RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teacher educators’ perspectives on the implementation of Beginning Teacher Standards for Physical Education in Ireland: developing and regulating the profession?

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Abstract

The Physical Education Teacher Education community in Ireland has developed Beginning Teacher Standards for Physical Education (BTSfPE) at the post-primary (secondary) level. This study explored teacher educators’ perspectives on how the BTSfPE could be implemented and considered the possible impact on the profession within the discourses of power. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with teacher educators in physical education (n=13). Data were analysed inductively and trustworthiness issues were considered. Participants suggested that the teaching standards could serve as a developmental tool to guide individual teacher education programmes and beginning teachers as well as an assessment function to support quality assurance and to hold programmes accountable. The teacher educators were committed to addressing issues of quality and status in physical education in Ireland. However, an agreed vision of how the teaching standards would be used to develop and regulate the profession is necessary to ensure that the intended benefits emerge.

Key words: physical education; teaching standards; power
Introduction:

Teaching children...The nation’s future depends, in large part, on how well it is done (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education 2009, 357).

With the emergence of a global knowledge-based economy, teacher quality and the preparation of teachers for schools in teacher education contexts have received greater attention than before as education has been elevated on the political agenda (Adams 2008; Cochran-Smith and Fries 2005; McKinsey and Company 2007; OECD 2005). Education reform and the addressing of issues of teacher quality are framed within the ‘regulating discourses of economic necessity’ (Maguire 2010, 60). They are reflected in a shift from an input to an output model of both education and teacher education and increased regulation of initial teacher education (Newby 2003; Stotsky 2006; Thiessen, 2000) where focus has been placed on quantifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by beginning teachers. Teaching standards are used for the purposes of professional accreditation and review of teacher education programmes, to license individual teachers and as a basis for advanced teacher certification. In some countries generic standards are used to regulate physical education teacher education programmes but subject-specific teaching standards have been developed for physical education in the USA (Butler 2006; Curtner-Smith 1999; Lumpkin 2008; Mozen 2005; Ward, 2001). Beginning teacher standards for physical education (BTSfPE) have been developed by a group of the physical education teacher educators in Ireland (Appendix 1). Physical education teacher educators in Ireland are supportive of adopting a standards-based approach to build consensus and quality assurance within the profession (Ní Chróinín et al. 2012). However, whether adoption of a standards-based approach will result in these outcomes is uncertain. This paper explores teacher educators’ perspectives on how the BTSfPE should be implemented within an Irish context. This paper
considers how the BTSiPE might impact on the profession where techniques of power
(Foucault 1977) inscribed in and associated with policy documents can serve to impact on the
practice of teacher educators in their everyday lives (Gore 2002).

76 **Background: Viewing standards through the discourses of power**
77 The use of teaching standards to regulate teacher quality and to support teacher development
78 has been promoted by some as a necessary quality assurance to promote the
79 professionalisation of teaching and as a lever to reform teacher education (Cochran-Smith
80 2001b; Cochran-Smith 2004a; Cochran-Smith 2004b; Darling-Hammond 2000; Darling-
81 Hammond and Bransford 2005; Darling-Hammond 1998; Diez 1998; Furlong et al. 2000;
82 Ingvarson 1998; Ingvarson 2002; McNally et al. 2008; National Council for Accreditation of
83 Teacher Education 2010b). Others in education question whether this standards- based
84 model is the best way to describe and evaluate the complex multi-dimensional learning
85 processes involved in teaching and teacher education (Cochran-Smith 2004a; Cochran-Smith
86 2004c; Maguire 2010; Sachs 2001; Sachs 2003). They challenge the idea that all learning of
87 value can be framed in learning outcomes or predetermined standards and reject the
88 implementation of policies in ways that could result in a model of teacher education that
89 forces a ‘teaching to the standards’ (Apple 2001a; Conway et al. 2009; Maguire 2010).

