. **Please fill in the consent form if you wish to take part in the study.**

### **Contact details**

If you would like more information about this project or you have any other question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie)

0877646320

### **If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

MIREC Administrator  
Mary Immaculate College  
South Circular Road  
Limerick  
061-204515  
mirec@mic.ul.ie

## Study 2: Parental information sheet



# Parent information sheet

## **PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS: GENERALIST PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TEACHING ADDITIONAL PE**

---

Dear parent,

I am conducting a study into primary school physical education. I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to read this information sheet and consider if your child could help with this research.

### **Some information about the researcher**

My name is Liam Clohessy and I am a primary school teacher in Bunscoil Rinn an Chabhlaigh, Rushbrooke, Cobh, Co.Cork. I am currently taking time out from teaching to complete a PhD in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. I am completing this research in the area of primary school physical education (PE). I am interested in improving the teaching and learning of physical education in Irish national schools by providing opportunities for teachers with PE expertise to teach additional PE lessons.

### **Description of the research project**

This research is investigating the use of classroom teachers with PE expertise to teach classes other than their own for PE. This will be done through a process of class swapping, whereby one teacher will swap classes with colleagues and teach PE to their classes. Your child is in one of the classes taking part in the class swapping. The benefits and challenges of class swapping will be examined from the perspective of the teachers, children in the PE class and the school principal.

### **Purpose of the research project**

School-based subject leaders in other countries have been found to hold a key position from which to positively influence teaching and learning. Subject leaders do not currently exist in Irish primary schools and there are no research studies which specifically investigate class swapping for PE its influence on teaching and learning. This project will consider how class swapping can take place and its possible role within primary school physical education.

### **What does my child have to do if they participate?**

Six students who have received consent from their parents and who want to be involved will take part in two voice recorded group interviews, one at the beginning of the project and one at the end. I will interview the pupils in groups of three at a time. If there are any questions that the pupils do not like they don't have to answer them. The interviews will last for about fifteen minutes.

### **What kind of questions will be asked in the interview?**

All questions asked will be related to the pupils' experiences of their PE classes. I will ask questions like if they enjoy PE in school, what activities they did during their PE class, what did they learn during PE, what was it like to have a different teacher for PE?

### **What are the benefits?**

The research will provide valuable information on the appropriateness of class swapping in primary school PE. This may inform future curricular development in primary school physical education.

### **What are the risks?**

There are no risks involved in this project other than those in everyday life.

### **What happens to the information?**

All information will be treated as confidential and only the researcher and his academic supervisors will be able to view the data. The information collected will be used to write a thesis for the fulfilment of a PhD and academic publications. Pseudonyms will be used and any details that may compromise the confidentiality of participants will be omitted. Data will only be used for academic purposes and all information acquired by the researcher will be treated as confidential. Data will be kept by the researcher on an encrypted memory stick with a password and in a secure location. Ethical approval for this research project has been granted by Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee.

### **Does my child have to take part?**

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Both the parent/guardian and the child must give informed consent before they can take part in the project.

### **Informed consent**

Before allowing your child to participate in this project you must give informed consent. This means that by allowing them to participate in this project you acknowledge that you have done so voluntarily and that you understand the research and your child's role within the project. Your child must also decide if they want to take part in the project and there is a separate

consent form for them to sign. **Please fill in the consent form if you wish to allow your child take to part in the study and return to the class teacher.**

**Contact details**

If you would like more information about this project or you have any other question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie)

0877646320

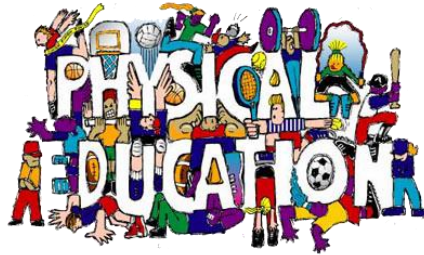
**If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

MIREC Administrator  
Mary Immaculate College  
South Circular Road, Limerick

061-204515

mirec@mic.ul.ie

## Study 2: Student information sheet



# Student information sheet

## **PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS: GENERALIST PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TEACHING ADDITIONAL PE**

---

Hi There!

Your school has been chosen to take part in a primary school PE project. This page has some information about the project that will help you decide if you would like to take part as well.

### **A PE project? What do you mean?**

The teachers in your school are really interested in helping you to have great PE classes and so they have agreed to take part in this project. Over the next few weeks you will be doing PE with another teacher from your school. You will probably know them or have seen them before. I would like to talk to you about what you think of the PE classes you do with this teacher. I would especially like to hear about what you think about having a different teacher for your PE class every week. This will help us to try and make PE really good in primary schools.

### **How can I take part?**

Six students who decide they want to take part will be asked some questions about their PE classes. I will talk to three of you at a time so you won't have to do it on your own. I am going to record what you say so that I don't forget and can remember later on what you said. I will talk to you twice between now and the end of the school year.

### **What Questions will I be asked?**

I will ask you things like if you enjoy PE in school, what activities did you do in PE, what makes PE really fun, did you learn anything in your PE classes, what was it like having a different teacher for PE? If there are any questions you don't like we can skip them and you don't have to answer them.

### **Who will be asking me the questions?**

My name is Liam and I am a primary school teacher. I love PE and spend lots of my time trying to make PE lessons really good for kids. I ask other schools and teachers to try out different ideas in PE and tell me what they thought of them. Afterwards I tell other teachers and schools how the projects went. This helps them make PE classes really fun for everyone. You will see me around your school over the next few weeks. I will be seeing how your PE lessons are going with the different teacher.

