

Situating Cultural Diversity in Movement

A case study on Physical Education teacher education in Norway

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Abstract

There is a growing body of research on cultural diversity, discrimination and racism in physical education teaching and practice. However, although ‘cultural diversity’ is a central concern in research, curriculum and policies of higher education, it is not clear *how* and *in what ways* students and teachers should consider cultural diversity. Drawing on qualitative interviews with teachers and students in a Norwegian physical education teacher education (PETE) program, we investigate how and in what ways students and teachers regard cultural diversity in that context. We suggest that cultural diversity is not sufficiently understood when it is assumed that knowledge about particular positions or identity categories (white, black, minority, majority) is fixed. Our findings indicate that cultural diversity is visible in movement and in bodily resonance between people. These findings present a strong argument for recognition of the relational, embodied and social aspect of cultural diversity in PE.

Key words: Cultural diversity, inter-corporeality, inter-affectivity, embodiment, bodily resonance, qualitative interview, movement, physical education teacher education

Introduction

In this study, we argue that situating cultural diversity in movement and between people, rather than in particular positions or categories, can strengthen our understanding of the relational, embodied and social aspect of cultural diversity. Throughout the article, the term cultural diversity refers to the multiplicity of cultural identities in society. This includes any kind of diversity brought up by informants, as well as diversity in movement capabilities and diversity in body size, gender and ethnic identity. Drawing on qualitative interviews with teachers and students in a Norwegian physical education teacher education (PETE) program, we investigate how and in what ways students and teachers take cultural diversity into account in that context. This is particularly significant given that in discourses on cultural diversity, physical activity and sport are frequently cited as effective means of promoting inclusion and integration (Beutler, 2008).

A number of important international treaties, such as the Bologna Process, celebrate cultural diversity as a value in its own right. The Bologna Declaration and European higher education institutions emphasise citizens' mobility and employability as crucial to the development of the Continent (Reinalda, 2008). However, in many areas, such as teacher education in England, the underrepresentation of black and minority ethnic students has been a chronic concern (Douglas & Halas, 2011; Flintoff, 2012). Even as school cohorts become increasingly ethnically diverse, teacher education cohorts lag some way behind, leaving a *White space* (Flintoff & Webb, 2012; Gilborn, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2013). Although the relatively few black and minority ethnic students in PETE evince strong motivation to improve physical education for future generations, research shows that these students are positioned as the problematic 'other', particularly with reference to skin color and religious dress (Flintoff, 2015). A broad body of research on cultural diversity in PE and PETE addresses issues of race, ethnicity and religion (Benn, Dagkas & Jawad, 2016; Barker et al. 2014; Fitzpatrick & Santamaria, 2015;

Pang & McDonald, 2016; Grimminger-Seidensticker & Möhwald, 2017; McEvoy et al 2015; Dagkas, Benn & Jawad, 2011; Flintoff & Webb, 2012; Walseth, 2015). The role of whiteness as ‘the nature of ivory tower racism’ (Douglas & Halas, 2013, p.453) has significant implications for PE and the PETE teaching, curriculum, as well as recruitment and learning (Douglas & Halas, 2013; Dowling & Flintoff, 2015; Flintoff, Dowling & Fitzgerald, 2015; Whatman et al., 2017; Pang, 2016). These scholars have emphasised the centrality of the body in physical education, as well as the heightened need for teacher sensitivity and awareness of the varied ways in which values are embodied among pupils (Evans et al 2004, Benn et al 2017).

Researchers have called attention to the acute need for teachers who possess the skills and understanding necessary to work effectively across cultures (Causey et al. 2000; Ko, Boswell & Yoon, 2015; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). However, Benn et al (2011) note the continuing gap between research on education and educational practice. One common approach to enhancing cultural sensitivity in professional practice is increased attention to knowledge of other cultures in curricula and courses (Champaneria & Axtell, 2004). Whiteman et al (2017) argue that including indigenous knowledge in the PETE curriculum could stimulate the kind of disruption and friction essential to growth in the discipline. However, as critics have pointed out, providing knowledge of other ‘cultures’ does not guarantee that people with different backgrounds will be treated equitably (Farais et al. 2017) Furthermore, even people from the same ethnic background do not necessarily share the same experiences (Vandenberg, 2010).