Some physical education teacher education (PETE) researchers have emphasised
issues of power and privilege within standards-based models (Macdonald and Hunter 2005;
Macdonald et al. 2006; Rossi et al. 2009) suggesting that often the ideals of policy documents
do not translate into practice (Curtner-Smith 1999; Rossi et al. 2009). Recognition of an
intricate set of connections between knowledge and power highlight the political and value
laden nature of teaching standards documents (Apple 2001b; Cochran-Smith and Fries 2002; Cochran-Smith and Fries 2005; Foucault 1980). Macdonald et al. (2006) emphasise the importance of considering teaching standards within the discourses of power suggesting that this is crucial to understanding their impact within the education system. Foucault's concept of disciplinary power explicitly shifts analyses of power from the ‘macro’ realm of structures and ideologies to the ‘micro’ level of impact on the individual allowing power to be viewed in a relational way rather than as simply involving the imposition of one will on another. From this viewpoint, power relations, for good or bad, serve to govern and regulate individuals and knowledge. Gore (1998; 2002) uses Foucaultian procedures to identify the enactment of power relations at the micro-level allowing the complexity of the relationship between parties to be viewed and also giving access to mechanisms whereby broader societal power relations are imposed and reproduced (Gore 2002). These techniques include 1. Surveillance (monitoring behaviour, making comparisons) 2. Normalisation (defining the normal; conforming in relation to standards) 3. Exclusion (limits of difference) 4. Classification (differentiating individual and groups) 5. Distribution (arranging, locating, ranking) 6. Individualisation (individual character) 7. Totalisation (collective character) 8. Regulation (controlling, subject to restrictions/ rewards and punishment (Gore 1998; Gore 2002). Regulation is considered the culmination of the other techniques. Macdonald et al. (2006) emphasised the importance of viewing standards through the lens of power. Regulatory processes (Gore 1998; 2002) can be applied in physical education contexts to allow for an exploration of the impact of power on the decisions taken at the level of courses and students in the everyday lives of teacher educators (Webb et al. 2004; Macdonald et al. 2006; Webb and Macdonald 2007).
In some contexts (e.g. Finland and Poland) standards are seen as a loose outline of teaching competencies and are ‘illustrative and indicative of performance’ (Conway et al. 2009, 151). In these contexts they are used to guide teacher development, promote reflective practice and lifelong learning and focus on improving the quality of teachers’ and teacher educators’ knowledge and practice (Darling-Hammond 2004; Koster and Dengerink 2008; Yinger and Hendricks-Lee 2000). In other contexts (e.g. England and New Zealand) teaching standards are articulated in ways that allow direct comparison of performances against a set of benchmarks with an emphasis on monitoring, regulating and measuring performance. In these contexts there is often a failure to support consideration of the broader social context of teaching and learning in higher education (Cochran-Smith and Fries 2002). In some countries, such as the UK and USA, the standards were initiated with a strong developmental focus but as they evolve ‘...there is an emerging drift from developmental to regulatory approaches to standards’ (Sachs, 2005, 5). Coolahan (2007a) highlights the importance of considering the balance between the developmental and regulatory purposes of standards:

> Depending on the mode devised, the competency approach can be professionally, positive and benign, or it can, alternatively, be of a narrow, check-list character and be professionally malign (Coolahan, 2007a, 34).

Sachs (2005) highlights how the mechanism of accountability can ultimately determine whether the standards are tightly prescribed or open and flexible resulting in more emphasis being placed on either teacher development or regulation.

Once established, it seems that teaching standards become the legitimising structure for all knowledge (Macdonald and Hunter 2005) and influence how learning experiences are
created within teacher education programmes (Delandshere and Arens 2001; Mergler 2008; Sachs 2005; Sheldon and Biddle 1998; Yinger and Hendricks-Lee 2000). Whether this power to legitimise is perceived and exercised in ways that are useful (establishing a knowledge base for the profession) or ways that restrict, normalise, regulate and control is often dependent on their context and who is responsible for judging them (Gore 1998; 2002; Mahony and Hextall 2000). As Apple (2001a) reminds us:

_We need to remember that none of this occurs on a level playing field...there are very real differences in power in one’s ability to influence, mediate, transform, or reject a policy or a regulatory process_ (Apple, 2001a, 191).

