# The Structural and Micropolitical Realities of Physical Literacy Professional Development in the United Kingdom: Navigating Professional Vulnerability.

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**Abstract**

This research examines the implications of professional vulnerability during physical literacy teacher professional development, through the lens of structural and micropolitical theory in the United Kingdom (UK). The research was conducted over a twelve-week period with qualified teachers across primary and secondary school contexts, within the UK. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture the professional development journey of each teacher. Thematic analysis and pen profiles were used to analyse and present the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The results explore expressions of teacher vulnerability through the structural and micropolitical realities experienced during physical literacy professional development. Structural realities were categorised using the political (macro), organisational (meso) and structural (micro) levels with the micropolitical realities categorised using the power dynamics of power over, with and through. This paper calls for the contextual element of professional development to be given as much consideration as the content itself. Professional development can be more effective by connecting the 'what' and 'how' alongside an understanding of the 'where' and 'who'. Structural and micropolitical theory and professional vulnerability offer glimpses into this contextual world, revealing a different but equally important narrative around the wider context of successful and meaningful physical literacy teacher professional development. Finally, the study identifies aspects of transferability into the wider domains of sport coaching and sport development where physical literacy is becoming increasingly visible.

**Key Words**: teacher professional development, professional vulnerability, micropolitical theory, physical literacy, sport development.

## Introduction

While there is a plethora of research that explores student teachers' professional vulnerability (PV) in relation to professional development (Tang et al., 2016; Wang and Clarke, 2014; Zhu et al., 2018), there is yet to be significant research into qualified teachers' PV in relation to physical literacy (PL) professional development from the perspective of structural and micropolitical theory. Engagement in professional development and subsequent pedagogical change or adaptation is an intricate process that is situated in multiple contextual factors. Structural and micropolitical theory offer unique perspectives in observing teachers undertaking professional development and their construction and reconstruction of practice in negotiation of organisational power and their own PV (Jokikokko et al. 2017; Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002).

PV is often presented as an emerging theme (Kelly, 2013) within research rather than the central discussion. For this reason, it is important to centralise the focus on teacher PV to understand how teachers express their vulnerability while undertaking PL professional development. Vulnerability can be defined as "mutual responsive-ness; an active, attentive

kind of listening; the exposure of the self in the presence of others" (Pignatelli 2011, p. 221). Lasky (2005) describes vulnerability as a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts. It can be perceived as both positive and negative or as Jackson (2018) articulates as a strength or a weakness. For many teachers, teaching is more than just an occupation and is instead more of a vocation or calling. Many teachers therefore invest themselves in their work, receiving feelings of job and life satisfaction from the rewards of teaching (Nias, 1996). This merger of teacher professional and personal identity intertwines teaching both as a source of self-esteem but, also, as a source of professional and personal vulnerability. Vulnerability can be heightened at certain key moments, including when considering and/or undertaking professional development opportunities.

This paper discusses the significance of PV in relation to effective and meaningful teacher professional development in the UK. A limited number of papers have begun to consider what understandings, interpretations and meanings teachers have around PL (Harvey and Pill, 2019). There have also been increasing calls for research to explore how PL as a concept has played out in practice (Young, O'Connor and Alfrey, 2020; Durden-Myers and Whitehead, 2018). This research draws upon the findings of a twelve-week PL informed physical education professional development programme. Here, PL is defined by the International PL Association (IPLA, 2017; online) as "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life." Recommendations for future PL professional development are also presented with regards to how PV can be navigated through the professional development process. PL has also been identified as a guiding framework and overarching goal of quality physical education (UNESCO, 2015), and is an underpinning principle for the proposed 'National Plan for Sport, Health and Wellbeing' in the UK (House of Lords, 2021). Therefore, research into how PL may be embedded within physical education practice including the role of PL professional development is timely and much needed (Durden-Myers and Whitehead, 2018). There have also been recent critical perspectives of PL and its utility as a transformative concept within the literature (Quennerstedt et al., 2020), hence this research also is important in revealing the realities of PL in practice. We are cognisant that discussions around PL, vulnerability and professional development are not unique to education or teaching but instead relevant to many different sectors including but not limited to sport and coaching for example, but, we also acknowledge that each sector will also have important nuances but also have transferable elements or principles for effective professional development practice. The overarching question that guided this research was: *How are professional vulnerabilities expressed during teacher PL professional development, and how are these vulnerabilities structurally and micropolitically constructed?*

**Literature Review**

Using a variety of literature, we explore what PV is, its significance for teachers and its transferability to wider contexts. We continue by discussing the role of professional development and 'experts' in supporting the nurturing of PL in practice as an increasingly adopted concept.