Despite a broad body of research on ethnic reflexivity (Pang, 2016), fluidity, hybridity and intersection of peoples’ identities (Pang, McDonald & Hay, 2013; Flintoff & Fitzgerald, 2012) few studies have explicitly examined PE as an inter-subjective phenomenon, focusing on

peoples' bodily movement, connectivity and resonance experiences in their encounters with others.

Azzarito & Simon (2017) discuss the important role that integrating sociocultural perspectives into teacher education programming can play in developing educators who promote social justice (Azzarito & Simon, 2017). Our study is consistent with this ambition. Combining anthropology and phenomenology, we argue that PE and PETE teachers and students possess knowledge on cultural diversity that becomes visible in their encounters with pupils. We agree with Smolcic and Katmich (2017) that intercultural interactions are not static; rather, they consist of contextually contingent processes of negotiation and struggle.

As already noted, international political documents, curricula and objectives all recognise the importance of cultural diversity (Huddleston et al.2011). In Norway, an official report (NOU 2017: 1) analysing the effect of increased immigration on the Norwegian welfare model observes that frontline workers such as teachers and health workers continually experience dilemmas in their efforts to balance people's right to be different against the quest for equality¹. Challenges to teachers include pupils and parents who demand 'special adaptation' or exemption from activities such as swimming and gymnastics for female pupils with hijab; requests for prayer rooms at school. Teachers have complained that they lack guidelines that could help them determine what adaptations are acceptable and how much flexibility they should offer. Research is lacking on the ways these issues influence everyday life in school (NOU, 2017, p. 174-176).

Schools in Norway are non-confessional and secular, though based on fundamental Christian and humanist values such as respect, tolerance, intellectual freedom, forgiveness and solidarity (Hovdelien 2015, p. 310). The Norwegian teacher education curriculum emphasises that future PE teachers should be equipped to facilitate training for students from different

cultural backgrounds (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*, 2004). However, *what* should be taken into account and *in what ways* is not specified.

Our intention was to explore cultural diversity as a social and embodied phenomenon. We posed the following research questions:

- 1) How do teachers and students in a physical education teacher education² (PETE) program interpret and conceptualise cultural diversity?
- 2) In addition, how do these interpretations and conceptualisations provide a specific embodied understanding of cultural diversity?

Theoretical Framework

We consider culture to be ‘what a person employs in order to interpret and act on the world’ (Barth, 2002, p.1). We view cultural diversity as a ‘relational’ phenomenon; that is, something that becomes visible between people when they meet, rather than a specific ‘difference’ from the majority population, exclusive to certain individuals (such as ‘Muslims’) or territories (e.g. ‘African culture’) (Hannerz 1996; Tsing 2005). Tsing’s concept of friction (Tsing, 2005) is a useful metaphor for diverse and conflicting encounters between people. According to Tsing, friction produces movement, action and affect (Tsing 2005, p.20). Combining perspectives from phenomenology and anthropology,³ we are concerned with understanding peoples’ capacity to create, reproduce and transform culture and cultural diversity. Human beings make sense of the world through experience, classification and categorisation, and by continuously transcending the categories they themselves create (Broch-Due, Rudie & Bleie 1993; Leseth 2004).

Michael Carrithers’ classic text, ‘Why humans have cultures’ (1992), inspires our approach. Carrithers’ emphasises sociality, or the ways in which people interact (‘the human capacity

for social interaction’) as the prime impetus to social innovation (Carrithers, 1992). Thomas Fuchs, taking a phenomenological perspective, argues that human sociality does not originate in isolated individuals, but through inter-corporeality and embodied affectivity (Fuchs 2016). Applying the concept of *embodied inter-affectivity* Fuchs (2016) asserts that in face-to-face encounters, intertwined subject-bodies resonate with each other; this inter-affectivity creates situations in which mutual empathy and understanding can develop. To elaborate further on embodied human relations we introduce the concepts of bodily resonance and connectivity.