Some research on the impact of standards in PETE has focused on issues around programme alignment and assessment (Banville 2006; Everhart and McKethan 2008; O’Meara and MacDonald 2004). Compliance with teaching standards has been considered from the perspective of the programme (Senne 2006) and the reviewer (Martin and Judd 2006). Delandshere and Arens (2001) found that ‘as teacher educators uncritically participate in the standards-based movement it becomes impossible for them to entertain alternative perspectives on teaching and education outside of the framework provided to them by the standards’ (p.547). O Meara and MacDonald (2004) highlight that teacher educators have a key role in how standards are framed within their teacher education programmmmes. The threat of being labeled sub-standard or the threat of withdrawal of programme accreditation may force compliance where ‘courses like coats will be cut and trimmed accordingly’ (Pring 1992, 22). The consequences of non-compliance through surveillance and normalisation serve to regulate the actions of the individual teacher and teacher educator in ways that are not evident from examination of teaching standards documents.
Traditionally, teacher educators were seen as the ‘gatekeepers of legitimate professional knowledge’ (Macdonald and Tinning 1995, 100) which included an inbuilt assumption of the quality of their practice based on inputs. In many countries the adoption of a standards-based approach (based on outputs), directed by government policy and implemented by Teaching Councils and agencies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has marginalised teacher educators from the process of reform in their local context by shifting accountability to the national level (Bales 2007; Maguire 2010). Standards are typically developed at a policy level and teacher educators are required to accommodate them in their programmes. While The Teaching Council in Ireland has recently been assigned a statutory role in the accreditation of teacher education programmes it is suggested that there are still significant gaps in teacher education policy in Ireland (Harford 2010). A group of physical education teacher educators, aware of this regulatory shift in Ireland, developed a set of Beginning Teacher Standards for Physical Education (BTSfPE) which detail what beginning teachers should know and be able to do in a physical education context. The BTSfPE frame what physical education teacher educators think the outcomes of teacher education in physical education should be within an Irish context thus bringing a shared sense of vision to PETE in Ireland across the three PETE programmes nationally.

Given that teacher education policy in Ireland is at ‘a critical juncture’ (Harford, 2010: 357) this attempt to influence the national agenda responds to Collier’s (2006) call for Physical Education teacher educators to ‘anticipate how to be active stakeholders in the process of political reform and policy generation’ (p.389) and responds to calls for teacher educators to take an activist and leadership role (Furlong et al. 2000; Imig and Imig 2007;
These teacher educators, aware of the political nature of their work and informed by those with significant experience of standards development and implementation in other contexts, have taken this proactive step to preempt and influence policy formation by trying to have their version of what is important legitimised, and how and by whom they should be judged.

Macdonald et al. (2006) address the issue of finding a balance within teaching standards that allows for regulation and accountability without controlling teacher education programmes and teacher educator performance:

A key question associated with an analysis of the standards discourse is the degree to which it extends beyond what can be seen as a narrow form of normalising (i.e. compliance), to a broader form of classification that defines in publicly acceptable ways the complex nature of teachers’ learning and work (Macdonald et al. 2006, 236).

The potential of teaching standards to support moving beyond ‘normalising’ to ‘a broader form of classification’ is considered within an Irish context where it is recognised that regulatory processes can serve to impact on practice in the everyday life of the teacher educators (Gore 2002). It is important to consider how development of the subject-specific BTSfPE could shape, limit or undermine future educational policy development in Ireland. This paper explores teacher educators’ perspectives on how the BTSfPE should be implemented in an Irish context and what the consequences of their implementation might be for PETE and the wider physical education community.
Methodology

Research context and participants

Ethical approval for the research study was obtained from the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Limerick. Thirteen physical education teacher educators drawn from nine teacher education institutions on the island of Ireland participated in the research. This represents a significant proportion of the Physical Education teacher educator population in Ireland (approximately 30 in total). This sample included five teacher educators at the primary level and eight at the post-primary (secondary) level. Both primary and post-primary level teacher educators were included to ensure balanced representation. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were addressed through informed consent and assurances that no participant would be identifiable by institution. Participants had varying knowledge and experience of standards-based education. A number of the post-primary participants were members of the PETE Ireland group that developed the BTSlPE and were involved to varying degrees in their development. Two of these post-primary participants had extensive experience teaching standards in other contexts. Many of the participants had some knowledge of the use of standards-based education in other countries though the majority of teacher educators involved in this study had not engaged in the debate around teaching standards in the literature. Participants were aware that accreditation of all teacher education programmes by the Teaching Council was imminent and would be required, though it was not known at this point what this process would involve.