### **Do I have to do it?**

If you don't want to take part in this, you don't have to. I will come and talk to your class about this and if you have any more questions you can ask me then. If you are happy to take part in the project and your mam and dad agree as well, you will have to sign your name on a form and say you want to do this. If you change your mind later on and decide you don't want to do it anymore that is no problem.

### **Who will know what I said in the interview?**

Nobody except the person asking the questions will know what you told us about your PE classes. I won't tell anybody else about what you told me. A report will be written about the project after but I won't use your names to make sure nobody knows what you said.

### **Contact details**

If you would like more information about this project or you have any other question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie)

0877646320

**If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:**

MIREC Administrator  
Mary Immaculate College  
South Circular Road Limerick  
061-204515  
mirec@mic.ul.ie

## Appendix C: Informed consent forms

### Study 1: Lead teacher informed consent form



### Project leader informed consent form

#### Physical education leadership in Irish primary schools: School based leaders?

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- I am a volunteer and have agreed to be a participant in this project of my own free will
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time
- I understand the nature of the research and my role within the project
- I understand the full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study
- I understand that all data relating to myself will be treated as confidential by the researcher
- I understand that I will be the **leader** for this project in my school

I consent to take part in this research study

Name

Date

Signature



## Study 1: Participating teacher informed consent form



### Participant informed consent form

#### Physical education leadership in Irish primary schools: School based leaders?

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- I am a volunteer and have agreed to be a participant in this project of my own free will
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time
- I understand the nature of the research and my role within the project
- I understand the full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study
- I understand that all data relating to myself will be treated as confidential by the researcher

I consent to take part in this research study

Name	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 1: School informed consent form



### School informed consent form

#### Physical education leadership in Irish primary schools: School based leaders?

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- The school has agreed voluntarily to participate in this project
- The school can withdraw from the project at any time
- The nature of the research is understood and the school understands its role within the project
- The full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study are understood
- It is understood that all data relating to the school will be treated as confidential by the researcher

I have the authority to authorise research in this school

Name	
Position	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 2: Lead teacher informed consent form



### PE leader informed consent form

#### Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- I am a volunteer and have agreed to be a participant in this project of my own free will
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time
- I understand the nature of the research and my role within the project
- I understand the full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study
- I understand that all data relating to myself will be treated as confidential by the researcher
- I understand that I will be the **PE leader** for this project in my school

I consent to take part in this research study

Name	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 2: Participating teacher informed consent form



### Participant informed consent form

#### Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- I am a volunteer and have agreed to be a participant in this project of my own free will
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time
- I understand the nature of the research and my role within the project
- I understand the full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study
- I understand that all data relating to myself will be treated as confidential by the researcher

I consent to take part in this research study

Name	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 2: School informed consent form



### School informed consent form

#### Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet
- The school has agreed voluntarily to participate in this project
- The school can withdraw from the project at any time
- The nature of the research is understood and the school understands its role within the project
- The full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study are understood
- It is understood that all data relating to the school will be treated as confidential by the researcher

I have the authority to authorise research in this school

Name	
Position	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 2: Parent informed consent form



### Parent informed consent form

#### Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

- I have read and understand the parent information sheet
- My child has read the student information sheet and I have discussed this with them
- My child is a volunteer and has agreed to be a participant in this project of their own free will
- I understand that my child can withdraw from the project at any time
- I understand the nature of the research and my child's role within the project
- I understand the full implications involved in participating, including all risks and benefits associated with the study
- I understand that all data relating to the project will be treated as confidential by the researcher

I consent for my child to take part in this research study

Name	
Childs name	
Date	
Signature	

## Study 2: Student informed consent form



### Student informed consent form

#### Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

- I have read and understand the student information sheet
- I have had time to think about taking part
- I have talked about taking part with my parents/guardians
- I have decided myself that I want to take part and no one is making me do it
- I know that I can change my mind and decide not to take part at any time
- I know that only the people at the interview will know what I say

I consent to take part in this research study

Name	
Date	
Signature	

## Appendix D: Ethics approval

### Study 1

For Office Use Only Application Reference Number:	A13-033
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	<h3>Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee</h3> <h4>MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form</h4>
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<b>1 Title of Research Project</b>
Physical education leadership in Irish primary schools: School based leaders?

<b>2 Applicant</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Liam Clohessy
<b>Department / Centre / Other</b>	Education - Arts Education and Physical Education (AEPE)
<b>Position</b>	Master of the Arts in Education Student

<b>3 Decision of MIREC Chair</b>	
	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required
	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard
<b>X</b>	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary
	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
	Insufficient information provided by applicant / Amendments required

<b>4 Reason(s) for Decision</b>
Ethical considerations have been addressed in the application.



<b>5 Declaration</b>	
<b>Name (Print)</b>	<b>Áine Lawlor</b>
	<i>MIREC Chair</i>
<b>Signature</b>	
	<i>MIREC Chair</i>
<b>Date</b>	<b>13/11/2013</b>

## Study 2: Ethical approval

For Office Use Only Application  
Reference Number:

A15-003

 <p>COLÁISTE MHUIRE GAN SMÁL OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK</p>	<h3>Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee</h3>
	<h3>MIREC-4: MIREC Chair Decision Form</h3>

### 1 Title of Research Project

Playing to Our Strengths: Generalist Primary School Teachers Teaching Additional PE

### 2 Applicant

<b>Name</b>	Liam Clohessy
<b>Department / Centre / Other</b>	Education
<b>Position</b>	PhD Student

### 3 Decision of MIREC Chair

	Ethical clearance through MIREC is required
	Ethical clearance through MIREC is not required and therefore the researcher need take no further action in this regard
X	Ethical clearance is required and granted. Referral to MIREC is not necessary
	Ethical clearance is required but the full MIREC process is not. Ethical clearance is therefore granted if required for external funding applications and the researcher need take no further action in this regard.
	Insufficient information provided by applicant / Amendments required

### 4 Reason(s) for Decision

I believe that this application satisfies MIREC requirements.