Bodily resonance and connectivity

In line with Fuchs & De Jaegher (2009), a phenomenological and enactive approach to sociality starts from *connectivity*, *inter-corporeality* and *inter-affectivity*. *Bodily resonance* indicates that our engagement with others is embodied and involves emotions, affectivity and ongoing interactions enabling a primary form of empathy without requiring any representations (Fuchs 2016 p .195). As a methodological point of departure, the concept of bodily resonance facilitates an understanding of ‘the other’ across cultural and national contexts (Wikan, 2013). The concept of resonance invites us to emphasise similarities that connect people, rather than distinctions that separate them.

Adopting this line of thought, we would argue that in PE, bodily sensations and kinesthetic feelings generate affects and expressions, both among pupils and in individual pupils. These bodily resonances and their expression are manifested in faces, gestures, postures and movements that occur between people who are in, and create, situations that researchers can further investigate. We base our analysis on this general framework, which we enhance with additional references.

Design and method

The preconceptions informing our design and research interests build on our previous research and teaching in physical education and cultural diversity, as well as on culture, body and movement (Engelsrud , 2005; Leseth, 2014; Leseth 2015). This pre-understanding provided us with a framework for interpreting and exploring our findings, a ‘space of knowledge’ (Lund, 2005). Recognising that choice of questions, precision and ability to follow up in the interview situation are decisive in determining what kind of knowledge is produced and how detailed it is (Pawson, 1996), the next section will clarify the methodology informing this study.

Contextualisation of sample

We chose to interview PETE teachers and former PETE students, assuming that this group of people had various experiences and understandings of cultural diversity.

We conducted 10 interviews in the PETE department at a Norwegian university college. This department offered a BA degree. It had a core staff of 8-10 teachers and enrolled about 40 students each year. Most of the teachers and students were white, ethnic Norwegians. We chose an institution located in a major city in Norway that emphasises cultural diversity in its recruitment, teaching and practice. To preserve anonymity, we will not describe the institution further.

Five of the interviews were with students, one male and four female, and five were with teachers, three male and two female. The age range was 22-26 among the students and 40-65 among the teachers. The students all had recent experience teaching physical education in a school, either as part of their university program or in a current job. The five teachers all held permanent positions at the institution. Their PETE work experience ranged between 2 and 30

years. Three of the teachers taught practical subjects: outdoor life, dance or sport. The other two taught theoretical subjects, such as ‘adapted physical education’.

The informants had a variety of experiences with cultural diversity. All of them were born and raised in Norway and therefore had a shared experience of belonging to the same group, place and language, as well as to a family. They discussed cultural diversity in physical education based on this commonality. All of them had some travel experience, whether from visiting other countries or from travelling in Norway; they lived in Oslo, but the majority were born in some other part of Norway and regarded their birthplace as ‘home’. Few of them considered these experiences influential in shaping their understanding of cultural diversity in their work or their views on it.

We recruited informants by email, after first contacting the chair of the department to introduce our project. The department chair recommended teachers to contact and the teachers suggested students. We obtained informed consent from all informants before each interview. All names are pseudonyms.

Qualitative interviewing

The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to grasp people’s experiences and understandings of a certain phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). One of our ambitions was to get a sense of cultural diversity as an everyday ‘phenomenon’ experienced first-hand in teaching and practice. Inspired by ‘active interviewing’ techniques⁴, a crucial question we posed was, ‘The curriculum in physical education emphasises the importance of developing cultural competence and being able to take the cultural diversity of pupils into account. What is your understanding of this?’

The interviews took place wherever the informants suggested: in their office, a cafeteria, a hall or a meeting room. Each interview lasted 60 – 120 minutes. All of them were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. The first author did the interviews and transcriptions.

On analytical steps and validity

In our thematic analysis, we moved back and forth between induction and abduction, looking for repetitions, similarities, differences and theory-related material (Ryan and Bernard, 2003)). Our analytical work is characterised by three phases of interpretation (e.g. Geertz, 1973). First, we read through the interview material in an effort to identify repeating themes related to cultural diversity which were brought up by informants. Second, we drew on our own analytical concepts, such as sociality, connectivity, bodily resonance and movement, in an effort to make sense of the participants' interpretations of cultural diversity through our theoretical framework. Finally, we discussed our findings and analysis critically.