Gathering the Interview Data
This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour duration with each of the teacher educators (ten face to face and three phone interviews). The interview guide focused on the participants’ previous experience of standards and consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of standards-based education. Research and developments elsewhere were drawn on to allow for consideration of other perspectives. The potential impact of the implementation of these standards for PETE, teacher educators and physical education in schools was explored. Copies of the transcript were sent to participants to confirm the accuracy of the text, to allow for clarification of thinking and to approve use of the text in the analysis phase. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and organised using nVivo 8 Qualitative Analysis Package.

**Analysis of the Data**

An inductive approach to the analysis and interpretation of the interview transcripts was used (Creswell 2009). Initially, the data were examined in relation to the research questions to provide a framework for the construction of themes through open coding using the constant comparison method (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Reading and rereading of transcripts to avoid fragmentation of the data allowed for understandings to emerge and ensured that the social context of the data was not lost. Memos were used to avoid drift in code definitions (Gibbs 2007). Interview transcripts were re-examined to check for discriminent cases to allow for presentation of these data (Creswell 2009, Miles and Huberman 1994). Quotes from participants are used to provide a balance of views on the issues involved. Trustworthiness of the findings, interpretations and conclusions was enhanced through member checking. This process included sharing of findings with the PETE Ireland group who developed the BTSfPE and sharing of a completed draft of this paper with both primary and post-primary participants. In addition, the findings were presented through a conference to the wider PETE
and physical education community in Ireland. Feedback and discussion from these three fora informed the findings and discussion presented below.

Findings and Discussion

The support of the physical education teacher educators for the use of BTSfPE in PETE at the post-primary level reflects the trend in physical education in other countries towards embracing the standards-based model (Dodds 2006). Participants emphasised the value of the teaching standards development process being led by the teacher educators themselves (Ingvarson 1998):

‘it gives us strength if we are one of the people to start the ball rolling... we have that opportunity to go in partnership to get these standards established rather than the ivory tower deciding what it is the standards should be’ (Participant 3, Post-Primary).

This reflects other contexts where the teaching profession themselves have been most active in developing standards (Yinger and Hendricks-Lee 2000). Participants anticipated that the teaching standards would impact positively at all levels within the profession by providing a quality assurance through standardisation rather than creation of sameness within the profession (Macdonald et al. 2006). However, the outcomes desired by this group of teacher educators cannot be guaranteed without a clear vision of how the teaching standards will be implemented within PETE, how they will be applied within the wider physical education and teacher education community, by whom the BTSfPE will be used and for what purposes. Teacher educators’ perspectives on how the BTSfPE should be implemented are presented and discussed in relation to their potential to (a) guide and develop and (b) regulate and assess the physical education profession in Ireland.
1. To guide and develop

Participants suggested the BTSfPE could act as a flexible, thinking tool to guide and inform PETE policy and practice as well as providing a benchmark for beginning teachers within the profession. Each post-primary institution could apply their own professional judgment in meeting the teaching standards while still broadly ‘ticking the boxes’ of the standards:

... it allows people to think... ‘what is going to work well within this context?’, rather than saying ‘I am rule driven and I will take this and I will teach it. (Participant 3, Post-Primary)

This supports the suggestion that a ‘light touch’ approach may be desirable in a teacher education context (McNeill 2000) and most appropriate in an Irish context (Conway et al. 2009). Participants rejected the idea that the use of teaching standards might legitimise one way of thinking about teaching, asserting that the content of the standards was essential knowledge but that it would still be possible to include aspects outside the standards within their programmes: ‘I would say that these are ten standards that are essential..., but I wouldn’t see that...I can’t go beyond that, [of] course you can’ (Participant 5, Post-Primary). The dismissal of issues of epistemic privilege for the benefit of consensus is indicative of a desire to address current fragmented practice.