*Professional vulnerability*

Vulnerability can be considered both a negative and a positive characteristic for effective teaching practice (Bullough, 2005). For example, many teachers invest themselves in their work (Nias, 1996) and receive feelings of job satisfaction from the rewards of teaching. Teachers ''often so closely merge their sense of personal and professional identity that the classroom becomes a main site for their self-esteem and fulfilment, and so too for their vulnerability'' (Nias, 1996, p. 297). PV can also be associated with negative characteristics such as teachers or indeed sports coaching

professionals losing a locus of control (Lasky, 2005) but it is also reported as an important and positive component for personal and professional growth (Bullough, 2005). From a sociocultural perspective, Lasky (2005) describes vulnerability as a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience that individuals can feel in an array of contexts. However, instead of considering vulnerability as teachers' emotional feelings (Lasky 2005), Kelchtermans (2011) identifies teachers' PV as ''a constitutive characteristic of teaching'' (p. 80) and ''a structural condition'' (p. 80) teachers find themselves situated in. Furthermore, Kelchtermans (2011) found that there are three sources of vulnerability: (1) at the micro level (the classroom), teachers struggle with the limits of instructional impacts on students' learning; (2) at the meso level (schools), the influence of principals, colleagues and parents; and (3) at the macro level, the influence of local educational policy.

Bloomfield (2010) considers practice as a hierarchical struggle for power in which they ''must find a balance between conveying strength and competence and yet not posing challenge, threat or even too much expertise to the 'expert' mentor'' (p. 227). In this paper, we define PV as teachers' self-understanding when they are constantly exposed to a multitude of external dynamics at play during PL professional development, such as the presentation of new research and knowledge, mentorship and practice evaluation. In particular teachers' PV is prone to be intensified while they are caught in dissonant hierarchical power relationships. Such agency is vital in constructing understanding of power relationships in the school setting. Individual agency is the key driver to interpreting and reinterpreting aspects of identity, meanings around PE, professional development, and constructs of PL.

*Professional vulnerability a transferable concept*

Whilst PV appears to have conceptual and empirical contextual relevance in teaching PE it may also be under exploited in the wider domains of community sport coaching and sport development (Ives et al., 2021; Mackintosh, 2021). The field of sport and active recreation has been quantified as having between 300-400,000 employees (Sport England, 2018). The parallel, and often overlapping delivery area of sport coaching has as many as 2.4 million qualified and unqualified volunteer and employed coaches in the United Kingdom (Sport Coach UK, 2021). In a recent study of the professionalisation of coaching and the landscape of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) it was identified that PV by coaches was a reason for non-progression through the pathway of coach education (Mackintosh, 2021). The recent UKCC national study of 1500 coaches, 46 NGBs, higher education providers and 12 national stakeholder agencies showed that technology, changing policy and professional environments alongside diverse expectations from coach education of very different audiences can induce a sense of vulnerability. It is apparent that coach education and coaching professional practice research has started to tentatively engage with the notions of PV (Gibson and Groom, 2021) alongside wider research that has examined coaching vulnerability, precarity of employment and emotions (Ives et al., 2021). There are perhaps similarities and implications here with regards to calls for PL to inform both coaching and teaching practice while carefully supporting practitioners in successfully engaging with the concept, which will inevitably involve effective PL professional development.

*Professional development, experts, and expertise*

Professional development is described as the specialised training or advanced professional learning intended to help teachers and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill and effectiveness (Abbott, 2014). Likewise, the global expansion of PL as a term in PE, but also in sport, health and community settings make this fertile ground for a wider research agenda (Riley and Proctor, 2022; Young, O'Connor and Alfrey, 2020). Therefore, we

position our work at the borders and boundary crossing intersection of PE research. Within education, professional development programmes provide feasible opportunities for teachers to develop and refine high-quality teaching practice in an ever-changing and multifaceted profession (Phillips, 2008). Yet professional development literature pays little consideration to the micropolitical practicums and power strategies of teachers and professional development providers. Even less emphasis is given to the professional development of sport development professionals (Mackintosh, 2021), with only isolated examples of considerations around power and micro-political strategies in coaching (Ives et al., 2021). Moreover, often a linear relationship is conveyed with knowledge moving from the provider to the participant. Rather than a more transactional and complex exchanging of vulnerability, power, knowledge, and authority. This is supported by Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p.789) whereby, it may be observed that "power exists only when it is put into action" knowledge is developed, and the internalisation of the subject involved occurs from a range of choices and responses.

The power dynamics between professional development providers and participants through a micropolitical lens and observing the overt and covert strategies employed to achieve the personal and professional goals is a potentially complex phenomenon. Furthermore, professional development can also expose the political (macro), organisational (meso) and structural (micro) vulnerabilities of teachers and therefore can be a challenging and threatening process. Durden-Myers and Keegan (2019) argue that PL professional development should be responsive to the teachers' context and needs. Furthermore, Armour and Yelling (2007, p.177) suggest that in order for professional development to be effective "teachers in their professional learning communities or networks [need to] play a leading role".