### 5 Declaration

<b>Name (Print)</b>	<b>Áine Lawlor</b>
	<i>MIREC Chair</i>

**Signature**



*MIREC Chair*

**Date**

**24 February 2015**

## Appendix E: Sample interview guides

### Study 1: Initial interview with lead teacher

#### **Initial interview with leaders**

##### Background information

- In this school ( Number of years)
- Sport (interests, active person?)
- PE (interested? how became interested?)

##### PE and sport in the school

- Tell me about PE and sports in your school
  - How school support teaching of PE?
  - Support you? Ask for support?
  - Discussed? By whom formal/informal

##### Participants own teaching of PE in their schools

- What is your role in PE in your school?
  - Collaboration (Have you ever collaborated with other teachers in the school in the area of PE? In what ways/areas?)
  - Support (Have you ever supported another member of staff in the area of PE? How?)
  - Influence (What are the factors that can influence the teaching of PE in a school?  
In your experience how can one teacher influence the practice of another teacher? Example?)
- Extra Curricular Sport, Expectation?

##### Leadership Experiences

- When you think of leadership, what come to mind? What does it mean for you?
  - Characteristics or actions associate with leader
  - Leadership V Management
  - Where would you place yourself?
- Experiences of leadership
  - Outside of school (Would this have been a formal or informal position?)
  - In school (Would this have been a formal or informal position? Post holder?)
  - Usual approach to innovation and change?
- Classroom teacher and leadership
  - Role of? How?
  - Difference between PE and other areas leading?

### **Introduction of new ideas**

- In this project you are...is this how you usually do it?
  - E.g. with some details? PE?
  - Who usually plays prominent role? Elaborate Why?

### **Leaders perspectives of how intervention is going to go**

- You know teachers how do you see the group dynamic working?
  - Challenges in implementation. Personally and as a team
  - Benefits? Personally and as a team?
  - Contribution to level of PE in the school?
  - What would be successful outcome? How assess this?

## Study 1: Focus group interview

- How are the kids finding the ultimate Frisbee?
- How are you finding teaching ultimate Frisbee?
  
- General description of project
- Tell me how you as a group/team went about the project
- Leadership
  - In this project I asked \_\_\_\_ to be the leader, is this how it has played out?
  - Roles?
  - Time for leadership?
  - Main Motivation?
  - Do you feel there is an extra expectation on the leader? Much involved?
- Support
  - How has the three of you working on the same project worked out?
  - Helped or supported each other? How? Who supports who?
  - Anyone outside of the group help? Postholder/principal/caretaker?
  - Planning together?
  - Collaboration? Different drills/ideas?
  - Other teachers doing the same PE as you. Good? Doing your own thing?
  - Other classes involved?
- Discussion
  - Has there been much discussion/communication between yourselves regarding the project?
  - Formal or informal? Helpful? Informal enough or like formal time?
  - When have you found time to do this? Before/after lessons?
- Benefits
  - What is going well?
  - What are the benefits in participating in the project? To both kids and teachers
- Challenges
  - Have you encountered challenges so far?
  - How have you overcome these?
  - Did anyone help you?
  - Lack of knowledge about ultimate Frisbee big issue? How overcome?
  - Time? How overcome?

- Person who didn't attend training, challenge? How help? Able to do project without training?
- Resources
  - How have you managed the resources and plans? Has this been challenging?
  - Was this the case for everyone? Picking out best bits?
  - Did you photocopy all resources for teachers or just those ones you found most relevant?
- Organisation
  - Has there been a lot of time spent organising? Equipment/timetabling?
  - Community hall suitability? Two games at one time possible? How many aside?
  - Has everyone had a part in this? Leader's job?
- Introducing something new
  - Describe to me the experience of introducing something new to the school, kids and teachers
  - Have you learned something about introducing new initiatives from this project so far?
  - Starting something new, would you follow the approach we used?
  - Would a resource pack on its own be enough? Training important?
  - This approach to introducing PE initiatives work again in the future? Continue next year?
- Looking forward
  - Will the approach to this project change or stay the same for the remainder?
  - Do you feel meeting here today and discussing the project is of value?

## **Study 2: Final interview with lead teacher**

### **Final interview with leader**

#### **Class swapping**

- Tell me about how the class swapping went since we last spoke
- How did you find it? Physically demanding/Stressful/making life easier. More work?
- How did you find teaching extra PE? Did you feel prepared/confident?Need for support?
- You mentioned momentum previously, has momentum been maintained/started to die off? Has the novelty started to wear off (pupils, yourself, teachers)
- What do you feel is the best way of going about planning and timetabling when class swapping?
- Transitions, weekly notes/plan, responsibility etc

#### **Challenges**

- What challenges did you encounter when class swapping?
- How did you overcome these challenges? Did you succeed?
- Difficult to account for class differences? Difficult to get continuity between classes?
- Behaviour issues E.g. someone upset or fighting. Whose responsibility is this to sort out? Teacher or leader?
- What drawbacks or disadvantages do you see to class swapping?

#### **Benefits**

- What went well when class swapping?
- As you see it are there benefits to class swapping? To the kids/teachers/schools?
- Benefits at broader level abilities of children?
- How do you feel the class swapping affected children's learning? Positive/negative?