McNeill (2000) argues that teaching standards permit ‘criticism aimed at fine-tuning the mechanism but does not permit critique that challenges its premises’ (p.268). However, participants were not concerned that use of teaching standards would restrict change and development suggesting that embedded reviews could accommodate new knowledge and new
contexts (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005; Darling-Hammond 1998). One participant outlined how a new curriculum model was included in a textbook in another context, even though it was not within the standards. This example demonstrates that teacher educators can have a role in legitimising new knowledge, even where a standards-based approach is in operation.

Participants were confident in the teacher educator’s ability to retain autonomy to make decisions about the content and emphasis of the programmes in their own context and resist compliance. This confidence may be based on the teacher educators’ current role in controlling the development of the standards. However, the reality of assessment may force compliance on the programme content and delivery in unanticipated ways as surveillance and classification are translated into regulation (O’Meara and MacDonald 2004). As one participant suggested: ‘...one of the other disadvantages is that you would need to standardise the people who are delivering the teaching of physical education’ (Participant 8, Primary). This quote highlights the potential role of distributive power associated with ranking of institutions and individual teacher educators.

2. To regulate and assess

The teacher educators suggested that each individual beginning teacher’s learning on exit from the post-primary PETE programme could be assessed to ‘check’ the standards where quality assurance is based on learning rather than claims of teacher quality (Levine 2006). Each beginning teacher could map evidence of his/her learning in a portfolio document. Portfolios are used in this way in other contexts (Tillema and Smith 2007; Zeichner and Wray 2001) where the teaching standards form a part of performance assessment of teacher education (Cochran-Smith 2004a).
Participants suggested that a combination of internal monitoring using professional bodies and external monitoring by The Teaching Council would support a transparent system of accountability. Participants saw regulation as a necessary and integral part of being accountable: ‘...we need a system for them to know’ (Participant 7, Primary). The acceptance of monitoring and regulation as a component of their professionalism reflects the current climate of accountability in education (Maguire 2010): ‘I think it would be too insular to keep them to ourselves...This is almost like patting ourselves on the back...’ (Participant 9, Primary). However, there is a danger that acceptance of external regulation could restrict the ability of teacher educators to make decisions in their own context. Teaching standards have been used to impact on the status of the teaching profession in other contexts (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) 2011). Participants pointed to where this has been done elsewhere in PETE:

‘...those whom are more internationally renowned as effective physical education teacher education programmes are...having to provide evidence on how they actually teach...’ (Participant 1, Post-Primary).

Participants suggested that the external assessment function of the teaching standards was crucial to increasing professionalism and enhancing the status of the teaching profession. The possible implications of external regulation for practice were considered:

‘...somebody should ultimately have the power to be able to say “now hang on that’s not really very effective and it’s going to have to change”’ (Participant 9, Primary).
Participants suggested that if an institution did not meet the standards they could work with the Teaching Council who could provide a framework to support the institution in order to achieve compliance. The fate of institutions that opted out of or did not buy into the teaching standards was considered but focus was placed on how these institutions could be supported to comply with the regulations rather than a consideration of legitimising these alternatives outside the teaching standards. This suggests that normalisation (meeting the standards) and exclusion (placing limits on difference) could become significant aspects of regulating the PETE programmes: ‘...if the Teaching Council is going to have that much power, or whatever you want to call it, what are the penalties?...’ (Participant 11, Primary). This is an indication that the teacher educators in this research were already thinking of solutions from ‘within’ the standards framework as has been found elsewhere (Delandshere and Arens 2001).

While participants did not perceive a future where course design and delivery would be driven by assessment and compliance to the teaching standards they recognised that comparisons between programmes based on compliance were inevitable. Some concern was expressed in relation to how the results of any assessment would be disseminated. The group was eager to avoid any ‘ranking’ of individual institutions. However, it seems that even when official ranking is not adopted, comparisons are still made. This highlights the potential role of distribution to regulate how teacher educators approach evaluation in relation to the BTSiPE. One of the participants described their experiences in another country where the reality of unofficial ranking impacted on programme decision making and forced an inevitable response to the standards. One concern in relation to ranking in making all
programmes conform to the same standards is that any difference could be equated with inadequacy rather than considered as a legitimate alternative (Apple 2001b). The operation of Foucaultian procedures of power could force an unintended normalisation of programmes through distribution, surveillance and normalisation depending on how the standards are assessed, by whom and with what consequences. Some of the participants cautioned against assessment of the standards that were too narrow or restrictive:

‘...we have to do something but we have to be careful we don’t create a stick that is going to beat us later in terms of like having a type of inspection going on’ (Participant 4, Post-Primary).