In this paper we question the role of such expert personal development trainers in a PL in-service education programme and how experiences and the meanings derived from this shape vulnerabilities and sensitivities. We define experts in their essence as having specialised knowledge from training and experience in a specific professional field. We also support the view that the knowledge base that delineates expertise not only legitimises experts' position, but it also influences what problems are visible to teachers and what range of solutions are entertained in relation to PE and the classroom pedagogy. We view this more critically in the sense that vulnerabilities, power relations and sensitivities need to be considered, and not simply assume a notion that experts 'add value' unproblematically.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research draws upon structural and micropolitical theory to inform how teacher PV is navigated during PL professional development. A micropolitical framework has been applied with student teachers (Zhu et al., 2018) but has yet to be utilised with qualified teachers across both primary and secondary contexts. Micropolitics ''is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves'' (Blasé, 1991, p. 1). There is conflict, tension, rivalry, and struggle at one end of micropolitics, and at the other end, there is cooperation, collaboration, and coalition-building (Blasé, 1991). Micropolitics act in overt and covert ways within organizations, as individuals and groups seek formal and informal powers to achieve their goals (Tan, 2015). This implies that micropolitical behaviours have identifiable patterns or structures (macro, meso and micro); and can be recognised introspectively. Through the lens of micropolitical theory, becoming and being a teacher is a political endeavour which involves the continuous negotiation of organizational power (Jokikokko et al., 2017). Micropolitical theory has been widely applied in school settings (Blasé and Anderson, 1995; Blasé and Bjo¨rk 2010) and according to Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002, p.756), micropolitical literacy is how teachers learn to "read*"* the micropolitical reality and to "write" themselves into it. Ehrich and Millwater

(2011) distinguished three micropolitical power strategies: power over, power with and power through. Table 1 below illustrates Ehrich and Millwater (2011) power strategies with examples for each.

**Table 1: Power Strategies**

| **Category** | **Examples** |
|---|---|
| "Power over" | Coercion and cooption, and empowerment |
| "Power with" | Cooperation, collaboration, coalition and collegiality |
| "Power through" | Facilitation, transaction and negotiation |

(Ehrich and Millwater, 2011)

Moreover, Ehrich and Millwater (2011) argue that internships are inherently micropolitical, which involves the juggling of power, influences, and relationships. This too could be said for professional development as an ongoing process of enhancing professional practice. Despite wide applications of micropolitical theory, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, currently, there is no research on teacher PV within professional development from the perspective of micropolitical theory. To fill this gap, this paper examines both the structural and micropolitical realities of the participants as they navigate PV when undertaking PL professional development.

## Methodology

This research is underpinned by a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology. We centrally locate the view that the teachers and actors in this study create social phenomenon and then sustain it through social practices (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Social constructivism assumes a relativist ontology that asserts that the social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Blaikie, 2007; Smith and Sparkes, 2014). The notion of *being a teacher*, *undertaking PL professional development* are therefore social constructs experienced through specific school and society-based processes and discourses. We therefore use our theoretical frameworks to help us to better understand the different social realities of the teachers in the various school settings they exist in, alongside and through. We acknowledge that our knowledge we add is culturally bound, context specific (Andrews et al., 2006) and we are attempting to make sense of the lived experiences of our participants through a variety of views and different perspectives. Thus, this study is interactive and co-constructed by the researcher and the researched (Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

This research also acknowledges the subjective meaning of social action embracing interpretivism and the notion of multiple realities (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Multiple realities are relevant to this study as the researcher and participant teachers are actively involved in constructing their 'reality'. We see our study as a first step into exploring this expanding and novel area of PL professional development policy implementation an professional development uptake.

The PL professional development programme consisted of a series of collaborative professional development sessions (n=7), lesson observations, reflections and mentoring from a PE teacher and PL expert. We consider such a programme itself as a construct of the interactions, meanings, beliefs and attitudes and opinion that shape the participants understandings and multiple interpretations of the programme. The content of the professional development session is outlined in the table 2 below:

**Table 2: Professional Development Content**

| Week Number | Professional Development Content |
|---|---|
| 0 | Professional Development / Research Overview |
| 1 | PL Introduction |
| 2 | PL Philosophy |
| 3 | Domains of PL and the Physical Domain |
| 4 | Affective Domain |
| 5 | Cognitive Domain |
| 6 | Physical, Affective and Cognitive Domains in Practice<br>Curriculum Design, SWOT Analysis and Action Plan |
| 7 | Charting PL Progress |

The research was conducted with primary generalist teachers (n=3) and secondary PE specialists (n=11) across three schools within the UK, over a twelve-week period. The impact of the PL professional development was captured using semi-structured interviews prior to the professional development commencing, immediately after the professional development period and then participants were interviewed again after a period of three months. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using abductive thematic analysis and key themes were represented using pen profiles. Pen profiles were used to represent the analysis (MacKintosh et al., 2011) in relation to micropolitical theory including the structural (macro, meso and micro) and power (over, with and through) themes. The data analysis framework outlined in Table 3 below, describes how data was processed and verified.

**Table 3: Data Processing and Verification Procedure**

| Data Processing | Data Verification |
|---|---|
| 1. Transfer data from Dictaphone or video camera to researcher laptop. | ● Immediately transfer and verify the correct data file. |
| 2. Clearly label data file using a consistent system | ● Use labelling method that enables each participant to be easily identifiable but without compromising anonymity. |
| 3. Clear Dictaphone or video camera for future use | ● Clearing the Dictaphone immediately will reduce the error for uploading and deleting incorrect files |
| 4. Input data into NVivo | ● Check files against participants are correct |
| 5. Transcribe data in NVivo | ● Check transcripts for accuracy and consistency |

| | |
|---|---|
| 6. Analyse data using thematic analysis (using consistent coding system) | ● Identify and apply coding system to generate themes and sub-themes. Using an abductive approach (Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001; Bodgan and Biklen, 1992). |
| 7. Identify individual, school or researcher excerpts for narrative representation. | ● Ensure transparency of narrative representation. |
| 8. Discuss themes and narrative representation. | ● Check alignment between themes, narrative representation. |
| 9. Discuss findings with participants. | ● Ensure themes and narrative representation align with participant perceptions. Respond to any comments made by participants. |