A small qualitative study raises the question of whether or not its findings are more generally applicable. We would suggest that through its use of analytical generalisation based on theory-driven interpretation, this study contributes to an understanding of cultural diversity that has relevance well beyond the specific empirical context of PETE (Pawson 1996).

Findings and analysis

In the following section we present and discuss our findings of how teachers and students in PETE interpret and conceptualise cultural diversity, and conclude by offering some recommendations for PETE education. .

‘We got a lot of theoretical instruction about culture; however, I’d like concrete instruction on what to do.’

In discussing cultural diversity, our informants made a clear distinction between their conceptual knowledge of the subject and their actual practices and solutions in what they interpreted as situations involving cultural diversity. The topic of culture and cultural diversity forms part of the curriculum on ‘adapted physical education’ in the PETE chosen for this study. According to our informants, the topics covered included perspectives on multicultural children and youth, issues of social inequality, discrimination, race, gender and disability⁵. Simon, a former student and now a PE teacher, recalled this:

We read a lot about culture. I can still recall the first sentence: ‘The word culture could be defined as so and so; it is a difficult, complex and broad concept’. This is what I remember. In addition, that there are different aspects of the concept of culture, such as skin color, religion, gender.

Simon went on to say that this knowledge was comprehensible only on a ‘theoretical level’; it was often very complex and he regretted his lack of practical experience in dealing with culturally diverse pupils in the classroom. Peter, another PETE teacher, made a similar statement in the course of discussing the problem of translating culture and diversity theory into practice:

Being abstract is kind of an occupational hazard; not providing the students with ‘solutions’. The problem with cultural diversity is that it is segregated into gender, class and race in the curriculum. Questions on culture and cultural diversity are underspecified when it comes to practice. How could we use theoretical knowledge on race, class and gender to suggest how she should behave in concrete situations?

Peter raises the problem of a lack of guidelines for how and when to consider cultural diversity in the classroom. Several of our informants raised this issue. Karen, one of the students, elaborated on it this way:

We got a lot of theoretical instruction on culture – that we should respect diversity. We learned about concepts such as ethnocentrism, inclusion, discrimination, stereotypes, disability, race and gender. We were assigned several research questions about culture

and things like that. However, to be honest, I'm sorry we didn't get more concrete instruction on what to do. I find operationalising theory into practice a bit difficult. Because it's up to you. Once you enter the profession, you're on your own.... We were given some exercises that we could introduce to adapt activities for disabled pupils. That was useful.

This informant shared an experience of being given considerable 'room to manoeuvre' and discretion in interpreting and putting the political goal of 'taking cultural diversity into account' into practice (align NOU 2017).

Some informants found it frustrating that the theory, curriculum and political documents they were given in their PETE program seemed abstract and lacked specific advice or guidelines for practice/action. Others observed that it was more a matter of 'following the rules' in activities and play. From the perspective of inter-affectivity and bodily resonance (Fuchs & De Jaegher 2016), the students' distinction is erased in their social interactions. Their experiences might illuminate how students manage to move on in dialogues that at first appear as problematic.

Several of our informants claimed that the concept of cultural diversity was fuzzy and unclear. They often cited 'experience-near'⁶ concepts in suggesting how to deal with diversity in the classroom: 'It is about being familiar'; 'you must communicate and talk to pupils';

Anne, a former student who now worked as a PE teacher in a high school, reported that the theoretical knowledge about cultural diversity provided in PETE had its uses. Learning about different cultures helped her understand pupils' actions and behaviour:

I think it is important to have knowledge of other cultures, what lies behind actions.... When necessary, I will study pupils' culture in detail. For example, when pupils do not want to participate in a particular activity. Sometimes parents requested that their children be excused from dance for religious or cultural reasons.

