Abstract

The socialization of physical education teachers has a significant impact on teaching and learning practices. Despite the plethora of previous research examining physical education teachers’ lives and careers, new research and perspectives are always required since that school, social and political cultures change. For this reason, this first edited collection of scholarship on physical education socialization for nearly three decades is long overdue. *Teaching Socialization in Physical Education: New Perspectives* adopts an innovative, cross-cultural approach examining how physical education teachers develop and the factors that impact on their development and pedagogical practices, in addition to detailing future socialization research possibilities in the subject.

Key words

Teacher socialization, Occupational socialization, Physical Education, Socialization research

The emergence of teacher socialization can be traced back to Waller’s classic work, *The Sociology of Teaching* (1932). Further texts by Lortie (1975) and Lacey (1977) continued to
examine how and why school teachers teach in the manner they do. With regard to published texts, the Physical Education (PE) profession have largely relied on Templin and Schempp’s (1989) seminal work, *Socialization into Physical Education: Learning to Teach*, to appraise the impact of teacher socialization on teachers’ beliefs, pedagogical practices and career trajectories. Recognizing that teacher socialization cannot be absolute given that school cultures change over time and/or between contexts (Richards, Templin & Graber, 2014), this book is long overdue. This new text takes a cross-cultural perspective, examining how PE teachers develop and those factors that influence their development from university studies/teacher training to late career.

The text consists of five parts, each focusing on a theme. These are:

- An overview of occupational socialization theory;
- Recruitment into and training for a career in PE;
- Career-long socialization and life in schools;
- Alternative and innovative perspectives on teacher socialization;
- The future of socialization research in PE.

In turn, each part outlined above consists of a number of chapters written by 14 eminent authors.

The first part of the text provides an explanation of teacher socialization and Lawson’s (1986) three phases of teacher socialization (childhood experiences of PE and sport, university PE teacher education, and on-the-job experiences working in various school settings) which are used to define PE occupational socialization. Parts Two and Three of the text critically examine a number of contemporary issues within each of these phases. This structure provides not only a theoretical underpinning but also a chronological timeline for understanding PE teacher socialization. This allows the reader, as suggested by the editors,
to understand the influence of their own socialization on their practices as physical education teachers and teacher educators’ (p.7) in a sequential manner. It also allows the reader to easily ‘dip’ into a variety of issues impacting on the three phases of occupational socialization. Parts Four and Five of the book consider how the boundaries of occupational socialization research are being moved forward and examine the potential future of socialization research in PE. As such, this book is not only of interest to practising PE teachers, but also those conducting research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

In providing an historical overview of occupational socialization theory, Part One (chapters one and two) of this text outlines the need for further research in this area. Borrowing from Templin and Schempp (1989), the editors argue that knowing the pedagogical practices of PE teachers, and why such practices take place, is necessary if teaching and learning is to improve. Chapter two outlines the research completed in the last forty years including the general and exploratory research studies of the 1970’s and 1980’s; research examining the dialectical nature of socialization, and studies conducted in the new millennium focusing largely on the impact of issues within the ‘working in school(s)’ phase. This provides a further platform for the authors to identify the need for further occupational socialization research. Suggestions for such research include the impact of social, economic and political environments on PE teachers’ practices, the socialization of PE teacher educators and their impact on students, and longitudinal studies of teachers at different career phases. I would also propose research is required addressing the socialization of teachers and their pedagogical practices with elementary/primary pupils and pupils experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Further, research exploring how PE teacher socialization could impact on those fulfilling alternative career roles such as Principal/Head Teacher would also be valuable? Nonetheless, this chapter provides an extremely useful
overview of occupational socialization research and provides a basis for examining each phase of this theoretical framework.

Part Two (chapters three to five) provides an interesting examination of recruitment into and training for a career in PE. Chapter three identifies that childhood socialization is extremely powerful in determining PE students’ orientations to the subject. However, the impact of factors such as PE teachers, sport coaches, the family, race, class, gender, and physical ability is contested. The need for childhood-based research to provide a deeper understanding of why pupils enter university PE and sports courses and what orientations they arrive with is emphasised. Chapters four and five examine the impact of higher education courses on student teachers’ orientations and pedagogical practices. These chapters suggest that university staff should have knowledge of their students’ prior beliefs (gained during the childhood stage of socialization) so those that are incongruent with the university PE programme can be challenged and potentially addressed. They also recommend that longitudinal research studies are conducted on those university PE programmes that are successful in instilling an orientation on their graduates that exemplifies the values promoted in the programme.

Part Three (chapters six to nine) of this text considers the career-long socialization of PE teachers. Chapter six utilises Fessler and Christensen’s (1992) teacher career cycle model to examine the different phase’s teachers experience working in various school settings. This elaborates on parts one and two of the text and identifies future research possibilities within and across the different phases. Chapter seven discusses the importance of continuing personal development, given that PE teachers are often isolated from other school teachers (Stroot and Ko, 2006), resulting in them merely reproducing the pedagogical practices of their colleagues. Chapter eight considers the impact of pupil misbehaviour on PE teachers and their teaching and learning practices. PE teachers may face such pupil misbehaviour
given the open spaces in which the subject operates and the large class sizes often not found in other subject areas. Practical ‘solutions’ to pupil misbehaviour are offered across the three phases of teacher socialization. The citing of general educational literature as opposed to PE literature within this chapter indicates the lack of specific PE research in this area. To overcome this deficiency, future opportunities for research are suggested.

In discussing alternative perspectives on teacher socialization, Part Four (chapters 10-15) of the book focuses on a variety of topics that influence those involved in PE. The use of role socialization theory (Richards, 2015) is outlined to provide an insight into how social role expectations are developed through socialization experiences. Differences between predominantly white middle-class teachers and students who are ethnically, culturally and socioeconomically different to them are explored. Suggestions as to how PE teachers can provide culturally relevant PE (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011) and suggested practices for university PE programmes are offered. Chapter 14 investigates the ongoing socialization experiences of university staff as they progress through their careers in higher education and the tensions they experience ‘finding a pathway where they can make large and sustainable ‘impacts’’ (p.221). The need for teacher educators to publish peer-reviewed research to achieve promotion and/or tenure, and its negative impact on developing the profession of PE outside the university is just one of the interesting topics raised in this chapter. In congruence with previous chapters in the text, the chapters in Part Four provide examples of further research required to improve the day-to-day practices of PE professionals.

Part Five (chapters 16-17) of the text provides an overview of the possible future of socialization research in PE. These two chapters suggest alternative methodological approaches to research using childhood experiences of PE and sport, university PE teacher education and various school settings. The central role teachers’ play in pupils’ learning
means that such research must be communicated not only with academics, but with the
teachers themselves if their pedagogical practices are to be advanced.

I believe this text would be of interest to PE (student) teachers and university staff interested
in understanding the potential impact of their own socialization on their practices. Chapters
tend to follow a similar format. They begin with an introduction to the topic. This is
followed by an outline/discussion of previous research relevant to that topic and suggestions
for future research studies. While there is a degree of content repetition in some chapters, this
allows the reader to ‘dip’ into individual chapters and understand the context of the topic
being discussed. As a researcher of PE teacher socialization in the UK, I am pleased to report
that the chapters in this text are theoretically sound, providing real life application and future
research possibilities. For these reasons, I consider this book to be essential for undergraduate
and postgraduate students and university staff wishing to firstly, understand this complex
topic and, secondly, complete further research in this area of study.

Nick O’Leary, University of Wolverhampton, UK

n.oleary@wlv.ac.uk
References