A data analysis framework describes the logical steps in collecting and arranging the data, supporting the credibility of the research (Atkinson and Delamont, 2005). In this case data was collated verbatim using a dictaphone. All data was transcribed from raw data into transcripts that were then made available for coding using NVIVO (a qualitative analysis software tool). Our coding was driven by the assumption that "data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said" (Patton, 1990; p.347). As is suggested, our coding started as soon as data collection began (Amis, 2006) using 'codes' to identify 'chunks of text' (Amis, 2006; p.128), that peaked interest in realtion to prior themes or as possible emerging themes. We particularly aligned with notions that whilst tidy views of data saturation is a goal, in reality "we know our analysis is not finished, only over" (Van Maanen, 1988; p.120).

In terms of our approach to methodology we adopted a more abductive design. Here we embraced Denis, Lamothe and Langley's (2001) stance of using *aprior* schemes. Such data analysis is therefore part data inspired and part theory inspired (Amis, 2006). As we coded and developed categories and themes we also returned to the literature, theoretical and conceptual ideas.

This research also adheres to the ethical requirements set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2018). Ethics was granted by the supervising University. Participant anonymity is preserved by using pseudonyms in the research findings, and participants were able to opt out throughout all stages of the research.

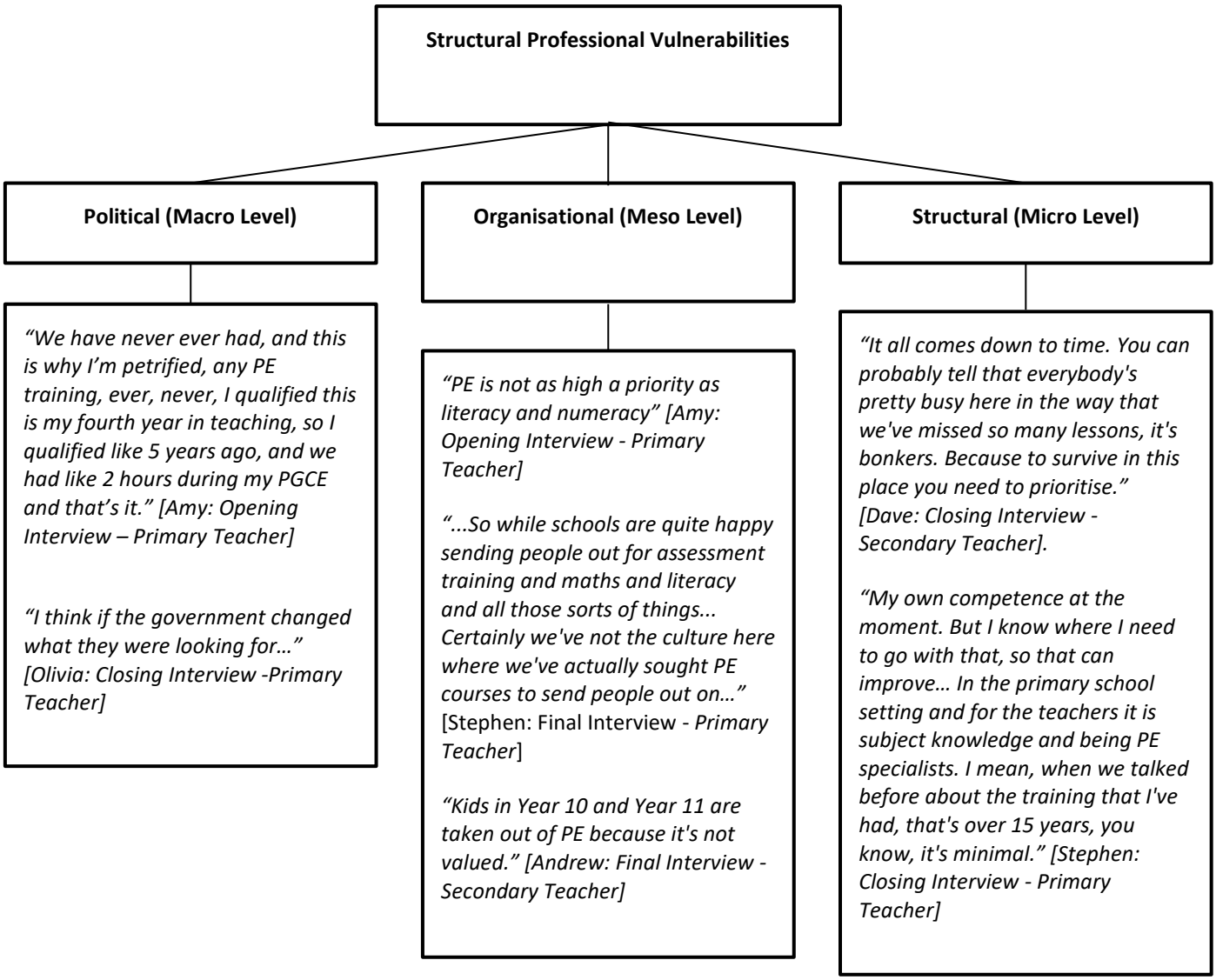
## Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research are presented in two sections: (1) structural PV (macro, meso and micro) and (2) micropolitical PV practicums (power over, with and through).