Anne's' observation, shared by several other informants, reflects a common assumption in ethnic studies: stereotypes, in the sense of simplified descriptions of conventional cultural traits, can ideologically legitimate ethnic boundaries (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). An

important finding in our material is that PETE students and teachers did not appear to believe that ‘cultural explanations’ legitimise unequal treatment. The informants are active producers of solutions in difficult situations.

Anne was quite explicit in explaining how she might confront a difficult situation: ‘Either you can play the ‘religion-card’, explaining and accepting the behaviour as ‘religiously prohibited’ – or you can talk to the individual(s) involved and see what happens.’ She cited the example of parents who wanted their child to be exempted from dance class:

I think there was some kind of communication problem with her parents because they didn’t respond to my [written] query. I needed their justification for the exemption. I asked the pupil what to do and she said I should talk to her parents. This pupil was a passive child (*ribbeveggsbarn*). I saw that when I was teaching dance she needed an alternative, so even though I didn’t get any response from her parents I instructed her in something else. It was a difficult situation, but she did need an alternative activity.

As shown by Dagkas et al. (2011) Muslim parents seem to have strong influence on their young children’s attitudes and behaviour. However, our study shows that this influence is not a given, but can be negotiated through communication between parents, pupil and teacher.

Betsy, who now works as a supply teacher in a secondary school, had a policy for dealing with cultural diversity similar to Anne’s. She emphasised that she had learnt a lot from what was taught in the PETE curriculum, but at the same time she made it clear that she didn’t believe ‘cultural explanations’ should be invoked to legitimate all pupil behaviour:

I learnt a lot from reading a book in the curriculum on how to work with children and youth from different cultures. It was exciting, and I got a completely different perspective. Like, ‘Okay, now I understand why this male pupil always cut into the line. In their culture, males rank higher than women.... You get a completely new understanding. You learn and accept. Nevertheless, they also have to learn to adapt to the school system and how it’s going to be in class.... I always tell the pupils, ‘In my class, if you want me to respect you, you have to respect me.... If we follow the rules, we’ll have fun’.

To explore the ways in which PETE teachers and students apply their knowledge of cultural diversity in concrete teaching situations, we posed the question of how they might accept and justify treatment of pupils that was ultimately unequal, based on cultural background. Our

informants agreed that this as a difficult challenge with no easy solution. Some were clear about how they would deal with various situations; others were uncertain. Karen, for example, expressed ambivalence:

When it comes to dressing, I guess I would accept a hijab in class if the pupil thought she needed it to participate. It is more important to me that pupils be actively engaged than that cultural restriction prevents them from participating. But I'm not sure. It's very difficult.

Other students as well as teachers stated decisively that dealing with cultural diversity was not an issue for them. 'Cultural diversity is not a problem,' Cecilia asserted. 'In sport activity, it's all about sticking to the core values, such as fair play, following the rules, respect for others and learning.' Cecilia's assertion provides an example of how teaching is experienced as a continuous tension between 'sticking to the common rules' and recognising differences, and striving to resolve this tension on a case-by-case basis. Anne emphasised the importance of discussing cultural issues with pupils and not assuming that their religious or ethnic background will always hinder their participation in physical activity:

It's difficult to explain why one pupil doesn't have to participate in, for example, football or dance, while others do. First, you need to get to know the pupils. Per, Pål and Mohammed should all participate. However, if Mohammed is not participating, I must admit that very often you have to 'play the religion-card'. This card is frequently an accepted explanation for not participating in activities. Recently, we celebrated Eid and several pupils were excused from school for a day to observe their religion. Although some of them might take a day off without really practicing their religion, that is the acceptable excuse.... For ethnic Norwegian pupils, mental health problems such as anxiety are considered an 'acceptable' excuse.

Betsy cited a different experience that she has had negotiating with boys:

Some of the male pupils find holding hands with other male pupils problematic. I think it has to do with homophobia. 'It's okay', I tell them, 'Then you can go with a girl.' You need to find solutions that make things work. 'If that solution doesn't work for you, just dance on your own.' Engaging all pupils in different dancing styles is a goal in the curriculum, a competence aim. Then I tell them, 'The two activities are no different for you. If you can participate in football and bandy, then you can participate in dance. There is no reason why you shouldn't.'