However, the need for the teaching standards to be defined in a way that allows access to those outside the profession for regulatory purposes may force the standards to be more explicit than participants currently imagine. There is a possibility that the desire to quality assure the profession and eliminate “poor” practice could also stifle and restrict the very best of current practice through the impact of regulatory processes in practice at the local level. It must be questioned whether teaching standards, that are open to a level of interpretation that would allow each institution to individualise them as suggested by participants, can truly be used to hold the teacher education programme or the individual accountable.

Be careful what you wish for…

Power is neither a force for good or bad but rather an ability to act in a particular way. The impact of these actions can yield positive or negative results. The implementation of the BTSfPE seems to hold the potential to impact positively or negatively, or both, at the same time, on the physical education profession. The teacher educators in this study are committed to adopting a standards-based approach to impact positively on the profession. However, the
findings of this study highlight a number of ideas that merit further consideration and will need to be carefully balanced if the standards are to serve a developmental and regulatory function simultaneously. These teacher educators have been proactive in influencing policy development in relation to how their teacher education programmes may be judged by developing subject-specific teaching standards. This action in itself demonstrates the commitment of the teacher educators and may enhance their professional status. However, it is important to keep the political nature of teacher education (Bates 2007) central to this discussion. Teaching standards can be ‘...powerful “message systems” with far-reaching influences’ (Conway and Artiles 2005, 22) within teacher education for teacher education programmes, teacher educators and beginning teachers, as well as having a broader impact in schools.

The concept of accountability can be viewed as a positive developmental agent linked to reflective practice but it can also be linked with external control, restriction and compliance (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000). The tension between autonomy and regulation within teacher education is often framed within a discourse that links improvement with accountability mechanisms (Bates 2007). The teacher educators in this study seem to align with this latter way of thinking. Their acceptance of the accountability arguments and language perhaps reflects how pervasive this discourse has become in education more generally. It may also reflect one result of a long-standing surveillance process which ultimately sees actors coming to internalise the gaze of their watchers. They have linked improvement of physical education and an associated positive impact on status with quality assurance through accountability mechanisms. However, though standards are linked to the rhetoric of professionalism, the reality may be that standards can be used as instruments of increased external control and may not result in the improved quality desired by the reform
Rossi et al (2009) found that implementation of standards in physical education did not necessarily align with the ideals they espoused. It is acknowledged that the teacher educators in this study were being strategic in trying to influence the policy agenda in their area. However, it could be asked whether these physical education teacher educators have gone too far by ‘imposing’ the standards on themselves, and by aligning too much with managerial perspectives (Maguire 2010) and internalising the gaze of the watchers.

In other countries accountability mechanisms, designed compliance with the standards, have impacted negatively on the teaching profession, teacher educators and the programmes on which they teach (Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003; Codd 2005; Delandshere & Arens, 2001; Møller 2002; Simons & Kelchtermans 2008). These studies highlight the impact of macro level power at the micro level through required compliance (through high stakes implications of non-compliance) to narrow accountability mechanisms in teacher education. Consideration of the possible impact of the BTSfPE through the lens of power results in a number of unanswered questions and a series of cautions about how the BTSfPE might be further developed. The question remains whether it is possible for teacher educators to maintain autonomy over decision-making in relation to the content and approaches within the programme when external regulation of the BTSfPE is proposed. Also, is it possible to allow a large degree of flexibility in relation to the content and approaches within teacher education programme while requiring all programmes to meet the same standards? Part of the issue here is that things which are referenced in the standards become "legitimate" in arguing for additional space on already packed programmes while things not referenced on the standards are more likely to get squeezed out. This may well limit the possibility for being creative and doing other things not directly referenced in the standards, despite the hope of the
participants. The extent to which a variety of different approaches can be legitimized remains uncertain.