### *(1) Structural Professional Vulnerabilities*

When exploring the barriers to implementing PL within practice it was possible to observe a structural relationship between teacher concerns (expressions of PV) at the macro, meso and micro level.

***Figure 1: Structural Professional Vulnerabilities Pen Profile***




*Political (Macro Level)*

Amy described how she had received very little training in PE initially and over her career to date, which left her feeling under confident and vulnerable in her teaching of PE.

> *"We have never ever had, and this is why I'm petrified, any PE training, ever, never, I qualified this is my fourth year in teaching, so I qualified like 5 years ago, and we had like 2 hours during my PGCE and that's it." [Amy: Opening Interview – Primary Teacher]*

Traditionally, PE teachers have engaged in comparatively little professional development. PE, in both national and international contexts, has been viewed as a low-status subject and this may indicate that funding and time for professional development have, both presently and in the past, been difficult to secure (Armour and Yelling, 2007). There is also limited availability of high-quality professional development opportunities that are both meaningful and relevant to the individuals, and move beyond the traditional one day delivery, which is reported to be ineffective (Armour and Yelling, 2007; Edwards et al., 2019). Armour and Yelling (2007) argue that fundamental questions about PE teacher development, its impact upon pupil learning, and the nature of effective PE professional development are long overdue.

The low status of PE and the lack of understanding of the impact of effective professional development on students' learning, may have together compounded the lack of opportunities, funding and time to conduct professional development.

This highlights a potential conflict, tension, rivalry, and struggle at the macro and meso end of micropolitics, suggesting that there is a lack of cooperation, collaboration, and coalition-building (Blasé, 1991; Tan, 2015) between subjects and the equity of provision, value and opportunities for professional development. Similarly, Harris (2014) found Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) to be inadequately preparing future PE teachers to promote healthy, active lifestyles. This view was supported by the teachers in this study who recommended that professional training and continuous professional development needed to be improved to adequately equip teachers in the delivery of PE. Olivia stressed that this would only happen if a renewed value was placed on PE at the highest level.

> *"I think if the government changed what they were looking for, in schools so that it wasn't just literacy and numeracy focused then that would feed down and would feed down to schools and then it would feed down to universities teaching teachers and they'd get more time, and there would be more CPD opportunities and then when the teachers are on board it passes down to the pupils and it's on the news, the parents" [Olivia: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This highlights that initial teacher training and professional development seems to be prioritised in proportion to the value the government places on specific subjects. For example, time would be allocated for numeracy and literacy in the primary context and GCSE PE in the secondary context as these are directly linked to school based and public facing accountability measures (Green, 2005; Thorburn, 2007). Opportunities do exist for core physical education, but it is inundated with a plethora of 'one-shot' professional development courses. Often these take place away from the classroom or school context, without specific follow-up and delivered by non-PE specialists such as National Governing Body (NGB) coaches. Armour and Yelling (2007) argue that these one-day professional development courses are unlikely to have a lasting impact upon teachers practice. However, this is precisely the kind of activities that has, to date, characterised much of the professional development available within PE, particularly in the UK (Armour and Yelling, 2007).

With sparse access to impactful physical education professional development, this also poses additional challenges to the impact of physical literacy informed professional development. In essence professional development at present is, 'hit or miss', rather than a robust and rich tapestry of opportunities that truly enhance everyday practice, informed by physical literacy.

*Organisational (Meso Level)*

There was a clear consensus across both primary and secondary contexts that PE was not considered a priority in schools. Amy highlighted how PE does not have the same priority as literacy and numeracy.

> *"PE is not as high a priority as literacy and numeracy" [Amy: Opening Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This is supported by Stephen who argues that because of this lower priority, professional development opportunities are not sought out or regularly offered and encouraged in PE.

*"The amount of PE CPD that teachers get, certainly in primary school, isn't huge. And from a school's point of view how much time do schools actually give to CPD training for PE? You know, it's all very well to say "Well, no-one's giving us these opportunities," in how many schools do you go and seek those opportunities? So while schools are quite happy sending people out for assessment training and maths and literacy and all those sorts of things... Certainly we've not the culture here where we've actually sought PE courses to send people out on; or encouraged teachers to come to us and say "Look, I'm really not sure about teaching netball, what can I do?" [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Andrew also described how PE wasn't valued because students were taken out of lessons.

*"Kids in Year 10 and Year 11 are taken out of PE because it's not valued." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

There seems to be a disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality of PE philosophy and practice. On the face of it, PE concerns itself with the holistic development of the individual, contributing to health, wellbeing and social development. In reality, this vision is overshadowed and engulfed by a dominant and overpowering discourse around academic examination performance within both the primary and secondary school contexts (Green, 2005; Thorburn, 2007).

*Structural (Micro Level)*

Structural themes included buy-in and accountability, confidence, competence and a lack of professional development, extra-responsibilities, leadership role, capacity, time and stress. Joe described how teacher buy-in is incredibly important.

*"No, I just think, obviously, buying into it" [Joe: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

This view was also supported by Andrew who described how initial and sustained buy-in is important in initiating and maintaining PL informed practice.