#### **Holistic Development**

- Do you feel class swapping has an impact on cross curricular learning?
- What are your thoughts on class swapping in relation to the holistic development of the child? Does something like this negatively affect the holistic ethos of the primary school curriculum and generalist primary school teacher?
- Do you feel class swapping had an impact on special bond between teacher and class? Were you able to build the same rapport with another teacher class? Why/why not?



### **Interactions with other teachers**

- Describe to me the interactions you had with other teachers regarding class swapping?
- What was the focus of these interactions? (Content or pupils?)
- Formal or informal? Helpful? When have you found time to do this? Before/after lessons?
- Did you start to identify with/focus on other students outside of your classroom?
- Would you consider the class swapping project as an individual or team initiative? Why?

### **Teachers/principal/children's perspectives of class swapping**

- What are the children's perspectives of the class swapping? Anxiety/excited? How do you know?
- How did the teachers find the class swapping? Stressful/making life easier
- What is your perception of the principal's thoughts on class swapping? Any other members of staff have an input?

### **Legacy of Class Swapping**

- How do you feel about teaching the other subject you swapped for again September?
- Do you feel less prepared to teach e.g. music now? Disengaged/disenfranchised?
- If you were not teaching music over the longer term, and you then had to teach music how would you feel? Make it harder?
- Do you think that some teachers would become further disengaged from PE after something like this? What happens if class swapping no longer becomes available? Would you like to do it long term?
- Is there a way of overcoming any legacy issues you see as problematic?
- Do you feel
- Do you think class swapping will continue in this school? Why/why not?
- What do you feel is the optimum way/amount of time in which class swapping can be used?

### **Leadership**

- Talk to me about leading the project? What was involved in leadership?
- Would you consider the class swapping you engaged in as leadership?
- Does teaching extra PE through class swapping position you well for PE leadership?

- Do you feel that class swapping would place emphasis/pressure on one specific teacher in terms of PE leadership? Does it allow other teachers to opt out?
- Do you feel the expertise you have is being utilised well? Is class swapping a good way?
- How could your expertise be best utilised?
- How can the individual PE expertise of teachers be best used in primary schools?
- Could a teacher who class swaps have any further support role? Could it be combined? Would that be realistic/manageable?
- Do you see a role for teachers outside of their own individual classrooms within primary schools?

### **Overall**

- Did your perception of what class swapping was going to be like match the reality?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Would you do anything differently if leading the project again?
- What can class swapping contribute to a school?
- Is class swapping doable/achievable? Is it worth the effort required?
- Was class swapping successful? How do you assess this?
- How would you argue for/against class swapping (for example to a principal/colleagues)
- What advice would you give someone else leading a similar project to this?
- Any advice you would give me going forward?

## **Study 2: Interview with principal**

### **Initial interview with principal**

#### **Background information**

- Tell me a bit about the school?
- Tell me a bit about your own background? (teaching career)
- Sports (interests active person?)

#### **PE and sport in the school**

- Talk to me about PE in the school?
  - Would PE be discussed much? Formally/informally?
  - How are teachers supported in PE? Detail/example
  - How are schools supported in PE? Details Who/where
  - Do you have much involvement in the PE being taught within the school?

#### **Class Swapping**

- In this project there will be... Why decide participate in research project?
- has class swapping taken place in this school before?
  - If so give e.g. with some details? PE or other subject area?
  - Who initiated this? Was it a good arrangement? Why/why not?
  - Tell me about the class swapping that is going to take place in this project
  - What do you feel the benefits of class swapping will be?
  - Do you think there could be any drawbacks to class swapping?
  - How do you imagine it will work in practice?
  - What do you think the perspectives of children/teachers/leader will be of class swapping?

#### **Leadership Experiences**

- When you think of leadership, what comes to mind? What does it mean for you?
  - Characteristics or actions associate with leader
  - Leadership V Management
  - Where would you place yourself?
- PE leadership
  - Is there PE leadership in this school? Who provides this? Principal/postholder/teachers?
  - Can you give me an example of PE leadership?
  - Difference between PE and other areas leading?
- Classroom teacher and leadership (distributed?)
  - Role of classroom teacher in leadership? How? Example?

#### **Perspective of how intervention is going to go**

- You know teachers how do you see the group dynamic working?
  - Challenges in implementation?

- Benefits? To yourself/teachers/kids?
- Contribution to level of PE in the school?
- What would be successful outcome? How assess this?

## **Study 2: Focus group with pupils**

### **Final Interview with pupils**

#### **Ice breaker**

Ice breaker activity of some kind

#### **PE with a different teacher**

- Remind me again what is PE? Why do you do it?
- Tell me about the PE you did with the other teacher over the past few weeks
- Draw a picture of your PE class? /I want you to write two lines about PE?
- Tell me about what you drew/wrote?
- What kind of things did you do?
- Tell me about what you learnt in PE
- Did you learn about other subjects in your PE class?
- How often did you do PE with\_\_\_\_\_?
- Was PE with \_\_\_\_\_ different than PE with your teacher? How? Why?
- What is the thing you like most about PE? Why?
- What is the thing you like least about PE? Why?
- Who do you prefer to do PE with? Why?
- I am going to say a word and I want you to say the first three words that come into your head. E.g Dog= bark, walk, food. Cat, School, yard time, school hall, PE class
- What does your teacher think of PE?
- Would you like to swap classes again in the future? Why/why not?