Teaching standards usually identify minimum levels of achievement (Sachs 2005). As currently written, the BTStfPE do not include a metric or a rubric that describes or quantifies levels of achievement. Once a rubric articulating performance levels is developed, is it inevitable that programmes will try to score as highly as possible on an evaluation and meet all standards? In addition, concerns that have been expressed in relation to the difficulty in finding a mechanism that adequately accounts for complexities of teaching and learning within individual social context remain (Apple 2001; Cochran-Smith 2004a). The use of a variety of metrics in assessing teacher performance is an approach being explored in the USA through the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium (TPAC) (scale.stanford.edu). Perhaps piloting and developing a similar mechanism to explore how the checking of standards might work would be a useful first step in exploring how the BTStfPE might operate in practice.

The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1993) maintained that rules do not contain the principles of their application. He argued that the implementation of rules draws on unarticulated understandings of social and historical context. In the current study, the teaching standards can be seen as an agreed set of rules for PETE. However, they do not contain any clear direction on their implementation. Without the principles of implementation for the BTStfPE, it is uncertain whether they will achieve their intended purpose in relation to enhancing the status of the profession through consensus and quality assurance. Thorpe (2003, 131) cautions that the best of intentions in reforming PETE ‘will be dense with effects
we may not comprehend until they have betrayed us’. The delicate balance between forcing all programmes to look the same through narrow compliance and ‘a broader form of classification’ (Macdonald et al. 2006, 236) is central to this struggle to define the profession and cement its legitimacy. Though it may be desirable, and is desired by these teacher educators to build consensus on ‘what counts’ and provide evidence of its achievement, promotion of high standards that all must meet while embracing difference is a difficult balancing act to achieve.

Regulatory processes of checking compliance (Gore 1998; Gore 2002; Macdonald et al. 2006) and the inevitable making of comparisons between programmes raises questions around how the standards might evolve. It is worth being mindful of Apple’s (2001a, 191) assertion that ‘there are very real differences in power in one’s ability to influence, mediate, transform, or reject a policy or a regulatory process’. The complexity of the enactment of power relations through Foucaultian procedures in practice points to the relative power at programme level to enact change once the mechanism of governance and regulation is in place. Questions around how new ideas can be legitimated through a review process need to be answered before any official status is sought. Since development of the BTSfPE the Teaching Council has completed a mandatory accreditation process with all teacher education programmes in Ireland. In addition, they have recently published Criteria and Guidelines for all teacher education programmes (The Teaching Council 2011). These include a detailed list of required learning outcomes for all programmes and narrows the space in which the BTSfPE may operate. These developments suggest that careful consideration needs to be given to the merit of seeking official status for the BTSfPE.

While participants emphasised the importance of review it is unclear how this might happen and who might be involved. Can the teacher education programmes review the standards themselves and determine what should be added or omitted? This approach would
not seem to align with the level of external accountability desired by participants in the study. However, an externally led review process could make the profession vulnerable to political and policy changes in the wider educational discourse. While the current emphasis in the Irish educational system is on literacy and numeracy (Department of Education and Skills 2011), one cannot predict what future trends might emerge. One such scenario might involve external agencies imposing criteria in relation to fitness levels in response to the ‘obesity crisis’ that could result in mandatory fitness testing of all beginning teachers on exit from the programme. While the merits of this scenario are debatable, what is significant is consideration of the relative agency of teacher educators in influencing the decision-making process.

The BTSfPE are subject-specific. Questions must be asked about what is lost in using physical education, rather than teacher education as the frame to define the profession. Could this framing actually decrease rather than increase the ability of physical education teacher educators to exert influence? Bates (2007) cautions that narrow framing could result in accountability with an emphasis on regulating ‘the technical detail of teacher education as an administrative service’ (Bates 2007, 139) rather than the potential contribution of teacher education to wider social and ethical concerns (Furlong et al. 2000). Preservation of the autonomy of teacher educators to be responsive to the wider social and cultural context seems central to this enterprise. In defining what counts in PETE contexts, the potential of PETE to influence wider teacher education debates needs to be carefully considered.