*"I feel like I bought into it then, and why haven't I bought into it now? We're not doing it. And that is lack of engagement for us, and I think it comes from buying into it. I think at the start some of us were really like "Yeah, let's do that." And I know other things happened, people have babies and people are off sick and people change roles in departments and stuff like that; but we haven't mentioned it." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Buying-in to the concept is essential if it is to become part of a teacher's own belief and values system and therefore part of their practice. Without clear buy-in or perhaps accountability it is unlikely that there will be any long-term change in practice (Durden-Myers, 2020). The impact of physical literacy professional development may also be hindered by

the academic debate with regards to what physical literacy is, and how it can inform practice (Lounsbury and McKenzie, 2015). Stephen expressed how his own competence has affected how he has utilised the concept of PL.

> *"My own competence at the moment. But I know where I need to go with that, so that can improve… In the primary school setting and for the teachers it is subject knowledge and being PE specialists. I mean, when we talked before about the training that I've had, that's over 15 years, you know, it's minimal." [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Teacher competence has also been linked to teacher confidence when teaching physical education. Teacher confidence and competence could be an even more prevalent issue moving forwards given that, increasingly, primary PE is being outsourced to coaching companies (Parnell et al., 2017).

Stephen and Andrew alluded that core PE lessons can be seen as a low priority in relation to a teacher's planning and workload. Stephen specifically highlighted that his leadership role has caused disruption to his regularly delivery of physical education with his class.

> *"My role since January has just been changed, so taking on more sort of leadership management responsibility, has just meant that Fridays get knocked on the head. I'm just not in the class as much. And I think that's the biggest barrier for me at the moment, is how much actual contact time I've got with the children; that I can't just rearrange things the way that I could previously" [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This vulnerability due to wider leadership roles and priorities was echoed by Andrew who had felt his lessons had been detrimentally affected by wider issues across the school.

> *"Me, personally, being dragged into different parts of the school for different reasons over the last couple of weeks has meant that I haven't planned or taught a proper lesson I think for two weeks." [Andrew: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Stephen and Andrew both had extra teaching responsibilities and leadership roles which detrimentally affected their capacity to plan and prioritise PE. These sentiments were also shared by teachers without additional responsibilities. Amy who described how she had relatively little time to plan all her lessons to the same standard of numeracy and literacy.

> *"I know it sounds a lot but when you only get half a day to plan all your literacy lessons, all your numeracy lessons, all your guided reading lessons, there isn't much time left for science and topic, and PE and everything else. It's just time, I suppose." [Amy: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

This view is supported by Joe who stated that due to the pressure and accountability placed upon teachers with limited capacity prioritising key stage 4 lessons often takes priority.

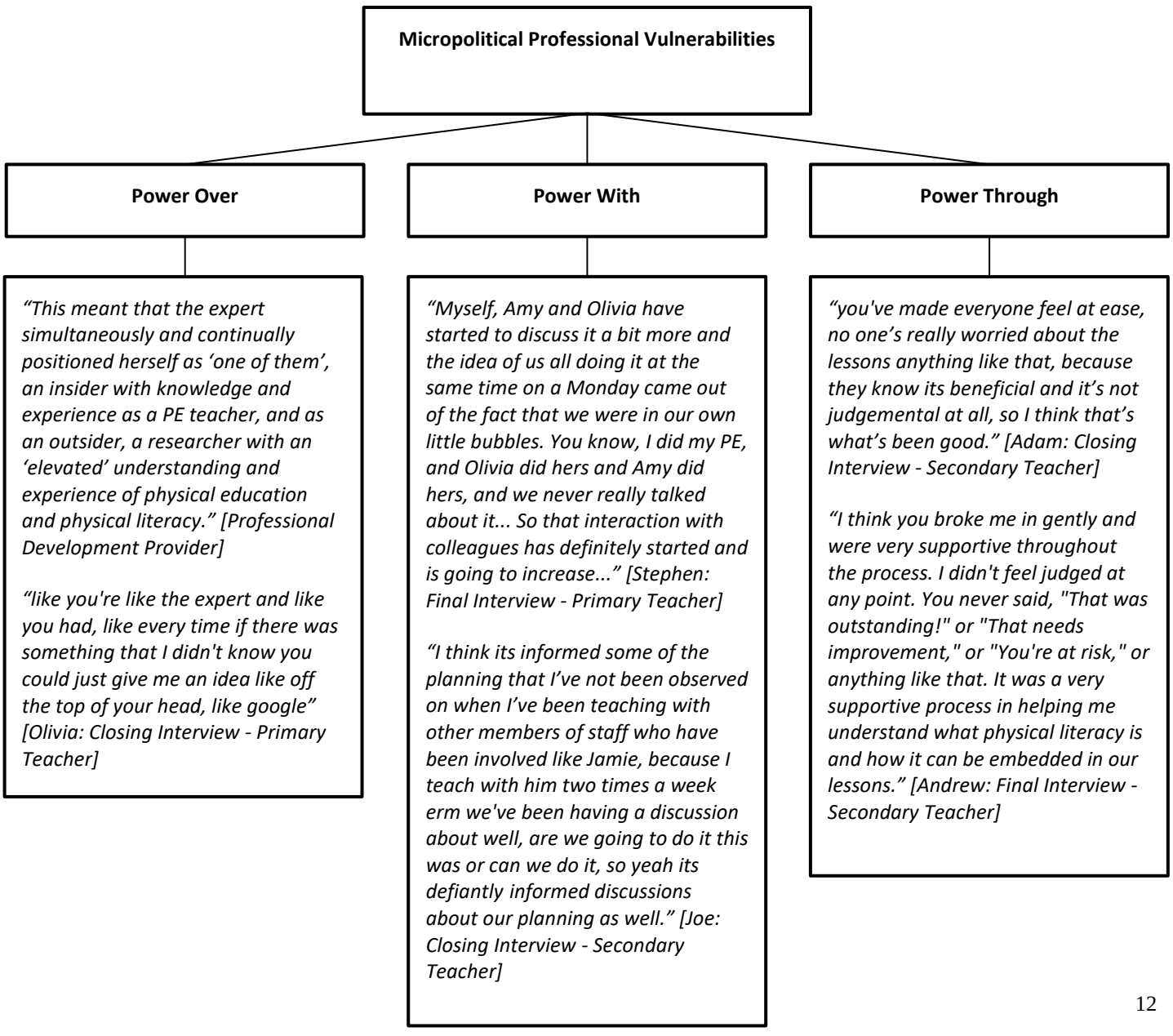
*"I suppose it's like anything isn't is, it's a very pressured job, and there's a lot of work to get done, and sometimes maybe, for a lesson you might not think about it as much as you would do in terms of maybe a key stage 4 lesson, or, a lesson that your being judged on a bit more, so the only barriers for me is obviously managing time to make sure all my lessons are using physical literacy and obviously developing that as much as possible" [Joe: Opening Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Teacher workload is well documented as an issue in the profession (DfE, 2018). It is important to understand and acknowledge this because it can be a barrier to embedding PL in practice. In order to be able to undertake professional development or even have the time and space to improve, plan and deliver meaningful lessons teachers must have the capacity to do so (Durden-Myers, 2020).