Although PETE students learn about cultures in terms of ‘people from Pakistan, Asia and Liberia’, we found it interesting that our informants seem to draw on their teaching experience to refine such ‘group identities.’ Here is Karen:

We learnt from the books that Muslim girls cannot take a shower and that they will not participate in swimming and even gymnastics. Yet, Muslim girls differ. Some of them like to swim and to participate in activities like ball games; others do not.

According to Karen, ‘group identities’ such as ‘Muslim girls’ are not fixed categories, but represent people who differ – for example, in their preferences. In PETE education, teachers and students apply broad interpretations and conceptualisations of cultural diversity, understanding it as referring to diversity in gender, ability/disability, class, ethnicity, religion, and learn how such categories have different meanings in theory and practice. The PE curriculum incorporates these concepts, without explicitly noting the embodied character of its teaching practice. However, the emphasis on dialogue and negotiation resembles Gressgård’s observation that when culture become the sole explanatory variable for individual action, people lose sight of a possible space for self-reflection, negotiation and dialogue between people who experience themselves as culturally different (Gressgård, 2012). This is consistent with the broader social scientific critique of using cultural concepts as a mechanism for explanation and legitimation (Hannerz, 2011). For both students and teachers, developing competence in dialogue and an orientation toward practical solutions developed mutually by embodied subjects are crucial.

‘You learn to know different people, not cultures, and you need to find solutions that work in class.’

All of our informants shared a primary aim in their work: enabling students and pupils to learn through and in activity; to participate and to be part of a team. ‘Different activities

provide various degrees of diversity, in terms of both skills and global diffusion,' commented one of the PETE teachers. When asked to cite a challenge in physical education related to cultural diversity, Peter, one of the PETE teachers, responded this way:

Worldwide, there are more than 100 different ball games, a lot more.... In Norway, we have a growing variety of games, yet football and handball dominate in schools and as recreational activities.... I introduce my students to a variety of games. It's important to include all students.... The problem is, many PE teachers regard football as an easy, culturally neutral sport. I believe that to develop their full range of motor skills, you have to teach students a variety of activities and games, not just football.

Peter's primary argument for expanding the range of activities taught was not about developing cultural competence, but strengthening motor skills and developing interaction. He emphasised the importance of introducing a variety of activities. When he had a PETE student or a pupil from a different cultural background, he tried to get to know and include him or her on the team and in other activities. 'You learn to get to know different human beings, not cultures,' he observed. 'It's all about getting to know people on a common, human level.' In effect, he was emphasising the bodily aspect of inclusion.

Charles, one of the outdoor education teachers, asserted that the main goals in outdoor life education were to give students experience in diverse weather conditions, teach them to cooperate and encourage them to develop as individuals. He described how student participation in activities had made him aware of various aspects of cultural diversity:

We had a female student from a Muslim background who didn't want to sleep in a tent with boys.... My immediate reaction was that who you sleep with in the tent doesn't matter.... Then I realised that for this student, it did matter. It wasn't a problem, really. We did some reorganising so that she could sleep with a girl.'

Although failure to recruit minority students into PETE and the relatively homogeneous group of students in these programs are common concerns, our informants tended to focus on the opportunities that activities and movements afford for teaching about cultural diversity and resolving situations that involve cultural differences.

Sofie, a PETE teacher, asserted that respecting cultural diversity requires taking the different backgrounds of pupils and students into account. She provided this example:

Two of my male students recently had instruction practice together for several weeks at a multicultural and ethnically diverse primary school downtown. The two had very different backgrounds. One had grown up in the city center and felt at home in the multicultural class. The other, who had grown up in the countryside among ethnic Norwegians, felt a bit at sea in this context.... However, it turned out to be very exciting, particularly when they were teaching in situations involving informal play and games; activities that were more accessible than, for instance, dance.