## Appendix F: Reflection documents

### Study 1

#### Reflective Diary

Think about **your experiences of being a leader** this week. Please use the questions below to document your interactions and relationships with others as well as your actions (what you did), as the leader.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Week number: \_\_\_\_\_

5. How did you lead the project in your school this week? What did you do?

6. This week as the leader: what went well?

7. This week as the leader: what was challenging?

8. Did your actions as leader this week impact on:  
(c) Students' learning in PE? How?

(d) The teaching of PE in school this week? How?

## Study 2

### Reflective Diary

Think about **your experiences of teaching additional PE** this week. Please use the questions below to document what you did and any interactions you had in the past week in your role teaching additional PE.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Week number: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Using the table below please outline details of the PE you taught over the past week

Class		Class		Class	
PE Strand(s)		PE Strand(s)		PE Strand(s)	
Topic(s)		Topic(s)		Topic(s)	
Total number of PE minutes		Total number of PE minutes		Total number of PE minutes	

2. What were the benefits of teaching PE to other classes this week?

3. What were the challenges of teaching PE to other classes this week?

4. Who did you talk to about PE this week? Use the questions below to help give a brief description.

(A) Did you seek information or advice about PE this week?

(B) Did anyone ask you for advice or information about PE this week?





## Appendix G: Class swapping planning document

### Class Swapping Planning Document

Both teachers taking part in the class swap should complete this document together before you start

<b>Teacher 1:</b>	
<b>Current Class:</b>	
<b>Subject area of interest/passion:</b>	
<b>Details of expertise:</b>	

<b>Teacher 2:</b>	
<b>Current Class:</b>	
<b>Subject area of interest/passion:</b>	
<b>Details of expertise:</b>	

<b>Proposed length of swap:</b>	
<b>Proposed day/time of swap:</b>	
<b>Logistical procedures for swapping:</b>	
<b>Procedures in the case of teacher absence:</b>	

**Aims/objectives of swap:**

**Behavioural management expectations:**

How will responsibility for behaviour management be handled during the swap?

**Content to be taught during the class swap:**

What content will be taught by each teacher during the class swap? Provide a short overview of topics to be covered, teaching methodologies and details of planning procedures:

Teacher 1:

Teacher 2:

**Inclusion:**

Provide details of which pupils may benefit from differentiation as well as practical tips and advice. Also discuss with your swap partner how they can cater for pupils with special educational needs in your class.

Teacher 1:

Teacher 2:

**Reflection:**

On what day/time will you meet each week to briefly reflect on how the class swapping is progressing?

**Notes**

Any other information which may be of relevance to the swap?

**Appendix H: Observation template**

<b>PE leader:</b>	<b>Number of students:</b>
<b>Date of observation:</b>	<b>Class duration:</b>

**Pre-observation**

<b>Observation</b>	
Topic of session:	
Date of report:	
<b><i>PE leader observation</i></b>	
<b><u>Getting to class:</u></b> How do teachers swap? Is it efficient/Are classes ready. Discussion between teachers?	
<b><u>Integration:</u></b> Integrated content used by teacher/children	
<b><u>Continuity:</u></b>	

Evidence of continuity between lessons?	
<b><u>Student Interaction with PE leader:</u></b> Rapport? Respond to questions, Asks questions, gives feedback? Knows teacher names. Timid/shy/anxious or comfortable with new teacher?	
<b><u>PE leader interaction with student:</u></b> Rapport? Knows names, asks questions, encourages questions, gives feedback. Accounts for differences in class level through teaching style.	
<b><u>Grouping of students/differentiation:</u></b> Aware of differences in abilities/personalities in class	
<b><u>Rules/Routines:</u></b> <i>Children familiar with PE leader's rules/routines?</i> Behavioural issues?	
<b><u>Fun:</u></b> Pupils enjoyment of having a different teacher	
<b><u>Returning to classroom procedures:</u></b> Discussion between teachers?	

## Appendix I: Exemplar of coding strategy utilised

Interviewer: Liam Clohessy (L)

Participant: Noel (N)

L: so Noel what was your kind of experience of being the leader in the project? How did you get on?

N: well I suppose we, successful and enjoyable I suppose really bit of work in too of course you know but am thinking back now it's two months since we began. The initial things I suppose was a little bit of apprehension as to how it would go and am getting people on board and so on. But the two teachers that were with me were very co-operative like you know and went well I have to say in the end. It started well and you know the initial course that you gave us I suppose gave us another little bit of a grounding and what to go on and the notes that were being kept as well. So am once we had things up and running them it was only a case of keep it going you know and it was a case of I suppose getting the initial things going. We needed to get the equipment, well you did you give us the Frisbee but we just had to make sure that we were okay for you know...I organised the cones and the various bibs and so on for all the rest of them. We kind of put together a timetable, a mini timetable I suppose you would call it and am we like our facilities aren't great because it is the yard we had to use and twas a problem at times and on windy days like.

L: I know sure it is hard

N: yea yea.

L: And you mentioned there seemed to be a bit of work involved in it like, what kind of things did you find you were doing during it?

N: The things I was doing really was only just making sure that they had all the equipment they needed and that we, that they were happy with the timetable that when they could do it. Passing on the notes to makes sure that they understood how to go about it. And sometimes then like I suppose the hardest part, or the most awkward part was when...you had the windy day or the rainy day and people, they would come to me and they would say will they go out or won't they or you'll be kind of...you'll be involved with them as well as your own class trying to make up what to do. Eventually we came to the decision that we would hire the community hall you know and we did indoors, which was in hindsight a good idea you know? and it worked better from there we go a few sessions in there then so the only work that was



Changes as a result of project  
Learning from young teachers  
Culminating activity day

Support received

One leader is best  
Motivation for taking part

Future adaptations  
Structure to introducing something new  
Expectation on the leader  
Positive feedback

Expectation V Reality of leading  
Who should be leading  
Self-refereeing and Spirit  
Organisation  
Post Holder  
Content knowledge

Duties and Future Role for PE leader  
Informal Discussion

Extending project Further in the scho

Workload

Providing suggestions

involved there really was getting the secretary to organise the various sessions every week and to make sure it was booked and paid for you know? And getting a bit of feedback for them then every week and that's all really. It wasn't major work now I have to say but you know just you know just a bit of extra work that's all.