Conclusion
‘Teaching standards owned and developed by the profession will ensure that we have quality teachers for the future’ (Sachs 2005, 10). The teacher educators in this study are committed to enhancing the status of the profession through adoption of a standards-based approach in line with Sach’s vision. However, it is questionable whether a standards-based approach will produce the desired impact, allowing a broader form of classification rather than narrowing practice through normalisation and regulation (Macdonald et al. 2006), within the PETE community in Ireland without a clear vision of how the teaching standards would be regulated, by whom and with what consequences. The findings of this study reveal how the operation of regulatory processes could result in unintended negative consequences. In particular, even though the BTSfPE have been developed voluntarily by the PETE community an approach that allows for external accountability and regulation at national level in the future should be carefully considered to ensure that the impact is in the best interest of teaching and learning in physical education.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge the support and contribution of the physical education teacher educators who participated in the study and PETE Ireland. Their engagement with the interpretations and conclusions of the research is particularly appreciated.

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**Appendix 1: Beginning Teacher Standards for Physical Education**
What a beginning teacher should KNOW and BE ABLE TO DO upon exiting a teacher education programme.

1. Commitment to students and their learning
   a. Education and learning focused
   b. Identify steps to develop as a competent, caring and reflective practitioner
   c. Seek connections with the community to stimulate and support student opportunities
   d. Work within a community of practice with the goal of enhancing student growth and development

2. Reflection
   a. Personal / professional development through use of a reflective cycle that allows understanding teaching practice and making changes to meet thoughtfully identified goals
   b. Make use of colleagues, professional organizations, and resources to develop as a reflective practitioner

3. Content knowledge
   a. Good knowledge of the major skills and tactics central to the various strands of the relevant curricula.
   b. Prioritise content appropriate to the needs of the students.
   c. Ability to demonstrate correctly, or provide a correct demonstration through a third party, of all major skills and tactics central to the relevant curricula
   d. Ability to recognise and correct errors in performance of major skills and tactics areas central to the relevant curricula
e. Knowledge of and ability to debate current educational issues related to physical activity

f. Ability to describe and apply physiological and sociological concepts to physical activity

4. Pedagogical content knowledge
   a. Knowledge of relevant curricula (e.g., sport education, TFFU, adventure education, etc)
   b. Knowledge of JCPE, SCPE, LCPE standards and their application
   c. Knowledge of the learner
   d. Knowledge of approaches that may be taken to teach content of relevant curricula

5. Communication
   a. Who
      1. With students
      2. With staff members
      3. With parents
      4. With the wider community
   b. How
      1. Oral, written, and electronic skills
      2. Listening skills
      3. Verbal and non-verbal
      4. Visual / media
   c. What
1. Managerial information

2. Instructional information

3. Sensitivity to all learners

6. Planning for teaching, learning, and assessment
   a. Recognise the importance of both short and long term planning that is linked to programme goals and student needs
   b. Develop a coherent, cohesive and instructionally aligned programme
   c. Progressive learning experiences aligned with programme and lesson goals and allow learners to integrate knowledge and skills
   d. Identify appropriate cues and prompts to support learning
   e. Design appropriate explanations and demonstrations to reinforce learning
   f. Encourage critical and varied types of assessment of the physical education curriculum

7. Teaching ALL learners
   a. Recognise the importance of inclusion in the PE class
   b. Knowledge of inclusion principles and practices
   c. Knowledge of approaches that may be taken to adapt content of relevant curricula to suit all needs / understand how individuals differ in their approaches to learning
   d. Ability to monitor individual and group performance to design safe and appropriate learning experiences

8. Lifelong learners
a. Commitment to the profession by actively participating in the professional physical education community

b. Commitment to ongoing professional development through the design of a professional development plan to guide your own growth as a physical education teacher

c. Actively advocate for physical education in the school and beyond in the community

9. Managers of learning environment

a. School, community, classroom

b. Design of preventive management routines that facilitate a smoothly functioning learning experience

c. Manage resources in ways that provide equitable experiences for all learners

d. Facilitate learners becoming self managers of their own behaviour and physical activity experiences

e. Design an effective behaviour management strategy

10. Change agents

a. Ability to persevere

b. Practicalities of teaching within the Irish system

c. Strategic change management skills