***(2) Micropolitical Professional Vulnerability***

When discussing the PL professional development with teachers it revealed a 'toing and froing' between the participant and the provider in a complex micropolitical exchange of vulnerability, power, knowledge, and authority.

***Figure 2: Micropolitical Professional Vulnerabilities Pen Profile***



*Power Over*

Relationships are often built upon mutual trust and respect. Gimbert and Nolan (2003) stress the importance of trust in supportive professional development relationships in facilitating mutual synergism that supports the professional growth of the participant. At times this synergism is weighted in the providers favour (power over), with knowledge and expertise passing from the provider to the participant, this is supported by Olivia who stated how the researcher was clearly an expert in the field.

> *"like you're like the expert and like you had, like every time if there was something that I didn't know you could just give me an idea like off the top of your head, like google" [Olivia: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Jamie also stated how the combination of researcher expertise as well as disposition was beneficial in his growth and development.

> *"I think it's just your expertise. The CPD's really helped as well, but I think if I was to pick one thing it would be the feedback… It's just that you're always helpful, you're always willing to provide feedback or just go above and beyond to help us, so nothing's too much or nothings too less, and I've really enjoyed having you around the building… Like I know other teachers have said it's really useful. I just want to thank you for coming as well because I've learnt a lot off you, so it's been really beneficial for me." [Jamie: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Jamie and Olivia highlighted how the researcher needed to have both expertise and interpersonal skills to be effective. Developing a safe and supportive professional development environment is key to nurturing teachers' confidence and competence.

As described above, this was not a judgemental process but instead was just a genuine attempt to make each participant a better practitioner by improving their practice. Stephen highlighted how he found the professional development challenging and valuable.

> *"I would just say that I have found the process challenging, but challenging in a good way… It's nice that something that comes along that you think "Do you know what, that actually makes sense. Why didn't I know about that? Why haven't we been doing that?" And then the biggest thing for any teacher is that you want to see an impact, a positive impact, on the children, isn't it? And I think, or I know, that the more I go down this route, the more positive it will be for the children and the better their experiences for physical activity will be... I found it challenging but I enjoyed it and it's been good. So, thank you. I've really valued the process, ideally, I'd have more time to do this. [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

As Stephen highlighted, improvement in teaching practice will only take place if PL professional development is both meaningful, effective and enjoyable. Power over can be associated with negative characteristics such as to co-option or coercion (Ehrich and Millwater, 2011) but it is clear in this example that when approached sensitively power over can lead to teacher empowerment.

*Power With*

Providing opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, coalition and collegiality featured in the discussions. Stephen described the collaborative nature of the PL professional development.

> *"Myself, Amy and Olivia have started to discuss it a bit more and the idea of us all doing it at the same time on a Monday came out of the fact that we were in our own little bubbles. You know, I did my PE, and Olivia did hers and Amy did hers, and we never really talked about it." [Stephen: Final Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Joe also highlighted how the PL professional development has encouraged professional conservations and group planning with his colleagues.