L: yea there is a bit involved in it. So like you mentioned there about getting the feedback so when would ye have gotten a chance to do that?

N: well it would be mostly informally I would say, you know really maybe I, in the staff room if at lunch time I would meet them or whenever if I would meet them I would say well how did it go today? How do the session go today, and they would say oh I tried this or I tried that you know am, problems such as maybe the wind or we'll say fellas having difficulty with the forward throw. Am things like that that's all really, we just discuss feedback like that and maybe we'd say you know, what do you think you might do next week or things like that, that's more or less that's all really. We didn't sit down any, the three of us formally at any session as such, we all would have spoken about it amongst each other.

L: and do you think that was kind of helpful, that there was chat going on?

N: Oh God yea. I mean with any class that would be good because you normally get ideas from other teachers so a bit of feedback is always valuable.

L: Would that be something that would happen in the school anyway?

N: it would, oh it would happen for other subjects. Particularly I suppose for the subjects now that mightn't call the core curriculum subjects because most teachers would have their own ideas and that and they'd be doing a kind of a routine thing. Things like PE art drama you'd have ideas like that and sometimes teachers would cross over with each other and they would be telling each other what to do or you know, just suggestions as to what. I did this and it was good, I did something else and I wouldn't bother doing it again L: so that seemed to go well advising each other or you know or getting ideas

N: Yea I think so yea.

L: a lot of your time I suppose in the project in the leading it seemed to be more in you know managing the equipment and getting all the timetable sorted

N: yea, it wasn't a major deal now like as I say, no I wouldn't complain about it, that's all really I mean and getting out the notes and suggesting parts of the syllabus that you had organised for it, suggesting various things to do on it, that's about all I did really.

L: and like would that usually be the case where you would suggest something or the way that you would be into the PE and you might be known at school, would that be something that might like

N: I would...for other topics is it?

L: even just in PE would other teachers usually take that on board or do you think it was just something new that they might have been talking about it more?

N: am... if it was something new, well this being a novelty now alright, and other teachers besides the two teachers that were at it were, they enquired and I am sure maybe next year now they will maybe consider it now that we have the Frisbees on board anyway it will be easier to just take in class out and I'd say they'll consider it definitely yea. But as regards other subjects am or other parts of PE, yea I mean am most teachers would have their own, I suppose things that that they like to do for PE and they would, an odd time they would come to me. I look after the equipment generally for the PE anyway and it mostly for the equipment, do you know where are the balls or where are the hurleys where are the helmets, where is this where is that. So is mostly about equipment, they would rarely enough ask me for suggestions as what to do.

L: And like what do you think of that? Do you enjoy like or would you mind or do you feel comfortable giving advice to other teachers?

N: I don't mind, no I don't mind at all except that I...I don't like to put myself up on a pedestal as knowing all there is to know about PE. And you know, if you want to know about PE go to Noel kind of thing, that's not how I would see myself but am an odd teacher would I suppose, when it's GAA games now which I would be into they might look for suggestions for the routines for that alright you know. But it other parts of PE like they all do, like we go to the pool they all do their own thing there. Things like little mini games they all have their own ideas for that so wouldn't come to me for that really. In fact for some of those you'd gain from some of the younger teachers in a way because they'd have new ideas about parachutes or things that I wouldn't have experience of you know? So like it works both ways really, it works both ways.

L: very good. Just thinking about we'll say you took on the leader role do you think there should be some element of that, like kind of advising others or helping others out? Or should it be more about the managing the equipment and the organisation?

N: yea I suppose because it's a PE post with me and I do I manage the equipment and I look after all teams and you know sports days and all that kind of thing am so if there is a kind of a question they do come to me on that and it is mostly about those kind of topics. It would be less about syllabus or curriculum things really but there is an avenue for it of course if someone has expertise in it by all means share it you know?

Changes as a result of project

Learning from young teachers

Culminating activity day

Extending project Further in the school

Support received

Equipment

One leader is best

Motivation for taking part

Future adaptations

Structure to introducing something new

Expectation on the leader

Positive feedback

Workload

Expectation V Reality of leading

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Content knowledge

Self-refereeing and Spirit

## **Appendix J: Sample excerpts from reflexive diary**

### February 2014

Did I bias initial interactions with Bruce? Perhaps asked wrong question mentioning team and emphasised leadership too much? Decided to be more guarded with others and not emphasise team as much, more waiting to see what happens.

### April 2014

Have I ever really considered the idea of a school based leader from a long term perspective? Am I blinded by my personal experiences and desire to spend more of my own time involved in PE? While yes one person can have a positive influence, is this actually a short sighted perspective?

### March 2015

Is class swapping beneficial? I have to overcome any preconceptions and be open to the fact that this might not necessarily be good thing for schools. Despite choosing to spend significant time investigating class swapping, I must trust the research process. Could we disengage some teachers from PE? Might it actually have negative effect? What are the long term consequences of something like this? Need to remind myself of these questions.

### April 2015

The leaders have not been fully able to construct meaning and insight into their experiences of class swapping after 4 weeks. Perhaps this is because they do not know what the other teachers think of the process yet. Using the social constructivist lens adopted for this project, they have not yet socially constructed meaning of class swapping. Perhaps they will not decide on what they think of class swapping until they do this. Should I offer them this opportunity through focus group interviews?