Our informants offered many examples that demonstrated how they relied on pupils and students as resources for bringing different experiences into an activity. When discussing cultural origin and difference, the PETE teachers tended to cite activities that are diverse, in the sense of the complexity and multiplicity of dances, competitive sports and games, and so on. In contrast, students with first-hand experience teaching in schools averred that what makes the repertoire of activities diverse is how pupils make contributions from their backgrounds; what they 'bring to' the physical education class as embodied beings. Several of the students recounted inviting pupils from different ethnic backgrounds to introduce activities from their culture in class. Anne explains:

I think it is important as a teacher to take advantage of the pupils' resources in teaching.... For instance, I suggested that the pupils create a dance using elements from their everyday life and their cultural background.... One pupil with an Albanian background managed to incorporate elements from her parents' dancing traditions as well as elements from her everyday life in Norway. She was so excited. It was very motivating!

Their excitement can be interpreted as evidence that when the focus is on inter-affectivity and engagement, diversity is experienced as a continuous and often positive 'friction' that produces affects and motion.

Our informants reported experiences with various degrees of pupil resistance to teacher practices or activity choices. Anne's PE lessons always began and ended in a circle. In this

circle, she could ‘connect’ with everybody, inform pupils of what they are supposed to do and ask if they had any questions. Once, a frequently disruptive pupil told her to sit down: He wanted to be the teacher. Anne ignored the comment, but after the lesson she discreetly took him aside and said, ‘Talking to me like that is unacceptable’. Explaining her strategy, she said, ‘Although he was from a different cultural background, probably with a different perspective on women, I refuse to accept his “culture” as a justification for his behaviour’. She tried to resolve the situation by engaging in dialogue with this pupil; referring to certain standards of behaviour and explaining that respect for the teacher was imperative, regardless of her or his gender.

Other informants noted that clothing and swimming are problematic for some pupils, although this was not a concern of pupils with immigrant backgrounds in particular. ‘The important thing’, Philip emphasised, ‘is that pupils participate in activities, not whether or not they change into gym clothes’.

The extent to which ‘diversity’ constitutes a challenge or a resource is an empirical question. Referring to situations and cases taking place in activities, our informants observed that they know of no study guide on how to think about cultural diversity. In this context, one of the teachers described her cultural diversity experiences as ‘getting away from balance’, indicating that they involved a state of bodily sensation. As suggested by Hastrup (1992) such moments of amazement are a point of departure for cultural understanding that goes through emotional and embodied states.

‘It’s all about being part of the group or team’

Several of our informants asserted that theoretical approaches that view cultural diversity as ‘static sizes’, or characterise people based on their backgrounds, often exaggerate the reality.

As one of the PETE teachers stated, 'It's all about being part of the group or team'. Working from this premise, our PETE teacher and student informants often depicted pupils as having the ability to include themselves and each other in teams or groups, cooperate, include others, form teams and follow the rules, as well as speak up when they disagree. They are able to treat others as equals, be inclusive and act as part of a group. Simon's account of his experience with a pupil with a disability illustrates this point:

I got a message from another teacher that I was going to be teaching a class that included with a pupil with limited vision. I thought it was a little exciting but wondered how I was going to include this pupil in the activity. However, [when I actually taught the class] I had the very nice experience that the pupil joined in. Other pupils held his hand and played well with him.... They knew him and he smiled and laughed.... I realised that I was the one who should have adapted more. I was a bit... surprised.

Other informants offered similar examples, particularly with reference to pupils with a disability. Significantly, our informants did not view pupils with immigrant backgrounds as excluded or outside the group or class; the assumption was that they were included. This does not necessarily mean that our teacher informants had never experienced challenges within a group due to disagreements or non-acceptance of their practices or choice of activities. In our material, teachers and students were interested in communicating and negotiating; in encounters with their students or pupils, they become angry, afraid, happy, touched. They develop an understanding of each other through their face-to-face encounters. As Fuchs argues, bodily sensation and kinesthetic feeling in PE encounters can generate affect and expressions between pupils and within them (Fuchs, 2016).

Concluding discussion

Our presumption for this research was that considering cultural diversity in any professional practice requires an ability to *understand* what culture means, and how and in what ways to take culture into account. Taking the bodily, affectively, socially complexity of human beings into account presents analytical, practical and methodological challenges of

understanding how culture matters in the PE context (e.g. Evans et al. 2004, Benn et al 2017; Pang, McDonald & Hay, 2013). Meeting such challenges requires a framework that systematically incorporates theoretical recognition of interaction as both bodily and affective. We suggest that this is essential to understand the affective and bodily interaction that takes place in teaching.