> *"I think its informed some of the planning that I've not been observed on when I've been teaching with other members of staff who have been involved like Jamie, because I teach with him two times a week erm we've been having a discussion about well, are we going to do it this was or can we do it, so yeah its defiantly informed discussions about our planning as well." [Joe: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Both the Primary and Secondary contexts expressed how they had, as a subject community, become closer discussing their practice as a team as a result of the PL professional development. This finding supports the notion that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.31) and people learn and develop their practice through being participants within a community (O'Sullivan, 2007). What can be taken from this research is that collaborative PL professional development can provide opportunities for meaningful discussions between teachers about PL and physical education which in turn may develop their own and each other's practice (O'Sullivan, 2007). It does not however necessarily create a community of practice, whereby a group of people "deepen their knowledge, understanding and expertise in an area by interacting with one another on an on-going basis" (Wenger, et al., 2002, p.4). To achieve this the intentional development and creation of a subject community of practice is required.

*Power Through*

The relationship between colleagues in a community of practice is an important factor. But so too is the relationship between the researcher and the teachers. Teachers identified the importance of the relationship with, and expertise of, the researcher. Stephen described the importance of having a supportive expert; one who you feel confident in sharing your ideas with.

> *"I think you need to have a relationship where you feel confidence with the other person and quite happy to openly share something. I think you've got that, that yes, you're the expert but you don't come over as someone going "Well, this is wrong, you need to do this" you've got that balance of understanding where we're coming from, and our skill set, and you sort of feeding in your knowledge to improve us. So, yeah, as I say, I didn't at any point think about Fridays as an "Oh no!" type thing, and I never felt in the reflection bit that I was being judged. [Stephen: Closing Interview - Primary Teacher]*

Adam also highlighted how the researcher made everyone feel at ease.

*"you've made everyone feel at ease, no one's really worried about the lessons anything like that, because they know its beneficial and it's not judgemental at all, so I think that's what's been good." [Adam: Closing Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

This was supported by Andrew who states how the researcher was supportive throughout the whole process.

*"I think you broke me in gently and were very supportive throughout the process. I didn't feel judged at any point… It was a very supportive process in helping me understand what physical literacy is and how it can be embedded in our lessons." [Andrew: Final Interview - Secondary Teacher]*

Relationships are key to any learning whether that be between the teacher and the student or the researcher and the teacher. The teachers in this research all expressed how there was a strong relationship between themselves and the researcher. This dynamic lead to the establishment of rapport and a secure professional relationship. This success was due to the PL professional development provider carefully considering the 'power through' the professional development and when to transact or facilitate, challenge or support, critique or praise.

**Conclusion**

This research examined the implications of PV during teacher PL professional development through the lens of structural and micropolitical theory. As Kelchtermans (2011) describes, teachers' PV is prone to being intensified while they are caught in dissonant structures and powers. When implementing any change or introducing any new concepts within practice it is advised that professional development providers are sensitive and empathetic to the vulnerabilities of teachers as part of this process. With PL gaining interest globally in PE, sport development and physical activity provision we argue for acknowledgement of the contextual challenges of professional development for wider settings as more practitioners engage with the concept.

Durden-Myers and Keegan (2019) highlight that effective PL professional development should make a long-term impact on teacher's pedagogy and understanding of PL, as this provides clear evidence of the influence of professional development. While this is true, it is also important to understand and affect the systems and structures that either help or hinder this long-term impact. Using micropolitical theory as a theoretical framework it offers a lens through which this political, sociocultural, and contextual world may be observed. As the findings of this research have identified, PV is a multi-structural phenomenon. Participants may express their vulnerabilities in multiple or singular structural levels (macro, meso, micro), which may be helped or hindered in relation to the external and internal structures, such as but not limited to, power dynamics and personal agency. An awareness and appreciation of power structures including how they can be both supportive and/or unsupportive in facilitating long term impact is essential for professional development providers in PE and wider coaching and sport development contexts. Thus, we propose that the design and evaluation of professional development must clearly consider the content as well as the context. Professional development providers should where possible also lay the groundwork for facilitation, collegiality, collaboration, and coalition and empower teachers with the longer-term in mind. In addition, relatively 'new' concepts introduced to the teaching and coaching contexts such as physical literacy, may heighten vulnerabilities. This is pertinent in the case of

this physical literacy professional development research because it encourages teachers to reflect and consider more deeply their purpose, practice and impact as pedagogs.

As a direct result of this process and the learning within this research we have also recognised that the term 'expert' may be problematic, in further perpetuating power imbalances (Gardiner, 2021). This mirrors the call to action for PE professional development providers by Armour and Yelling (2004, p.110) "to redefine a niche in the changing teacher development landscape and to find new ways of both conceptualising and providing expertise and support".

Future research agendas in the UK and globally should explore notions of vulnerability across the PE, community sport and physical activity sectors. It is clear that such vulnerabilities are present in many domains of the professional landscape in a sphere of public service delivery that remain fragile, fragmented and often, as a consequence, vulnerable (Mackintosh and Liddle, 2015; Mackintosh, 2021). Therefore, more nuanced cross-sectoral studies of vulnerability and structural and micro-political theory are likely to offer powerful insights to how this growing sector (Sport England, 2017) that PL straddles (House of Lords, 2021; IPLA, 2022; Riley and Proctor, 2022) is negotiating multiple senses of vulnerabilities across identities, organisations and the spaces and places of those trying to engage communities in physical activity (Riley and Proctor, 2022).

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