**Appendix K: Sample child drawings and commentaries**



(FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A).

L: *ok now here is a page, I want you to draw picture of the PE you did with Tara.*

K: *we used to do soccer and basketball*

N: *now we don't do it anymore we changed it around a bit*

L: *how did you like doing the different things with Tara?*

N: *it is always fun when the sixth class get to help us*

K: *I am going to draw friend of mine in sixth class*

L: *what are you going to draw?*

K: *the scavenger hunt*

L: *was that your favourite thing that you did with Tara?*

K: *yea*

L: *why did you like that one so much?*

K: *because we had to find things under the cone and then write the shape on a sheet and then you had to find another one and you can see numbers. The numbers on top of the cone. Then you pick the numbers you actually want and you take it up and you get a shape.*

L: *that sounds like good fun. What are you drawing?*

N: *I am drawing when we learned gymnastics with Tara*

L: *what is that?*

N: *do you know the ladders you lie on the floor? We were jumping in them and then we were doing tumbles with the mats in the halla's.*

L: *oh tumbles. What kind of tumbles?*

N: *we were doing forward and side and tuck and log*

L: *did you ever do them with your teacher or was it just Tara?*

N: *just Tara. We only done soccer and basketball with our teacher.*

(FFG 2 Pupils Riverhedge 2A).

## **Appendix L: Ultimate frisbee resources**

### **Seven Reasons to Include Ultimate Frisbee as Part of a PE Curriculum**

1. Students do not have to be highly skilled or athletic to be successful. All students can learn to throw or catch a disc even if they are not highly skilled. This is advantageous because it can lead nonathletic students to develop feelings of “I can do this.”
2. Students are likely to get lots of “touches” (i.e., opportunities to catch and throw the disc) because the game transitions quickly from offense to defence and vice versa. More touches are good because they help students feel that they are “part of the game” and can significantly improve performance.
3. Playing the game requires lots of physical activity. Students return from playing Ultimate with red faces and sweaty foreheads. This is because a typical game consists of sprinting, jumping, sliding, cutting, pivoting, and leaping with little down-time in-between.
4. Ultimate is a simple game to learn. Students can learn the game quickly, enabling them to spend more time practicing, playing the game, and getting physical activity.
5. Self-refereeing is the officiating method of choice. Self- refereeing encourages students to solve their own disputes by listening to and communicating with one another.
6. Ultimate is conducive for single-gender or coed physical education classes. As long as a student can throw and/or catch a disc, he or she is likely to enjoy playing the game even with members of the opposite gender who might be more or less athletic.
7. Equipment needed to play is inexpensive and minimal. Discs, cones, and a playing field/hall are the only necessary pieces of equipment.

### Ultimate Frisbee workshop 04/02/14

<u>Section</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Reference</u>
Gather in hall	Free Practice	
Introduction and PowerPoint	Introduction to Ultimate Frisbee and Teaching games for understanding (TGFU) approach teaching	-See PowerPoint
Warm up, Frisbee Fluency and catching	-Easing fear for those new to Frisbee  -Crocodile catching technique	- See instructional videos, Frisbee Fluency and USA elementary disc curriculum p5, 18, 19, 28 and 29.  -See p.17 IFDA lesson plans
Introduction of game and rules	-Building from one team on pitch to two teams and one Frisbee	-See introduction of game and rules to beginners
Game using adapted rules	-Making the game easier for beginners	-See p.4 IFDA lesson plans
Pairs throw and catch	-teaching points to develop throwing technique	-See p.15, 16 IFDA lesson plans  -See p.7,8 USA elementary disc curriculum
Demonstration of throwing activities	-Further develop throwing technique 'Hot Frisbee activity'	-See 'More Frisbee activities'  -See p.18 IFDA lesson plans
Creation and playing of games/activities thought of by participants	-Problem Solving  -Applying knowledge from other areas	n/a

Demonstration of more Frisbee games/activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Frisbee stuck in the mud</li> <li>-Frisbee mobile archery</li> <li>-Treasure chest and no man's land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-See 'More Frisbee activities'</li> <li>-See 'Games sense, Ultimate Frisbee no.2'</li> <li>-See 'Ultimate Frisbee task cards'</li> </ul>
Game using full rules	Full game	-See instructional video
Review	-Spirit of the game	-See p.3 IFDA lesson plans

## **Additional frisbee activities**

### **Hot Frisbee activity**

- Get pupils into groups of 3
- Each group requires 1 Frisbee and 4 cones
- Get each group to find a space and make a square with their cones.
- To start with each cone should be about 5 paces apart
- Each pupil stands at one of the cones on their own. There should be one cone with no one at it.
- The Frisbee sometimes becomes roasting and too hot to handle and must be thrown. The pupil with the Frisbee throws it to another member of the group
- After throwing the Frisbee the thrower sprints to the empty cone
- The cycle continues with each pupil running after they make a pass
- As the Frisbee will 'burn' their hands if they hold it too long they must throw it straight away
- To make the task more challenging make the square bigger and challenge the students to count the number of successful passes.
- Insert a defender into the centre of the square to make it harder

### **Frisbee stuck in the mud**

- Divide the pupils in a number of group, each with their own large square
- Choose one pupil to become a catcher
- The catcher attempts to catch all pupils inside the square. If you are tagged by the catcher or go outside the square you must Freeze on spot with your hands in the crocodile catch position
- After the catcher has tagged a few people introduce a Frisbee. The Frisbee can be used to free those who have been caught. If the Frisbee is thrown and then caught by someone frozen they become free.
- The cycle continues with people being caught and then freed by the magic Frisbee.
- The catcher can't tag/catch someone in possession of the magic Frisbee.
- Introduce more Frisbees/catchers as the situation dictates

### **Spirit of the game explanation**

Dear teacher,

Please find attached details of the spirit of the game criteria that will be used at the upcoming Frisbee fun day. The idea is to emphasise participation and enjoyment rather than competition. Certificates will be presented to the most spirited team on the day as opposed to overall winners.