Our findings show how physical education teacher education and practice might accommodate cultural diversity by modifying bodily responses and experiences. PE students are able to join with their pupils in modifying activities to negotiate with them, and to make their own bodily responses visible and clear. Our findings prompt us to offer three major recommendations:

First, focusing on what occurs in a movement situation, we recommend a flexible understanding of what respect for cultural diversity should involve in practice.

Second, because situating diversity in movement creates opportunities for inclusive and inter-affective practices, PETE education in cultural diversity should be orientated towards movement experience and include equipping students to assess the need for disparate treatment based on cultural difference in particular situations and to justify their choices.

Third, PETE students and teachers might adopt a different way of interpreting and conceptualising cultural diversity through movement and activity. This ‘new’ approach should incorporate perspectives that view cultural diversity as a fluid concept (Barth 2002, Hannerz 1996, Tsing 2005, Wikan 2013).

PE as a school subject emerges in our material as an arena rich in flexibility and motion, offering a wide range of opportunities for inculcating and mediating cultural ‘ideas’ on diversity. Viewed in this light, PE appears to be, or could become, a more positive force than previous researchers have suggested (i.e. Fitzpatrick, 2013; Flintoff & Dowling, 2017;

Walseth, 2013). Citing inter-corporeal encounters in particular, our student informants identified abundant possibilities for dialogue with pupils in what might initially appear to be ‘difficult’ situations. They used bodily resonance situations as an opportunity to initiate dialogue and relied on co-determination to ‘move on’ with activities and pupils. This indicates that skilled teachers can use the proximal and embodied situations inherent in physical education to draw on cultural diversity in a positive way.

As indicated in our analyses, physical education as an academic discipline involves flexibility and motion, and therefore possibilities for mediating and inculcating cultural ‘ideas’ concerning diversity that include bodily affects and movement experience.

Interpreting cultural diversity through the lens of movement and activity represents a ‘new’ approach, consistent with Fuchs’s argument that individuals can resonate with others on a personal level. Working with others through teaching and practice is a lifelong project, with abundant opportunities for connecting and moving with others. Movement with others involves tensions, frictions and negotiations, as well as creating affects through relationships and experiences among people. Situating cultural diversity in movement offers opportunities for developing an understanding of how we can accommodate, respect and benefit from cultural diversity throughout society. However, it does not resolve the challenges that might arise within the context of PE and PETE. These challenges are complex, myriad and fluid, and they are continuous. Prescriptions of how to ‘solve problems’ or find definitive answers] perpetuate the false notion that cultural diversity issues in PE might one day disappear. PETE programs can deal with cultural diversity far more effectively by encouraging their students to be aware of their bodily presence in relation to all kinds of pupils, and to trust the bodily resonance and affectivity in which they are situated.

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¹ A key question in the debate on gender equality and cultural diversity in democratic welfare states, is to what extent it is legitimate to force liberal values on groups with non-liberal values (NOU 2017, p.174). Feminist writers debate the problem of accepting group rights that permit oppressive practices (Okin, 1999).

² Our empirical case is taken from a specific PETE institution in Norway. We do not highlight the Norwegian context per se, but rather use it as a case study in developing a theoretical understanding of cultural diversity in movement.

³ Anthropology and phenomenology cover a broad range of approaches (Keesing & Strathern, 1998, Ram & Houston, 2015).

⁴ Active interviewing differs from in-depth interviewing in the sense that the researcher delimits and guides the conversation towards a specific topic or expectations or to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Andersen, 2006).

⁵ We have not conducted a systematic review or text analysis of the curriculum in PETE regarding issues of cultural diversity. We refer to literature and concepts that the informants brought up in our interviews.

⁶ Clifford Geertz (1973) makes a distinction between 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' concepts. That is, between informants' native words and concepts and the analytical and analytical concepts of the researcher.