The most spirited team will be decided upon by the pupils using the spirit of the game scoring sheet. I have attached this sheet so pupils and teachers can become familiar with it and practice before the fun day. Each team will receive a spirit of the game scoring sheet and after each game they play, they will be asked to fill out this sheet about their opponents. I am suggesting that pupils practice using the self-scoring sheet on themselves first before the fun day, so as to get a grasp of the concept and not to be overly critical of others. I have also included a spirit of the game scoring system example which outlines exactly what it is to be a spirited team, namely; rules and knowledge use, fouls and body contact, fair-mindedness, positive attitude and self-control and communication.

The scoring sheets will be totalled and the team with highest score will be awarded with certificates recognising their achievement as the most spirited team at the conclusion of the games. I will also be forwarding you exact details of the Frisbee Fun day before the end of the week.

I look forward to hearing how the kids get on with the spirit of the game scoring system

Kind Regards,

Liam

## Ultimate Frisbee Fun Day

Please find below details of the upcoming ultimate Frisbee fun day for your class. If you have any questions or difficulties please contact me as soon as possible.

Class:

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Opposition:

Please divide your class into four teams, Team A, Team B, Team C and Team D. Pupils can think of a name for their team beginning with their assigned letter if they want to e.g., Alligators, Conor's catchers etc. Don't worry if the numbers are uneven and if one or two teams have an extra player. Try and divide them equally in terms of ability i.e. spread those players who you feel are most capable between the teams. Assign a captain to each team, perhaps someone who took a special interest in the Frisbee and who may not have had an opportunity to be a captain before. So for example if there are 30 in your class you will have two teams of 7 and two teams of 8. Please type/write in the team name and names of the pupils on each team below.

### Team A

### Team B

### Team C

### Team D

Team Name	<u>A</u> _____	<u>B</u> _____	<u>C</u> _____	<u>D</u> _____
1.	Captain:	Captain:	Captain:	Captain:
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				

If possible bring bibs for each team. If you don't have any bibs/enough bibs don't worry I will bring spares. Students are asked to dress as they would usually for PE lessons. Each teacher is also asked to bring one Frisbee on the day for the games and to ensure each child knows which team they are part of. Please arrive at the venue at least 5-10 minutes before the scheduled start time. Please return this sheet electronically to [liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie](mailto:liam.clohessy@mic.ul.ie) or arrange for collection by **Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of April at the latest.**



### Further Information

- Games will be 6 a side. This means that most teams will have 1 or 2 subs. There will be an egg timer/sieve at each side-line, when this reaches 0 the two subs will come on as soon as possible and the timer will be reset. **All pupils must take equal turns being subs** etc (I would suggest assigning them numbers, so there is no argument and everyone knows when it is their turn). The idea is that everyone regardless of ability gets an equal amount of game time.
- Each team will play three games. Two of which will be against teams from another school. A fixture list will be clearly displayed at the venue and this will also be given to leaders in advance of the tournament where possible.
- Games will be 7 minutes in length.
- There will be two games going on at the same time. The hall will be divided into two playing pitches.
- There will be a 1 minute break/turnover in between each game. As time will be tight please try to ensure that all teams and players are ready to start games promptly.
- At any one time there will be four teams playing and four teams spectating/observing. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that those pupils in their class not playing are being appropriate spectators and are acting suitably. Space permitting there will hopefully be benches/chairs for spectators around the edges.
- The most spirited team will be decided upon by the pupils using the spirit of the game scoring sheet. Each team will receive a spirit of the game scoring sheet. They will be asked to fill out this sheet when they are spectating. (get teams to practice with the scoring sheet before the tournament day)
- The scoring sheets will be totalled and the team with highest score will be awarded with certificates recognising their achievement as the most spirited team at the conclusion of the games.

### Game Rules

- The game will be started with both teams standing in their endzones. One team will throw the Frisbee to the opposition team. Once the Frisbee has been thrown the game is on and players can move anywhere
- Teams score by catching the Frisbee in the endzone. Scores will not be kept in the games, enjoyment rather than competition is to be emphasised

- After a team has scored they place the Frisbee on the ground in the endzone. Any member of the other team can pick up the Frisbee and starts the game again by throwing to one of their teammates (like a kick out in football or puck out in hurling). Fast restarts are encouraged.
- There is absolutely no contact with another player allowed
- Players must stand still when holding the disc. They are allowed to move and pivot from side to side but nothing more.
- If the Frisbee is thrown out of bounds (goes onto other pitch) or hits a wall the possession is turned over and given to the opposition team. They restart the game with the Frisbee at the point of the pitch nearest where the Frisbee went out of bounds.
- The responsibility to catch a pass is on the throwing team. The possession is turned over (given to the opposition team) if the Frisbee hits the ground after being thrown. No drops are allowed. Possession is also turned over in the case of an interception.
- Games are to be self-referred. All players act as referees in the game. Each player can point out when a rule has been broken and talk with the player who broke it to decide how the game should be restarted. Players should look to re-start the game as quickly as possible and as if the incident never happened.